

**PERFORMANCE**

**Motions:  
Eccentric and  
Burning**

**VOICE**  
the village

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**ECCENTRIC MOTIONS.** By Pooh Kaye. The Kitchen, 484 Broome Street, 925-3615 (February 17-20).  
**HE SAW HER BURNING.** By Joan Jonas. Whitney Museum, Madison Avenue and 75th Street, 570-3617 (February 22-March 13).

Pooh Kaye and Joan Jonas share certain strategies as performance makers. Both use a variety of means: task activities, objects, dancing, film. Both are interested in magic and in mythic structures, but locate these themes in specifically urban, modern cultures. Yet the meanings of their two recent performances could not be more distinct. Kaye's work is all about sensation; Jonas's is about perception.

Kaye's concert comprised her solo, *Homelife of a Wildgirl*, a new group piece, *Eccentric Motions*, and a film-in-progress (with Elizabeth Ross), *Sticks on the Move*. The "wildgirl" is Kaye's stylistic hallmark—a combination infant, kitten, and rodent, who wriggles, clambers up a small brick structure, spits, spouts water, builds pathways, stuffs bricks into a pouchlike T-shirt, and watches films of herself burrowing into a mattress at double speed. Like a child, she is curious about the textures, smells, and movements of things around her; like an animal, she savors her sensations untrammelled by social rules. Hers is a preverbal, paradisaic universe in which communication takes the form of squeals and grunts (in the film, by Jana Haimsohn). *Eccentric Motions* spreads these images among a group: Yvonne Meier, Brian Moran, Nelson Zayas, Susan Brown, M. J. Becker, and Kaye herself. Where in the solo one sensed a narrative building from the actions of approaching the brick structure, playing in it, pulling it apart, and leaving it, in the group piece the action is less logical and more diffuse. The performers (one could think of them as players) manipulate wooden posts in a variety of ways. Yet their range of actions transcends, for instance, the factual manipulations of the analytic postmodern dancers and the related down-to-earth, anti-illusionist objects of the Minimalist sculptors. The posts are not simply structural devices. As the piece opens, two men, in the dark, hold two posts that are smoldering with burning embers. That light, in the darkness, creates a sense of mystery and then danger. Later, the entire group gnaws the huge sticks and spits out splinters. The motions are eccentric, but they are the motions of a community, albeit our own, not the motions of aberrant individuals.

*Sticks on the Move* is simply a delight. It is a trick film in which the outdoor light changes rapidly from day to night, people chase sticks and sticks chase people, and finally the humans and the objects team up for uncanny feats of locomotion. As in Kaye's short, pixilated wildgirl films, speed creates humor, but here that effect is amplified by a sustained sense of the mystery of things themselves.

The opening film in *Homelife of a Wildgirl*, showing a brook in a forest where Kaye bounces erratically, sets the scene for the live action, and the second film, in which Kaye scurries around a New York loft, transfers the action from a natural setting to a cultural one. Thus Kaye creates a salutary overlay of the holistic environment that serves as compensation for the spectators. Her red grass skirt may hang on the Kitchen's white column, but through the performance we can see that column as a tree. Joan Jonas's use of recorded images, on film, and closed-circuit video, have the opposite effect; rather than creating an imaginary environment, they build a mental space, and they subvert images by artificially constructing and deconstructing them. Jonas, too, shows us a film of a forest, this time with a lake. But as the film changes from black and white to color, what we are privileged to sense is *that we see*.

By Sally Banes