

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Zornitsa Stoyanova

Quick Takes-"THEN"

By Megan Bridge

TD writers, polled for quick takes on Group Motion's performance of *THEN* by Susan Rethorst, responded in ways that were warm, cool and in-between.

"The biggest impression *THEN* left me with was how not-needly it was. After coming home from American Realness,* in which all the artists were trying to get presented, and were very much asking for attention, *THEN* did not beg for it. *THEN* felt (to me) not concerned with being impressive, but if I aligned my attention with the piece the right way, it rewarded me again and again and again. It was a refreshing pleasure to watch." --Annie Wilson

"I don't know how I feel about this work--I don't feel super strongly in general about it. There were parts I liked, and I could really see how Rethorst's work is related to her [philosophy of choreography](#)." --Becca Weber

"The choreographed playfulness and joy of the piece registered as spontaneity. The ensemble interacted with an orchestrated precision that highlighted the formal mysteries of their play. Throughout, the individuality of performers was always present, as in scenes with Lindsay Browning, Greg Holt and Lesya Popil, where Rethorst was able to reveal and render coquettish humor, raunchy extroversion and insular introspection, defining individual characters within the ensemble. " – Jonathan Stein

"In watching *THEN* I saw a lot of material and stylistic tendencies that I recognized from Susan's other work, in particular the piece I performed with her last year, *208 East Broadway*. Lindsay Browning's impish and dramatic facial posturing and gestures were very similar to what Susan asked us to do during an audition for her work in 2012. In *208 East Broadway* Michelle Stortz also performed a sequence like this...moving from upstage to downstage while batting eyelashes and flirting with the audience, or an invisible presence. Many other details too, like the particular way that dancers touched, poked, or manipulated each other's bodies (stepping over each other while kicking limbs out of the way) were reminiscent of bodies of material that we cultivated during our rehearsal process. Even

one exact movement sequence, with a port de bras of the arms high overhead and then some twitching thumbs, was quoted verbatim. Many artists reference, recycle, or quote verbatim** from their earlier work, and this practice probably contributes to the cultivation of their own particular aesthetic. I'm wondering, for Susan, how this practice relates to her commitment to "not knowing" in the studio."

**-- Megan Bridge

"I found during this show that my mind was wandering a lot, which surprised me. The friend I went with said she experienced the same. I also wonder if some of that wandering attention was due to this feeling I had that some of the work was like an inside joke that I wasn't totally in on. Something about it was a little bit more alienating than inviting. And I had thoughts about whether I would feel that way were I not familiar with all of the dancers in the cast, which was an interesting thought proposal." – Becca Weber

"I think the way that Susan works with dancers is particularly flattering to a company like Group Motion. The company is full of powerhouse performers who are fully embodied and present both physically and facially. Susan's choreography, in particular the relaxed precision that her movement contains, suits this group of dancers particularly well." – Megan Bridge

"I think the experience, too, shows the value of bringing in outside artists to be a source of continuing re-invigoration and discovery for an on-going and most talented company of dancers." -- Jonathan Stein

THEN, by Susan Rethorst and Group Motion, Arts Bank, January 16-19, 2014

*The [American Realness](#) festival took place the month prior in New York during the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Conference where artists "sell" their work through performing in such showcases. See also this [TD article on APAP](#) by Lisa Kraus.

** See Rethorst's writing on *Stealing, Influence and Identity* [here](#).

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