

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Lars Jan

Choreographing Life

by Patricia Graham

The Object Lesson makes magical a world we already inhabit--the world of our "stuff" and what it means to us. The odd assortment of objects bumping up against each other in the theater lobby – bicycles, lamps, Astroturf, bags, a keyboard – is so amusing and so familiar. Forget diatribes decrying materialism, we're attached and there's plenty good reason; this is Sobelle's territory.

"Give this to a stranger. Do it. Quit being shy."

The performance space is stuffed full of cardboard boxes: most have black marker labeling the contents or instructing us. Sobelle mingles with the audience before the show and encourages us to look in the boxes. I find one full of his old bank statements and another of broken trophies. There are mountains of boxes that climb the walls and others with little wooden legs that say, "Sit on me" or "Give me to someone with long legs." We all get to play in this gently reminiscent world; a decrepit warehouse bursting with memories.

"Old Hats." "Things that make me feel sad."

Sobelle has everything in those boxes- furnishings for a cozy little room, items from his time as a youth in France, dinner fixings, a chandelier, old plants and ice skates for dancing- the myriad things that root a person into their life, along with the actual roots. When he constructs the room, each of the objects seem to burst from its box with its own unique trajectory--a rug unrolling, a table and lamp growing upward. Sobelle goes into the back of a box and emerges out the other side, pulling on a jacket. When he explores the larger space dives into the boxes pulling out treasures and coaxing stories out of the objects, a light-hearted archeologist stumbling through his past experiences.

“Please open, dog stuff.”

Elegantly, we get tricked, again and again, and we love it. With ultra sophisticated recording devices, time bends and Sobelle confronts his own misgivings, feeling ungrounded. Eventually it's clear that he's been rooted all along. We finally learn how a clown makes salad! Time accelerates and life streams 3-D – toothbrush, razor, hairdryer, coffee cup, phone, wine glass, flowers, tablecloth, baby clothes, toys, bills, phone, papers, money, golf clubs, books, fishing pole, glasses, glasses, glasses, hospital gown, pills, IV line, roots...all of consequence. It just keeps moving.

“What the world needs now, is love, sweet love...”

Feel the joy.

The Object Lesson, Geoff Sobelle, Christ Church Neighborhood House, September 14-21, FringeArts.com/object-lesson

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September 14, 2013