

the DANCE i n s i d e r

Flash Review 2, 11/5/02: Mapping

Castro Charts the Seasons, Site-Specifically

by Nicole Pope

NEW YORK -- Yanira Castro & Company's "Cartography: haru, verano, autumn, hiver," seen October 26, unfolded as the experience of a love affair's journey through the seasons. The site-specific piece took place within and without the six buildings of the 130,000 square-foot Old American Can Factory in Brooklyn. Though the audience's travels from season to season were nipped with the autumn winds of October, the ambiances of spring, summer, fall, and winter were each enhanced by befitting sets, and by projected video by Kevin Kwan and Shelley Eshkar, the lighting of Roderick Murray that imitated the sun's intensity over the course of a year, costumes by Albert Sakhai, and William J Grabek Jr.'s original score, which designated specific instruments for each season.

Led out of the gathering room, the audience finds itself in front of a large garage door, watching it slowly reveal a private world of doors, stairwells and peculiarly shaped buildings -- the beginning of our journey. After walking up a claustrophobic staircase, our cluster comes to a large loft where a circle is defined by sheets of translucent plastic and the light that makes it look like a spring shower. Dispersed throughout these hanging shafts, the audience watches a pair of skipping sprites, Jan Schollenberger and Pamela Vail, enter the circle to the rhythm of harps mimicking the sound of rain on tin cans. Their costumes are evocative of early buds, but not quite. The duet covers the space in resilient, frolicsome leaps, pushing the air behind them with straight arms. The repetition within this segment as well as the ones that follow gives a sense that this is how it always is; this is how it always begins and ultimately ends; though, there is something different and fresh each time the cycle is renewed.

From here, a winding pathway leads the audience to a pristine environment of fluorescent lights. Two sunbathers, Castro and Nancy Ellis, are erotically positioned on a slight diagonal, their bare-breasts arched towards the fabricated rays of sunlight. They move in unison, both with mischievous grimaces as they slowly tread over the floor in a manner that is at times elegant and at times disturbingly violent. In a repeated square pattern, they sharply jut their barely covered bottoms over the floor from corner to corner while the lazy grunts of a trombone melt away.

We exit the way we came and walk across the courtyard to another building. We descend into the cellar to find a small, intimate room where a couple sits enveloped in the folds of each other's body. Heather Olson and Marya Wethers wear brown tattered layers of torn nylon as they rest atop crushed autumn leaves which are covered by plexi-glass. Above them, two curved mirrors give a very detached perspective of the scene. The audience sits and stands around the duet as we watch this initial closeness wither. Their intense gazes contrast the subtle and delicate movements they make as

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they seem fearful of handling something all too fragile and breakable. The notes of a piano haunt the environment in this beautiful exploration of the disintegration of love. Finally, a chilly rooftop sets the scene of l'hiver. The audience sits in the formation of a large V, a distance away from the stark duet performed by Ellis and Vail. A score for cellos peaks through the city sounds. The dancer's disconnected movements, sparse and erratic, are reminiscent of the sudden jolts and quivering calves of Cunningham's "Beach Birds." Though the two move in unison very near to each other, it is a lonely piece. They watch the tracks of their journey cover in snow, forgotten.

Though the metaphor of love changing through the seasons is not a new one, Castro's sophisticated direction over the many elements that went into creating environments made for a meditative evening. I felt that the choreography itself was in some ways the weakest piece of this collaboration. The movement vocabularies of each season seemed under-developed, and I walked away having little sense of Castro as a mover.