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SUSAN RETHORST DANCE COMPANY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Since 1979, choreographer Susan Rethorst's work has been presented regularly in New York City seasons, where it is highly regarded by critics and audiences. Her approach has created a standard for originality and authenticity in the dance world. Celebrated contemporary choreographer Trisha Brown has commented: "I have been watching Susan Rethorst's work for years with admiration and envy." Her dances have been seen by diverse audiences around the United States and in Europe. In recognition of her artistic contribution, Ms. Rethorst was one of the first recipients of a "Bessie" New York Dance and Performance Award for Outstanding Creative Achievement.

Rethorst considers herself a researcher whose ongoing investigations lay bare the connection of the psyche to the physique. Her previous choreography reveals a course of development defined by her own uncompromising standard of vision. Tobi Tobias in the *Village Voice* commented about last season's *Sometimes to Grace*: "Quietly dogged, Susan Rethorst is an original. She has pursued her rigorously pure concept of dance for 15 years, refining it and making it more subtle and multilayered, all the while refusing to conform to the dictates of any of the several schools of popular taste. Her latest work...shows her idiosyncratic gift in full bloom."

~~The Susan Rethorst Dance Company~~ will present the premiere of a new work at The Kitchen in New York City in May 1993. The piece will deconstruct the cadence of everyday life by reassembling the gestures of familiar activities. She is currently exploring movement specificity and detail as an indication of personality, attitude and thought. "Movement detail, isolated and presented unadorned, appears both intimate and exaggerated in essence. It can appear as simplicity itself, and at the same time as an interpretation of itself -- ironic, out of scale, self-conscious, et cetera. I am delving into the area where movement, personality and thought converge and blur."

This season's project will be a collaboration with lighting designer Michael Giannitti; together they will create a partnership of movement and light. As light itself can take an active voice in defining space and mood, movement can reveal nuances that are luminous in quality. Rethorst and Giannitti will use these possibilities to construct a dialogue between each medium.

While thoroughly contemporary, her past pieces have evoked Impressionist painters in the natural, realistic way she uses dancing bodies. They are unidealized and frank, describing the eloquence of ordinary experience. This naturalism carries with it a deeply feminist significance which she will continue to articulate. As Rethorst often focuses her dances on women, the expression of their bodies on their own terms defies media images of unattainable perfection. Authentic female power and grace become important elements of the content. Craig Bromberg in the *East Village Eye* described her approach as "the representation of an intuitively nonverbal sense of language, in direct opposition to the spoken discourse of patriarchy."

Rethorst's work has also been compared with that of writers such as Virginia Woolf and Henry James. This stems in part from the intimacy and detail of her movement language which takes on a subtle, shaded texture almost conversational in its rising and falling dynamic. In the *New York Times* Jennifer Dunning noted "She has a way of endowing the simplest of dances -- dances that can

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easily be seen just as satisfying pure movement -- with vivid muted undertones, like a partly heard conversation among highly literate friends. It is no accident that Ms. Rethorst's dances have been compared to fine fiction..."

The choreographer is currently developing the source movement material for this season's project, which includes new elements featuring vertical movement and droning rhythmic directional gestures. Rehearsals will commence in December at the Rethorst Company Studio.

Rethorst intends to create a nonhierarchical dance work where the multiple meanings of movement and light are each allowed to have their own voice, and to converse among themselves. "I intuitively have respect for my work in that I let it go its own way. I choose the movement gesture, relationship, placement, and let it speak for itself, confident that it will." Her audiences are implicitly empowered by experiencing the dances undictated to; their individual associations and interpretations are vital to the artistic process.

SUSAN RETHORST BIOGRAPHY

Susan Rethorst began Modern Dance studies at an early age with Erika Thimey, a contemporary of Mary Wigman. She continued dancing at Bennington College where she met Judith Dunn, a participant of the Judson Church performances. Tutorials with Dunn laid the groundwork for Rethorst's artistic sensibility.

Since 1977 Ms. Rethorst has been creating dances from her home base in New York City. Her work has been presented in New York by the Museum of Modern Art and other prominent venues including Dance Theater Workshop, The Kitchen, Performance Space 122, and throughout the U.S. at various dance theaters and universities. Internationally her work has been produced by The Holland Festival, Spazio Zero Rome, The Kunsthalle Basel, Salle Simon, Patino Geneva, The Aix-en-Provence Festival, and the Theatre School of Amsterdam. Ms. Rethorst has received commissions from the Jerome Foundation (through Dance Theater Workshop), Creative Time Inc., the Downtown Whitney Museum, the Maine Festival of the Arts, Jacob's Pillow, the Ram Island Dance Company, and various individual dancers.

She was among the first to receive a New York Dance and Performance Award ("Bessie") for outstanding achievement. In recognition of her choreographic accomplishments she has been the recipient of several grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Creative Artists' Public Service Program, the Ernie Pagnano Memorial Fund Award, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the New York Foundation for the Arts.

She has been artist-in-residence at the Djerassi Foundation, New York University, Rhode Island College, and the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam.
