

the DANCE i n s i d e r

Letter from New York, 12-6: I Sing the Body Unplugged

Accusatory Curtsies, Twin Fetuses, Well-made Mammals, & Authoritative Bodies from Spradlin, Castro, O'Brien & Green

By Chris Dohse

Copyright 2006 Chris Dohse

NEW YORK – ...Another piece that combines many elements into a sensational whole is Yanira Castro's "(fetus)twin fet(us)twin," seen October 20 at the Chocolate Factory in Long Island City. The space itself wins me over at hello, a two-floor industrial garage-and basement-like structure with cement steps and metal handrail, odd bricked-in closets, hallways, darkness, shadows. Castro and her collaborators use them all, and the audience follows from one installation island to another as her tableaux vivant unfold, apparently inspired by two events, the discovery of an absorbed fetal twin inside a young boy and the surgical separation of a pair of conjoined twins in infancy.

After watching a video by Julie Wyman (a span of a bridge in halting and stuttering phases of construction) in the hall/lobby, we find a circle of folding chairs in the first space, up some steps in a gray/white room, encircling an ambitious motorized sculpture by C. Merritt Houghton that sometimes reveals and sometimes obscures the eerily calm action of two dancers (longtime Castro collaborators Nancy Ellis and Pamela Vail) like the inexorably flapping wings of a Rebecca Horn angel. Suzanne Dougan's costumes include fragments of nurse or dunce caps, girdles, gloves, the muttonchop sleeves of a Victorian spinster or Elizabethan knight.

Downstairs for part two, a ring of headphones hang from the ceiling surrounding two bulbous ova studded with blue lights. A dancer in the mask and scrubs of a surgical nurse enters and compulsively pulls on and discards rubber gloves; the headphones emit the recording of a complex surgical procedure.

Castro and her team's attention to texture and detail captures a gristly and atmospheric tone that seems perfect for the autumnal chill in the air, the hiss of dried leaves on the sidewalks outside. Their carnival-tent twin oddity could be the offspring of Tim Burton or Shirley Jackson.