

Run: CarriageWorks

By Lynne Lancaster ArtsHub | Monday, August 31, 2009



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6-ton dramaturgy indeed! This work should perhaps be subtitled 'Death-defying theatre' as it uses the entire space of the CarriageWorks Bay 20, examines the use of heavy machinery, weight, balance and philosophy and has the gloved and be-spectacled cast perilously perched on giant beams, hanging upside down backwards, and slithering up and down ladders while delivering their monologues. Oh and they also dance, displaying the trademark De Quincey Co fusion of contemporary dance and Butoh, building on several decades of work by dancer-choreographer Tess de Quincey in Europe, Japan and Australia. The work is based in Body Weather technique, a contemporary dance training founded in Japan by Butoh dancer Min Tanaka, melding Western and Asian practice and thought.

Run explores extreme energy, time and motion. Heritage components of CarriageWorks, each weighing over a ton, are suspended. The audience enters an unpredictable space, where bodies and objects merge and unfold as integrated elements of a warped, massive physical-ized environment. Forming an integral and moving environment, the suspended weight of heavy beams and animations oscillate between chaos and stability generating 'active' and 'static' as constant, relative and dynamic processes in an engine of instability.

Studying the mechanics of locomotion of the human body, the company drew on the works of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904) and photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904). From the interweaving of inter-relationships new properties and factors of the engine emerge. Energy, force, scale, memory, control and the uncontrollable appear, at times suspended or linked. The work opens with a dancer as robot, a cog in the machinery, the head slowly being twisted, fitted and tightened by a giant hanging beam that looks like a spanner. At other times the dancers appear like wading or darting birds and there are allusions to Fokine's famous 'Dying Swan' solo for Pavlova. The spinning of the beams is echoed in the choreography and the dancers also 'freeze' and pose, like cats. There is also a section where one of the dancers exuberantly runs in a circle, jumping over the angled beams.

Media and visual images also create other layers of meaning; the back wall is used as a projection screen for grainy black and white film quite 1930's (?) in style. Live video cameras using colour are also used to capture, edit and project the invisible and elemental structure of relationships within this enquiry into motion in space. Sometimes the dancers interact with their filmed image and multiple images are also used. The show ends with the cast 'frozen', 'running' in slow-motion while the cold computer images fade.

Dale Gorfinkel sitting at the front of the stage with an amazing assortment of items (including bottle tops, horns, polystyrene cups, a tuning fork, a xylophone etc.) created a sensational soundscape also incorporating use of a computer. Special mention must also be made of the marvellous eerie, atmospheric lighting by Travis Hodgson.

A deeply layered, rather astonishing piece.

De Quincey Co in *Run: CarriageWorks*
PRESENTED BY Performance Space