



Screen Dance: A New Visual Language - The 6th Annual Dance Camera West Film Festival 2007

by **Rachel Levin**

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Dance Camera West—an annual film festival devoted to the collision of choreography and cinematography—opened Friday with a screening of seven short films from around the world. These shorts utilized the interplay of movement and cinematic technique to comment upon themes as diverse as love, isolation, masculinity, work, and metamorphosis. The settings for these films share striking similarities; each fills industrial, urban spaces with dancing bodies that bring life, nature, and human conflict to the soulless built environment.

In "Bórrame Mucho" (Spain, 2005), "Pavillon Noir" (France/Switzerland), and "10 Exhalations" (Russia, 2006), young people strive for connection in modern cityscapes. The young female protagonist in "Bórrame" embodies stillness within the rapid movement of commuters entering and exiting trains at a crowded metro station. She stretches and does isolations on the concrete bench where passengers wait. Then she tries to connect by hugging passersby, who embrace her—expressionless—and quickly move on. The hugs grow more and more intimate, until one man walks away with her perched atop his shoulder.

While the mood in "Bórrame" is one of yearning, the mood in "Pavillon" is comic. A group of employees in an office building of concrete and glass use any point of contact—passing a file, switching chairs, walking downstairs—as an excuse for movement. They frolic in every cranny of the building, getting swept up into each others' embraces and leading each other into spins and leaps. A hilarious interlude ensues in which one of the employees, dressed in a white lab coat, treats an ailing co-worker with a slapstick chiropractic dance.

In "10 Exhalations," a romance evolves in the cramped quarters of a tiny apartment living room. In each scene of movement, the couple's exhalation of breath is animated as an icy stream of air that alternately connects and repels them. All three of these films seem to demonstrate that dance, and the physical contact it promises, is an antidote to the sterile anonymity of modern urban life, love, and work.

"Gun" (Canada, 2006) and "Corp et Instruments" (Canada, 2006) reflect on our gendered fascination with cultural objects. As the title implies, "Gun" is a meditation on masculinity and the choreography of violence. A trio of men dressed like old-time gangsters gather in a run-down warehouse for a gun showdown of sorts. With guns and bodies constantly in motion, they enact all possible scenarios of a cinematic fight scene, eventually pointing their weapons at the audience in the end to confront us with our own acceptance of screen violence.

The central object of "Corp et Instruments" is the guitar amp. Three women cavort around three amps in a barren sound stage. They dance at speaker level, whipping their legs about the amps, then put on high heels and dance together in the center of the room. It is perhaps a commentary on the fetish of rock and the ecstasy of amplified music.

The remaining films, "Minotaur-Ex" (France, 2001), and "Flight" (Canada, 2004), explore the metamorphosis of man and monster. "Minotaur-Ex" interprets the myth of the three-faced monster as three dancers, naked except for a crusty chalk, writhing in dirt in seeming pain and despair and trying to find a way out of their industrial cage of concrete. "Flight" involves a single dancer in dark room moving to the light of a single lamp. He circles it as if he were orbiting the sun. The filmmaker compares the

dancer's journey to the transformation of man: "drawn from darkness to the lights of knowledge and, eventually, to the knowledge of his own, inevitable death."

These selections pushed the bounds of what constitutes dance and, in doing so, reveal the promise of dance on screen to create a visual language all its own. Such inventive combinations of movement and visual storytelling will be on display throughout the festival, which ends June 30. Mark your calendars for:

Choreography Media Honors screening and reception

June 7, 7:30 p.m.

Director's Guild of America
7920 Sunset Blvd., L.A.

Local Makers—LA Choreographers and Directors

An outdoor screening

June 9, 8 p.m.

Cheviot Hills Recreation Center
2551 Motor Ave., L.A.

"Vers Mathilde"

A documentary of Mathilde Monnier

June 10, 5 p.m.

Max Palevsky Theatre at the Aero
1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica

Pina Bausch on Screen

June 16, 7 p.m.

The Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd., L.A.

"Men in the Wall"

An art installation

June 20-30

18th Street Arts Center
1639 18th Street, Santa Monica

Screenings by Thierry DeMey

June 23, 8 p.m.

REDCAT
631 W. Second St., L.A.

Thierry DeMey Dance on Screen Workshop

June 23-26

UCLA Gloria Kaufman Hall
120 Westwood Plaza, L.A.

For more information, visit www.dancecamerawest.org

For information about Dance Camera West at the LA Film Festival, visit www.lafilmfest.com