

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Duckler's Brush Up as a Performance Act

Phantom Street Artist · Wednesday, June 24th, 2015



Ms. Hirano adding paint to Toogie's shirt
Glendale – June 13, 2015 Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre premiered their latest dance performance titled *Brush Up* at the Glendale Brand Municipal Gallery. This production was created in collaboration with Tokyo-based calligraphy artist Isa Hirano, combining traditional Japanese calligraphy with site specific art.

Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre's initiative has aimed to direct innovative dance experiences at non traditional places, providing new hermetic readings of public spaces. The company strives to build community through movement connecting audiences and artists.

Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre was first founded in 1985 by Artistic/Executive Director and choreographer Heidi Duckler. For the past two decades, Duckler and her dance troupe has created unique dance experiences for many distinctive locations. Originally named Collage Dance Theatre, Duckler inaugurated her first site-specific act at a local laundromat where dancers were accompanied by the industrial token sounds of washers and dryers. *Laundromatinee* captured the collage ethos of a company which delineated wash and dry signs, opting to spin new cycle of hermetic meaning of art, movement, pop culture, and interactive forms in new found spaces.

Light and space artist Robert Irwin first popularized the term "site specific" in the 70's to describe conditional works which drew its cues from installations and its surroundings. The term has since gained influence in many disciplines, including dance and performance art. It has a reference in philosopher Edmund Husserl's principles of the Phenomenal conditional, an ideology in which both the audience and the performers are placed in the same proximity, compelling meaning by assigning value to the experience rather than the act itself. This concept eliminated the perception of space and time, audience and participant as well as aesthetic and aesthete.

Brush Up references the great language of the Gutai, whose philosophical and critical origins of expression came from establishing new meaning by attributing themselves as the ultimate objective tools in relation to the immediacy of corporeal bodied meaning. The dancers were cast as paint brushed tools, where Ms. Hirano transcended time and space leaving marked signs on its figures gaining ground.

The physical acts of both the dancers and calligraphers are complimentary in its form. The music composed by Chris Garcia sets the tone in painting its colored ambience as the dancers, Teresa "Toogie" Barcelo, Deidra "Krucial" Cooper, Nick Heitzeberg and Ja-Young Kim, clad in white outfits, moved about Ms. Hirano.

Calligraphy has typically been regarded as an ancient art form of great reverence. The growing resurgence of interest in ritualistic markings intersecting with calligraphy has gained momentum and vitality, breathing life into a new form called performance calligraphy where the artists utilize their bodies as a canvas for Isa, who stopped to impress marks which inspired her at that moment in time. Both sets of artists guided by the music, moved methodically focusing their attention on their breathing and rhythm and the skilled execution of deliberate moves of their brush and bodies in which to bring to life an emotional experience. Contemporary elements such as spray paint were also incorporated into its signature act to provide an edgier glossed finish to Ms. Hirano's calligraphy.

Ms. Duckler spoke at length about her complexity of her work stating that, "it [*Brush Up*] operates on so many levels of meanings...so many emotions, so much space. Making sure not to stifle the art, having to cover it in plastic, the control of the societal versus the traditional Japanese, the splattering of the ink and the flow of emotions..."

As a preview, Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre will next perform *Governing Bodies* on Saturday July 8, 2015, originally choreographed for LA's City Hall, at San Buenaventura City Hall, Ventura's Place during Art Walk. For additional show times and performances please go to <http://www.heididuckler.org/>

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