

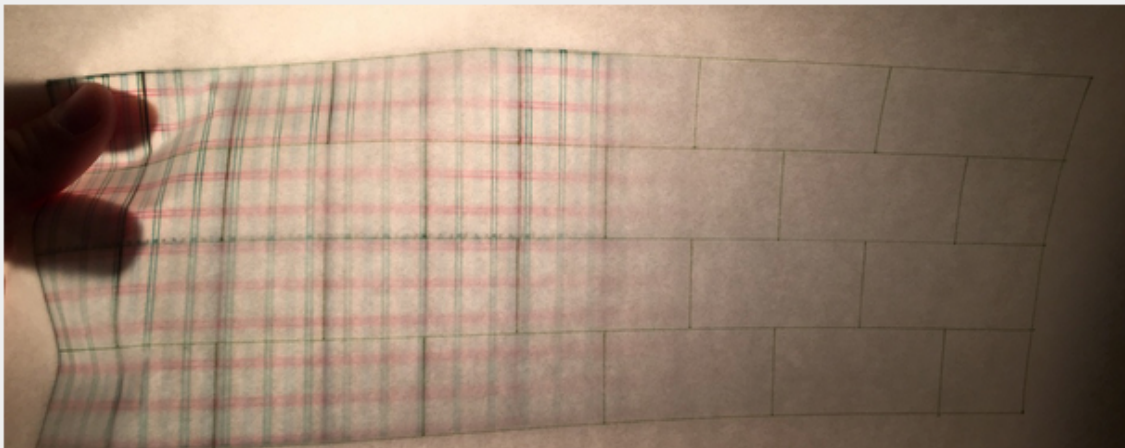
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MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE

May 21, 2015

YVE LARIS COHEN'S "FINE" AT THE KITCHEN

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thekitchen.org/event/yve-laris-cohen-fine

As soon as I was ushered in the doors of [The Kitchen](#) for the opening night of [Yve Laris Cohen's *Fine*](#) (all at once like cattle—no last-minute trickling in here) I decided it was a who's who of the downtown performance scene. Crowded together behind a curtain, greetings were exchanged, heads nodded in complicity as we stood there, waiting for whatever was about to happen. When Yve had a very public back-and-forth with Sarah Michelson about whether or not she needed a chair (she didn't), it felt like a family squabble. And when Yve closed the doors behind us, trapping us in what now appeared as a long, dark corridor, I felt solace knowing friends and colleagues were standing nearby in this unknown, potentially frightening space.

I needn't have worried. The evening unfolded with equal parts formal drama and human ordinariness, the type of high-impact banality I've come to expect from Yve's ballet-influenced ruminations on architecture. His recent installation of New York City Ballet's touring floor at Danspace Project was a most cogent thesis on the confluence of uptown resources and downtown resourcefulness. He is virtuosic in his ability to say a lot with the most common of interactions, with the simplest of actions.

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Fine was no different. Yve, wearing a headset and carrying a clipboard, was the director of a series of coordinated interviews and events. These discussions were all based on Yve's original project idea, which we never actually got to see in the space. Hearing from various technical advisors Ed, Zach, Karen, and Scott, and others, we learned that Yve's project "El Fine" (pronounced fee-nay, as Ed kindly explained) was to have been a sprung raked dance floor turned on its side to function as a wall. The plan had been to push this ominous wall toward the audience in the space at a very slow speed, eventually pushing us out of the doors through which we had entered. Due to various technical difficulties and resource deficiencies, as explained by Yve's likeable team, the project was not completed. Instead, we were seeing the residue. The human beings who would have made this project happen were now participants in its oral archive.

That these behind-the-scenes magicians were put front and center in Yve's work was startling, even though it shouldn't have been. I had never before heard an engineer speak onstage in a performance, despite being crucial to the experience of more theater than I'm often aware. These were real people with outside perspectives using their vast scientific knowledge to make things happen for performance artists. Their personalities shone through as they responded to Yve's formulaic questions: when asked how much he was earning, architectural consultant Zach (Cohen) replied cheekily, "Not enough." When Scott (Lydiard), a former Aerospace engineer, spoke lovingly of Yve and his work, he admitted that he didn't always understand it but was always impressed by Yve's structural prowess.

These conversations may have veered into the sentimental if not for the formal constraints imposed by Yve. For nearly the entire piece, Tom (von Foerster) raised and lowered the middle curtain in the space, revealing more of The Kitchen's depth. So machine-like was he in turning the handle to the curtain rigging, I wasn't aware it was man-operated until halfway through the performance. This slow unveiling of the physical space mirrored the divulging of information—symmetry in line with the imagined structural balancing act that would have been *El Fine*.

Dance emerged visibly only at the end: with small whispers and trusting glances, Yve mounted Tom's shoulder, draping his body in a sculptural vignette. Right, left, right, left;

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they repeated the tension-filled gesture for sustained periods. Yve lay there, relying on this older man to be his rock, his support, his foundation—a human architecture, at last.