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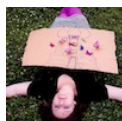


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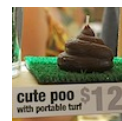
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By Laura Bleiberg Mon., Jun. 20 2011 at 10:38 AM
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Courtesy DCW

Dancers Judit Ruiz Onandi, Frauke Marien and Cecilia Moisiso (left to right) in a rare moment of G-rated repose from "Co(te)lette."

Movie director Mike Figgis and the U.S. premiere of *The Co(te)lette Film* were the headline event for Dance Camera West, L.A.'s annual dance media film festival that took place Thursday through Sunday at the Getty Center, UCLA and the Hammer Museum.

A *côtelette* is French for meat cutlet or chop. When you remove the parenthetical "(te)," you get Colette, the celebrated French writer (*Gigi*), who scandalized the Belle Époque with her books, theatrical performances and affairs with men and women. Dutch choreographer Ann Van den Broek paired these references for her 2007 performance piece, *Co(te)lette*, an examination of female carnal desires and feminine stereotypes.

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Co(te)lette's dance language is steeped in brutality, and the choreographer purposely walks that line between heroic honesty and overkill. It won awards in Europe, but has never been performed in this country; a mutual acquaintance introduced Van den Broek to Figgis, and they adapted the 57-minute piece for posterity.

Figgis (*Leaving Las Vegas*, *Timecode*), speaking before a full house in the 295-seat Billy Wilder Theater, is a big dance fan, with a particular fondness for flamenco. He charmed the audience by saying things like mainstream Hollywood fare is a "total mindless abuse of the technology." As good a job as he did translating *Co(te)lette* to the screen, it was the work's shock value that lingered, rather than its dance language or any insightfulness.

But that's the fun of Dance Camera West -- with 33 features, animations, documentaries, and shorts (some excerpted), there was a lot to choose from and think about. Then there were the chance meetings with dance world friends. It's hard to think of another dance event in L.A. that attracts this much of the community in one spot.

And what about beyond that community? Harder to say. Those actively involved in the making and promotion of dance films (also known as screendance, dance videos, dance media), tend to proselytize that pairing movement and the big screen is just the ticket to introducing new audiences to contemporary dance or transforming the marginal status of the whole art form. Lovely ideas, but most likely pie in the sky. The screendance superstars are TV reality shows like *Dancing with the Stars*, and the film *Black Swan* (which did, admittedly, cause a brief run on *Swan Lake* tickets in Manhattan). Many of the festival films are experimental and have a much more narrow appeal.

For the festival's 10th anniversary, DCW artistic director Lynette Kessler condensed the festival to a long weekend (it had lasted a month, in previous years), and held an afternoon conference with academic and professional presenters. Dancer and film-maker Carri Ann Shim Sham (her professional surname), whose *Sand* was shown at the Cannes Film Festival and comes to L.A. in August, urged dancers to learn the craft of movie-making, and especially digital editing.

Mexican director Alfredo Salomon's delightful *Vias de Vuelo* was among my favorites of the short films. Others were *A Few Minutes of Lock*, featuring the astonishing horizontal air rolls of the fearless Louise Lecavalier, and *Tank Man Tango: A Tiananmen Memorial*, a danced ode to the bag-swinging hero who stood up to the Chinese military's might 20 years ago.

Salomon admitted that he came to L.A., in part, to look for funding. "I think this is the most important (dance film) festival in America," he said. "I think this festival defines a vision of what screendance is."

But money certainly defines what you can make. One third of the festival movies were from Canada, which has both government and foundation money available to underwrite dance films. Maybe DCW can get *Dancing's* producers and Darren Aronofsky to kick in some of *their* profits for a fund to promote dance film in this country. How about that?

Tags: 10th anniversary, animation, dance, documentary, film festival, premiere

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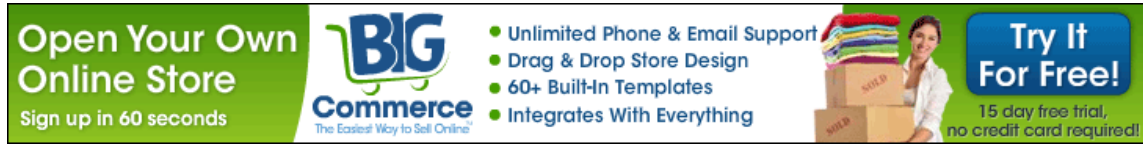
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