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In Every Twitch, a Transformation of the Ordinary

Close to the Kitchen on Thursday night, two men in odd, frozen positions on the sidewalk caught the eye. One crouched, body bent forward; the other splayed his arms stiffly to the sides.

DANCE REVIEW

ROSLYN SULCAS

Drugs, not art, were clearly the context here, but it was an odd physical premonition of Sam Kim's "dumb dumb bunny," in which 12 dancers stagger and crumple through just those arrested mid-positions, lost in a universe of their own while disco and house music thump around them.

Not that Ms. Kim's work is about drugs, unless they're the everyday drugs of conformity and complacency. But the piece offers a notable transformation of physical detail — the hallucinogen-fueled abandonment of ordinary stance and demeanor, the cool chic and terminal self-consciousness of fashionable behavior — into a persuasive choreographic metaphor for the loss of self.

As the dancers take up position at the beginning, some on the 21-foot-high, three-tiered scaffolding (by Mimi Lien) to one side of the Kitchen's black-box space, you feel as if they might be about to break into an ironic Riverdance routine, a suspicion amplified by the catchy disco beat that starts up and the bank of lights arranged in an L shape around the stage. But when they begin to gyrate wildly, staggering around the stage, tossing their hair and



BRIANA BLASKO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Dancers gyrate and freeze to a disco beat in Sam Kim's "dumb dumb bunny" at the Kitchen.

dumb dumb bunny

The Kitchen

freezing in stylized, camera-ready positions, their movement is a disconcertingly peculiar deconstruction of the ordinary.

To a series of well-chosen (and very loud) tracks that fade in and out, the dancers twitch, shudder, quiver and jerk; they move with bent knees and painful awkwardness, lurching imbalance, stuttering, convulsive spasms. At the

heart of the work is a long, affecting duet for Miriam Wolf and Michael Helland in which their fierce entangled encounters feel like a thwarted, frantic search for emotional connection.

This pair, together with Liz Santoro and an often-solo Ms. Kim, dominate most of the 65-minute piece, which sometimes loses momentum through uneven pacing. But even the dancers with less to do than the central quartet are remarkable, turning the spectacle of these soulless,

zombielike creatures into a sight both gruesome and compelling.

For all its size, the scaffolding remains a rather underwhelming feature, used to best effect in a repeated sequence that has three unhinged figures tumbling scarily and in painful increments down from one level to another, finally collapsing inertly below. But there's no lack of certainty about the rest; Ms. Kim has shown us the bunnies, vulnerable to the ravages of the world, and it's a chilling sight.