

TWO COATS OF PAINT

Award-winning NYC blogazine, primarily about painting



GROUP SHOWS

CounterPointe: Artists and choreographers collaborate

May 2, 2019 5:50 pm



Michelle Thompson Ulerich and Justine Hill collaboration. All photos by Arnaud Falchier (www.ttltrack.com)

Contributed by Sharon Butler / For the past seven years, **Norte Maar**, an enterprising and energizing interdisciplinary arts group based in the Cypress Hills neighborhood of Brooklyn and led by Jason Andrew and Julia Gleich, has organized CounterPointe, a series of short dance performances that pair female choreographers with female visual artists. The artists might make costumes, sets, objects, or projections for a given performance. And sometimes the activity of collaborating with an artist from a different medium suggests new ways of working that they carry back to their regular studio activities. This year, artists **Amy Lincoln**, **Roxanne Jackson**, **Jamie Powell**, **Justine Hill**, **Meg Lipke**, and **Joy Curtis** were selected to participate. Created over the course of only two months, each program reflected an intense intellectual and creative exchange and impressive synergy, deftly combining the layered contemplations of visual art with dance's unmediated verve and ephemerality.



Courtney Cochran an with Jamie Powell collaboration.

Amy Lincoln, known for her surrealist and often slyly haunting depictions of plant life, both indoor and out, created a large-scale animation for “Sun Don’t Shine,” which was projected at the back of the stage. Seeing Lincoln’s small imagery on such a large scale was thrilling. The piece featured an outdoor scene and an animated loop of changing weather, from a bright sunny day, to convergent clouds, rain, and sunshine again. The dancer, wearing a bright orange costume, presented **Melanie Ramos**’s lively solo dance as if she were the energy force that animates the natural world.

In “Rising,” Courtney Cochran composed a playful piece for four dancers who appeared in thin earthy-brown shifts and moved around the stage like woodland creatures. **Jamie Powell** contributed canvases loosely tied and draped around gridded metal frames. The dance and visual art elements seemed to establish a telling tension between a distressed artificial world and a more vibrant and hopeful natural one.



Janice Rosario and Joy Curtis collaboration.

For **Janice Rosario**'s brooding, sexy duet, "The Simple Things," sculptor **Joy Curtis** created an evocative piece that referenced skeletons, directly and as a shadow. Performed on a dark stage, sparsely lit by spots, the dance, combined with Curtis's work, captured a sense of yearning for love and other things lost, personally and perhaps culturally. The ribcage-like forms made from brightly colored torn t-shirt scraps and attached to the dancer's dark clothes, seemed to suggest the strained and tattered armature that holds each of us together.

Justine Hill and **Michelle Thompson Ulerich**'s "Shapeshifters" also featured a duet, but rather than yearning, this one captured a kind of striving. The dancers, wearing white outfits that might have come from The Gap, performed amid freestanding, shaped paintings reminiscent of classical Greek sculpture. Each was painted with short vertical marks in saturated colors. As the performance began, the dancers were hiding behind the paintings, but, as the dance unfolded, they began to transfer bits of the color from the paintings to their costumes, as if they were blank canvases in the process of being painted. The process also might have intimated the blossoming and consolidation that romance can precipitate.



Mari Meade and Roxanne Jackson collaboration.

In **Mari Meade**'s jaunty and knowing "tryptic" collaboration with sculptor **Roxanne Jackson**, three dancers with cheetah print shirts and glamorous *Valley of the Dolls* wigs perform on the stage with three ceramic busts that were placed above eye-level on geometric pedestals and adorned with flowing wigs like the ones the dancers wear. The authentic versus the synthetic, Dorian Gray's portrait, and reality TV all came to mind during this rich, wry performance.



Julia K. Gleich with Meg Lipke collaboration.

The last dance, a witty, playful, and narratively complex collaboration between CounterPointe co-organizer **Julia K. Gleich** and **Meg Lipke**, was inspired by **Mira Schor**'s writing on her blog ***A Year of Positive Thinking***. The dancers use Lipke's painted textile sculptures as set objects, costumes, and props to explore the different phases of an artist's life, from, in Schor's words, naked to not dead enough. The dancers manipulate and utilize Lipke's objects expansively, yet the program retains an overarching structural coherence, implying that good artists, though they do not know precisely where they are going, invariably have sound internal guidance. Indeed, all twelve of the artists and choreographers demonstrated this precept.

Norte Maar has not only seized upon the clever and promising experiment of teaming women artists and choreographers and tasking them to generate performances; it has also nurtured the project to initial success and then summoned the energy and resources to continue the journey. An annual event for seven years, CounterPointe should live in perpetuity. Don't miss it next year.

CounterPointe 7 was organized by Jason Andrew and Julia Gleich and performed at The Actors Fund Arts Center, 160 Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn, New York, on April 26, 27, and 28.

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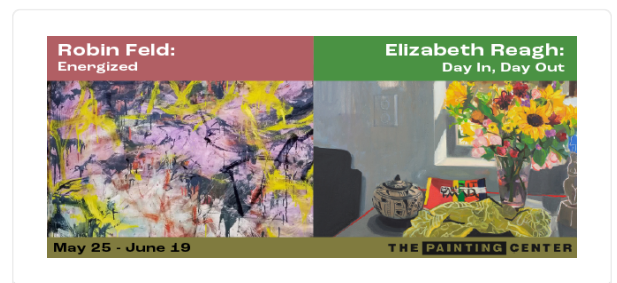
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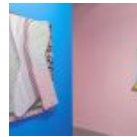
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