

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Weightless from Erika Janunger

Sarah Elgart · Monday, March 17th, 2014

This week I offer up Erika Janunger's beautiful award-winning dance short, *Weightless*, a film about architecture, gravity, and illusion.

As a choreographer I am always preoccupied with gravity, and with creating movement that alternately succumbs to or explores the illusion of defying it. In this short with two female dancers, one in a living room another in a bedroom, we watch as they seamlessly navigate from wall to floor, or vice versa, imperceptibly shifting their weight from one surface to the other. A dance film festival favorite, I've watched it countless times, each time successfully suspending disbelief. But from one moment to the next, I am so caught up in the illusion and the lyricism of the movement that I still cannot always tell how it was done.



Dancer defying gravity in *Weightless*

Years ago I had the privilege of working with Stanley Donen, and hearing from him how he created the trick of similarly moving a dancing Fred Astaire, and a room, in the 1951 film *Royal Wedding*. Back in those days the studios not only allowed him to build an entire room that actually rotated, they gave him weeks and weeks of prep and rehearsal time in order to successfully accomplish the illusion with both the amazing Astaire's dance and with the camera. I doubt *Weightless* had a quarter of the time, and I'm sure significantly less of a budget, but it is equally successful and even more mysterious. The execution of the two dancers—the fact that we are seeing each one seemingly in her own personal and private reverie—and the slightly haunting music, all add to the effect.

And by the way, not only did Erika Janunger choreograph, direct, shoot, and art direct the film, she also wrote the music.

Enjoy.

[embedvideo id="uLfFV-FM0vs" website="youtube"]

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