

# The Sydney Morning Herald

## ARTS

TUESDAY, MAY 4, 1999  
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### Wet cement and other impressions

#### **INHABITATION No 2**

Seymour Theatre Centre, May 1  
Reviewed by JILL SYKES

In some ways, the practice of butoh is frustrating in Australia because it is so demanding of those who adopt it seriously that we rarely get more than solo performers at its most refined and challenging level. Yet it can make a striking impact when it is used, even by relative newcomers, as the basis of response by mind and body to a particular environment – as Tess de

Quincey illustrated at Lake Mungo some years ago.

Last Saturday and Sunday at dusk, she directed 11 performers in a very different venue: the courtyard of the Seymour Theatre Centre, which shared the presentation of the work, *Inhabitation No 2*, with One Extra Company.

In the intense, contorted physicality of the style, the performers responded to the architecture, space and tree-scattered environment of the courtyard. Large puddles of

water added to the drama of the imagery as they splashed through, lay in them and had their every gesture reflected as they reacted with the art form's characteristic extremes of forcefulness and stillness.

Mostly the performers created an impact through their use of the surroundings – including high-speed dashes through the peripatetic audience – and this worked powerfully. But there were also arresting sequences in group and individual action: someone lying face down in the

pile of wet, golden autumn leaves; a crouching, crab-like run sideways; 10 of the 11 performers in tight formation, stepping up stairs slowly and smoothly in unison with their heads flung back at right angles to the body; a prone, waterlogged performer's stream-of-consciousness remark "wet cement" ...

☐ A 24-hour butoh-based performance, developed by Stuart Lynch, will take place at Art-space from noon this Saturday with 12 performers, including leading dancers in other styles.