

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Peterson Goodwyn

Dwelling on the Past and Present

by Joseph Ahmed

“The trusses are up! “

I sit on a chair, not inside, but just outside the threshold of Lindsey Huster’s West Philadelphia home, peering through the open door. Inside, a home video of a house under construction projects onto the base of the staircase. Two children trot about excitedly as the cameraman comments:

“Hi, crazy girls.”

Huster superimposes themselves on this image, an oversized silhouette that jumps, jostles, and balances, reliving childhood ebullience. As the video concludes, their movement quiets, a hand resting against the staircase in a tender double gesture, touching both the physical structure and the projected childhood home.

This is *Dwell*, [Headlong Performance Institute](#) alum Huster’s entry in the 2021 Philadelphia Fringe Festival. From the Fringearts blurb and some brief communication with Huster herself, I know that a major impetus behind this exploration of home-space is the death of a parent and the loss of a childhood home. I assume these are the house and the cameraman in the first projection, though it’s never stated. I wonder whether I would understand these influences on the choreography without my prior reading.

I’m drawn in by a segment when Huster slowly descends the stairs, sitting on each step as they go, sweeping with the head of a wicker broom. At first I see only dust collecting, but then red legos start appearing, plunk-plunking down the stairs. From my perspective at the base of the stairs, the sudden appearance is a delightful surprise.

By the end of the short (30 minute) piece, Huster is ascending back up the staircase, their body akimbo with head and shoulders pushed into the wall and feet against the banister. Sue Thompson’s “Gee! But I Hate to Go Home Alone” warbles from a downstairs record player. I think of both the intense labor of moving furniture up the stairs of a new house and how terrible of a slog moving on from

grief can be.

Dwell has all the markings of classic Philly Fringe content - a personal venue, small audience, and new work that feels like tender green shoots of grass ready to be watered. For such a DIY production, I'm impressed by the care and thoughtfulness in its production decisions. All proceeds are donated to [Morris Home](#), a residential recovery center specifically for trans and gender-variant individuals. An acknowledgement card outside the venue dives deep into the indigenous origins of the area, Karakung (Cobbs Creek), and recognizes the house's previous owners. This attention to context makes me excited to see how Huster's work evolves. To quote the opening video, the trusses are up.

[Dwell](#), Lindsey Huster, home of the artist, Sept. 16 - Sept. 19th.

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