

DANCE IN REVIEW



Tom Brazil

Koosil-ja Hwang, bottom, and Mary Spring in "Memoryscan."

The Topic Is Rich, The Vignettes Heartless

Dance Kumikokimoto
The Kitchen

Koosil-ja Hwang, the modern-dance choreographer and performer known formerly as Kumiko Kimoto, has been exploring her ethnic roots for several years. She has described her new "Memoryscan," performed by Dance Kumikokimoto on Wednesday night at the Kitchen, as an expanded exploration that draws on her dancers' memories to examine the relationship between ethnicity and identity.

As the audience filed in, Ms. Hwang traced and retraced a circle at the end of a rope manipulated by a Caucasian man, lighting up and smoking a cigarette as she trudged. The image is potent. And similarly strong imagery cropped up throughout the 90-minute piece. But "Memoryscan" was ultimately more a series of stylishly produced, rather heartless vignettes than a sustained look at this rich topic.

Ms. Hwang and her performers (Kathryn Sanders, Michael Portnoy, Margaret Hallisey and Mary Spring) are strong, vividly individualistic presences who move, speak and sing compellingly. They make good company in a piece otherwise notable for its impressively sophisticated use of live and pre-recorded video and its smooth mingling of real-time and anecdotal events.

Standout vignettes include Mr. Portnoy's sly embodiment of the comedian Jerry Lewis, the "dance" of a videotaped forest as seen by a live moving performer, and a bizarre golf lesson hauntingly interrupted by the cheeping muted song of a lost young girl who has wandered into the scene. But these and other narrative and visual images seem adrift in time and space.

Ms. Hwang created the music collage. The video was by Benton Bainbridge (live) and Caspar Stracke (pre-recorded) and the lighting by Carol Mullins. Mr. Portnoy created the witty, surrealistic texts for his solos. JENNIFER DUNNING