

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: John Chandler Hawthorne

I Was Waiting For You

by Emilee Lord

The installation in the gallery was made up of objects arranged on the floor in a spiral: shells, moss, sticks, leaves, an egg. A large tree limb hung from a rope with sticks and objects dangling from it like a mobile, slowly spinning. Projected on the wall were videos of Mark Kennedy walking, running, or dancing through fields and wooded areas.

Kennedy's movement was easy and clean. He moved calmly through the space repeating a chain reaction of gestures slowing down or speeding up, changing the range or reach. He marked the space, leaned on things, rolled across the ground, stood in the doorway that led to the quiet street. His gestures were sometimes clean and linear, other times describing his words, and sometimes came from an internal physical exploration. It was an authentic improvisational vocabulary; he was not executing dance but rather inhabiting his body within the space.

The spoken element was delivered quietly, conversationally, and blended observations of the space, his or our actions, thoughts, dreams, memories. These seemed a tool for keeping him present and it worked for me as well, helping me not apply meaning but stay there with him. I wondered, does he tell the same memory every time? Work that is grounded in really personal narrative can be hard to access. This part of the piece was done gently enough, generously enough, that the themes of personal grief and loss came through without a heavy hand.

Referring to the floor, Kennedy said, "I made a mess. I organized it but I made a mess." What I was looking at, however, was not a mess. Every object was controlled and placed with exactitude, and if he moved them while dancing he would often put them back immediately. This was in contrast to his movement which was forgiving, exploratory, and imprecise. When I was close to leaving, he began to play with the objects and rearrange them. The joy of his movement both live and in the video became visible in the objects for a moment.

When I walked into the gallery space, Kennedy had looked up from his position on the floor and said, "I was waiting for you." What unfolded was gentle and quiet; something waiting, holding, seeking.

The In Between, [Mark Kennedy](#), Vine street Gallery, Philadelphia, Fringe Festival 2021, Sept. 10 - Oct. 3

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September 12, 2021