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DIRECTIONS

The View From Down Under

A dance audience watches from below (and tries not to stare).

The air mattresses onstage are the first sign that John Jasperse's "Prone" is not your typical dance performance. Instead of being seated, audience members will be invited to lie down on them. (Eight chairs are reserved for the pregnant or infirm.) "Keep your arms and legs on the mattress," he warned at a recent rehearsal. "Don't sit up, probably. But you can move your head however you want."

One trouble with dance is that it can be more fun to do than to watch, and with "Prone," which runs through Dec. 17 at the Kitchen in Chelsea, Mr. Jasperse has managed to bring the audience inside dance in a way that few other choreographers have ever done.

Seating — or its equivalent — is limited to 56 people a show. First, half the audience lies down and half sits in chairs lining the stage; then the groups switch.

This arrangement is deliberately disorienting. Just who is watching whom? The view from below offers a surprising perspective on the human body: crotches, underbellies, foreshortened limbs.

The dancers — Luciana Achugar, Levi Gonzalez and Eleanor Hulihan — handle the proximity in a way that feels more generous than confrontational, but inches are inches, and the experience re-



John Jasperse

mains disconcertingly intimate. That, of course, is part of the point.

"I'm really trying to shake up the way people look at things," Mr. Jasperse said. "I would like to set up a situation in which people could entertain the idea of 'Where is my barrier and why? Do I really want their eye two inches away from mine? And if I don't, why? What is that taking away from me?'"

There is also the distant but real possibility of getting knocked in the head. "We've done an enormous amount of work to minimize the risk, but it's still there," Mr. Jasperse said. "Anybody could sue me, but there is nothing for them to get." **ERIKA KINETZ**