



The Arts

Monumental and inanimate dominate beautiful but irrelevant dancers

Deborah Jones | *August 23, 2009*

Article from: [The Australian](#)

Run. De Quincey Co. Performance Space at CarriageWorks, Sydney, August 20. Until August 29.

THERE are many beautiful things in Run, but running isn't one of them: there's hardly any, except for a short burst in the middle and suggested in the final frozen moment. The movement in Tess de Quincey's newest work is dominated by the monumental and the inanimate.

Huge relics from CarriageWorks' previous life as a railway workshop are flown and floated around the high-ceilinged space of Bay 20 in all their slow, weighty majesty. Four performers clamber around and through ladders, slide and balance on girders and claim the floor for themselves, but circumstances are stacked against them. In this scenario the machines, given voice by a soundscape of squeaks, sighs and clangs from Dale Gorfinkel, are definitely the winners.

There are a couple of occasions when the human spirit prevails, particularly in Victoria Hunt and Tom Davies's determination not to be bested by about a tonne of shifting iron. I was reminded of the photographs taken during the construction of the Empire State Building, with workers balancing on beams, completely unrestrained. And of Philippe Petit, the high-wire artist who turned the World Trade Centre into his stage. "I observed the tightrope 'dancer' _ because you couldn't call him a 'walker'," a policeman so memorably said.

In Run's 70-minute span such moments are too infrequent. The dancers _ Davies, Hunt, Peter Fraser and Linda Luke _ are all superbly tuned performers but they seem mostly irrelevant, particularly in the awkward few moments of speech (extracts from Wittgenstein and Anne Carson) and unmotivated laughter. You can see the incredible effort that goes into pitting puny flesh and blood against implacable objects, but seeing isn't feeling, and I was entirely unmoved.

The viewers are kept at a distance, able to admire the sculptural play of shadows on the walls, the expert video and photographic projection, Travis Hodgson's glowing lighting design and the knowledge that this building's ghosts are being summoned. These things are far from negligible _ de Quincey is exquisitely skilled in creating images to fill time and space _ but they should resonate more widely than they do in Run. Here, what you see is what you get.