

THE VILLAGE VOICE

Dancing on Strings

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by Deborah Jowitt

The extraordinarily gifted Australian choreographer Lucy Guerin treats confinement in another way. In *Melt*, Ros Warby and Stephanie Lake inhabit a small area, their bodies and psyches responding to climate changes. "Motion graphic designs" by Michaela French throw patterns on them—a grid of ice blocks, snow, flashes of lightning, lava, and so on. The two begin moving in increments, repetitive, frozen; they shiver. As the temperature rises, and Franc Tetaz's subtle score moves from creaking sounds to dripping ones to rumbling and crackling, the women's behavior and their contact with each other become more charged, more complex, but the dance remains spare—every moment elegantly chosen and defined.

In Guerin's brilliant *The Ends of Things*, confinement becomes the subject of a haunting and haunted narrative. Trevor Patrick is not only imprisoned in a room, he is imprisoned in his own disintegrating body. As he moves through his dreary day, slides are projected onto the walls of designer Dorotka Sapinska's cramped, three-sided room on wheels. The "bedroom" looks startlingly real; in the "kitchen" and "bathroom," the scale is askew. Patrick sleeps, puts on and takes off clothes that now hang on him, drinks tea, pees, performs some task that could be looking at a stamp collection or a photo album; a radio and useless answering-machine pitches link him tenuously with the outside world. Tetaz's score amplifies the sounds keyed to Patrick's activities.

Meanwhile, figures in the dimness outside the house gradually intrude like distorted memories and imaginings. While Patrick rests, we watch Warby and Byron Perry dance effusively, as if at a club, then fight; watch Lake and Perry interlace. Patrick folds his clothes; the two women fold Perry. Eventually the three invade the "house" and shadow Patrick through his day, brush his teeth, look disgusted when he pees; Lake's body becomes his "work." He seems barely aware of them at first; then they hold a wild party and he orders them out. After he undresses and moans himself to sleep, they dismantle the house.

With his refuge open to the wind, Patrick finds new barriers and obstacles: the legs and arms of the others, their embraces. Sometimes, when they freeze, he can safely snuggle against them. The three, standing perhaps for all people once part of his life, are motionless when he leaves them; he's so clumsy and weak that he bumps against a curtain as he exits the stage, and life. Patrick magnificently portrays this man's narrow, drab existence, besieged by what was and might have been.

SOURCE:

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