

The DANCE insider

Flash Review 3, 10-10: Unclear Except in the Concept Salisbury's Unrealized 'War'

By Chris Dohse
Copyright 2001 Chris Dohse

NEW YORK — I came to Dana Salisbury's "Stone's War (Against Loneliness and Human Separations from the Natural World)" on Friday night with high expectations. A "site-specific multidisciplinary production" housed in the Brooklyn complex of the Old American Can Factory and presented in association with Dancing in the Streets and XO: Projects Inc., for this project Salisbury had gathered a collection of veteran choreographers and performers whose work I'd previously admired. A previous production co-directed by Salisbury and awarded a Bessie was among my favorite performance experiences of the past few years. Perhaps too much was therefore anticipated. Or perhaps handicapped by its overtly profound motifs, "Stone's War," while containing moments of delight, wonder and horror, eluded success.

Among the delights: After grouping in a lounge behind the ticket table, the audience tramped through a series of garage-like spaces up several stairs to an expanse of rooftop. Interiors and exteriors promised a singular, brooding entertainment, with lunging shadows, echoing sounds, unexpected confinements and vistas. Greeting us on the roof was Ariane Anthony in a rag-bag costume, hatted. Anthony spoke a sort of creation myth with themes of separation and loneliness, adopting the postures of her various characters, accompanied by a serendipitous wind and gibbous moon. Storytelling is well suited to Anthony's naturally whimsical quality. We all donned conehead hats and became a swamp of primordial shrubbery for her.

One of the wonders: Christopher Caines's muscular choreographic phrases set to the ethereal sounds of the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble under the cramped ceiling of a loft's corner room. A text taken by Caines from Salisbury's source material, Gerald Vizenor's novel *Dead Voices*, was projected on the ceiling's beams. The singers dialed cell phones. Dancer Christopher Woodrell had painted his toenails. As if ripped from all our thoughts, "War or Peace?" in bold face, hovering above us, swam out of focus, for there was so much delirious dancing to be watched.

Two horrors: An orb-shaped basket (created by Kyle McCarthy, Paul Rice, Kerry Coutu and Markus Maurette) opening its middle to display a cat's asshole. Deke Weaver's distorted visage projected on a garage door. Later, Weaver's sneering, oily charm as the "Exterminator."

DD Dorvillier's self-involved solo rambling made a limp finale. The parking lot itself cast a more haunting spell. Severally, the evening's fragments formed no meaningful whole. Neither Salisbury's intention nor Vizenor's narrative became clear until a post-show subway reading of the program. Then there was a moment of "Aha!" But in this solitary imagination, the "new communities" described in Salisbury's artistic statement remained conceptual only.