

# Choreography steps onto the screen

Dance Camera West returns with an eclectic group of films from nine countries.

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Ever since Thomas Edison hand-tinted the swirling skirts of modern dance pioneer Loie Fuller in the film version of the 1905 "Dance Serpentine," there's been an interest in capturing this most ethereal art form on celluloid.

Flash forward to 2011 and the 10th Dance Camera West, the festival dedicated to the intersection of cinematography and choreography.

Founded by Lynette Kessler in 2002, the festival's offerings have always been a far cry from the usual summer movie fare. Opening night at the Getty Center features nine short dance films from around the world. Included are the American premieres of two Dutch films, "Horseplay," featuring a herd of Friesian horses and a male duet, and "Rehearsal III," a peek at a ballerina striving for perfection — from all angles and without a body double à la "Black Swan."

Thirty-two films from nine countries will be on view Thursday to Sunday at several Westside venues.

Audiences for Dance Camera West are as eclectic as the films. Kessler says, "People come from every art discipline, not just the dance world. There are also a lot of industry people — producers, directors, composers, designers," she adds. "The work is stunning in its application and creativity and it's not dance as some would identify dance — a pointed toe, a fall/body in the picture. It makes people become more aware of their everyday



DANCE CAMERA WEST

**PUSHING BOUNDARIES:** "The Co(t)lette Film," a collaboration between director Mike Figgis and choreographer Ann Van den Broek, has its U.S. premiere Saturday at the Hammer Museum's Billy Wilder Theater.



MOVIE SCREENING/DANCE CAMERA WEST

**VIVID:** "Butra" captures choreography by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui that was inspired by Shaolin monks.

"movement."

There's nothing everyday about Mike Figgis' "The Co(t)lette Film," a collaboration with Dutch choreographer Ann Van den Broek, who earned the Swan, Holland's most prestigious

dance honor, in 2008 after touring the concert piece for a year. Kessler scored a coup in bringing the Oscar-nominated director ("Leaving Las Vegas") to town to discuss the film, which has its American premiere Satur-

day at the Hammer Museum's Billy Wilder Theater.

At 58 minutes, "Co(t)lette" is a kind of postmodern "Showgirls" meets "Fight Club" punctuated with a dance marathon vibe. This unrelenting portrait of three women features female flesh braised, naked, quivering and in erotically charged poses. Van den Broek says "Co(t)lette," — literally "a piece of meat" — was also inspired by French

journalist writer Colette. British-born Figgis is no stranger to dance, having previously made documentaries featuring avant-garde choreographer William Forsythe ("Just Dancing Around"), and "Flamenco Women." Speaking by phone from London, he said, "I love dance and the balmy way Ann was dealing with this

material in an uncompromising way," Figgis said. "I also didn't want to alter her choreography. It's already quite inflammatory as a piece of dance theater, and when you introduce camera and angles, it becomes more edgy."

"The Co(t)lette Film" was commissioned by Belgian and Dutch TV and was made for about \$400,000. It pushes both boundaries and bodies to the limit. "I liked

dealing with sexual issues that were so conventional that they transcended the kind of voyeuristic, the sort of shallowness, if you like, that you can get just with bodies," Figgis said.

Having staged "Lucretia Borgia" in February for English National Opera that also included a live 3-D telecast, Figgis, 61, incorporated

highly eroticized Renaissance paintings — what he calls "Renaissance porn" — into short films he made as part of that production.

"Some of these ideas — the use and abuse of women in the opera — I could see with Ann's ideas in 'Co(t)lette,'" he said. "Her choreography is one of the few pieces I've seen that successfully takes those images — pornographic in many instances — and takes them somewhere else."

For those who prefer gentler dance films, the festival will not disappoint. Friday evening's short offerings screen outdoors at UCLA's Fowler Museum Amphitheater. They include "Stronger," a B-boy romp through the forest from Britain, and the nonfiction American short "Together: Dancing With Spinner Dolphins."

Eight short films are on tap Saturday at the Hammer, including selections from Australia, Mexico, Canada, with the West Coast and U.S. premieres, respectively, of "Fignment," a homage to Joseph Cornell's boxes, and "Via de Vasto," a humorous look at a contemporary Iran.

New this year, too, is a conference, "Dance Media: An Active Spectrum," comprising artists, dancers, educators and business professionals from the TV and film.

Fans of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui will want to pay attention to "Butra," one of three long form documentaries closing the festival (all West Coast premieres), as the Finnish Moroccan's choreography, inspired by Shaolin monks, is vividly captured by director Deborah May.

Kessler has plans to develop and find a larger market for these kinds of films. "Dance media is a new visual language for our time, and our crusade is to bring the creative back into the industry," she said.