

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

CEILING

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, June 27th, 2018

Although one usually spends rather than gains any money at them, the best dance film festivals are a win/win situation for the filmmaker. The opportunity to show one's work, cavort with other dance film directors, choreographers, dancers, etc., and to engage in interesting dialogue makes it all seem worthwhile. It's such a rarified genre with its own unique language, and to have the opportunity to engage in it for several hours or days feeds the soul if not the pocketbook.

Such was the case for me when I was fortunate enough to meet Katherine Helen Fisher, both of us having ended up speaking on a panel with our films accepted into the wonderful San Francisco Dance Film Festival (one of the loveliest and most well organized dance film festivals out there). A petite woman Kate is at once a fine dancer, a talented filmmaker, and a mighty force, full of good will, warmth, and optimism. Her imagistic based work explores the intersection between dance and new media, and a member (since 2008) of The Lucinda Childs Dance Company, she also works independently creating movement direction for the likes of Radiohead and Rufus Wainwright, not to mention her own films.



Katherine Helen Fisher in CEILING

Kate's dance short **CEILING** is a beautiful film, shot with a Phantom camera in the Angeles Forest. The film's palette combining the green and earth tones of nature with color from costume design or orange smoke, is offset by the pale hue of her own skin. A prevailing influence behind **CEILING** is the work of Edward Muybridge, who investigated whether or not all of a horse's feet left the ground during a gallop. In 1878, he found out that they did when he pioneered a technique that used multiple cameras to capture motion in stop-motion photographs. Putting dance into the hugeness of a forest instantly reminds us of how minute and unimportant we humans are in the greater context of the world and nature in general. But part of the beauty of this film is the blending of this backdrop with shots of a single dancer, Kate herself, leaping into the sky in hyper slow motion, so slowly in fact that we have time to focus on minutia and detail like the folds of her facial skin reacting to the formidable force and thrust of her upwards jump. The richness of these images is frequently counterpointed with shots in which the music itself completely ceases temporarily, but we see Kate in visual vignettes of super slow movement or complete stillness.



The macro and micro of CEILING

Kate writes: "**CEILING** is an attempt to acknowledge and celebrate the strength and beauty of my

own age and experience. The motif is the leap as a love letter to the amazing things the human body can be and do at all stages throughout life. As I transition from a career as a professional dancer on the stage into being a director and producer, I am constantly reevaluating my worth professionally. I made **CEILING** as a cinematic essay redefining the value system by which we, as female-identified creators, assert ourselves.” I, for one, am all in for this mindset.

Part of the film’s beauty is that the viewer is simultaneously thrust into the macro and micro of it all. We are tacitly reminded that the human spirit is expansive and powerful, extending well beyond the boundaries of the body, of age, and of gravity, such that the limitless sky certainly is our only ceiling.

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