
DANCE

Choreography Travels in Diverse Landscapes

THE FEISTINESS OF FORM

BY DEBORAH JOWITT

» John Jasperse attacks hot subjects with the formal precision of a classical artist. His pieces always seem to be about what people do to one another. In them, tenderness and violence are depicted as matter-of-factly as fixing breakfast.

In his justly acclaimed 1995 *Excessories*, five men and three women unsheath breasts and genitals and wield them in an elegant contrapuntal dance. His works evoke strong feelings partly through subtleties of design and rhythm.

Jasperse's new *Fort Blossom*—like its name, both severe and tender—juxtaposes genders on a half black, half cream floor. Stan Pressner creates bleak sun with golden lights. Michael Floyd's sound mix is sometimes almost subliminal. Parker Lutz and Juliette Mapp wear tight red dresses and carry—or wear like backpacks—big inflatable cushions in translucent pink. As they dance in unison to create the clear, jutting shapes Jasperse favors, awkwardness becomes refined (they make me think of camels placing one leg, then another, turning their heads, bending their necks). During the female duet, Jasperse, naked, travels from white floor to black like an inchworm. When he reaches Miguel Gutierrez, also naked and lying facedown on a transparent pillow, Gutierrez and the pillow roll to lie on top of him. As the men continue pumping their hips (like sex, yet not quite), the pillow deflates until they are touching. Then the women rest, and the men dance close to the floor. As in many of Jasperse's duets, every move engenders a responding one. In this slow, careful dialogue, each performer keeps placing his buttocks against his partner—on his cheek, his head, the sole of his foot. Butts subtly nuzzle each other. Gutierrez "sits" on Jasperse's braced arm and slowly, wriggling slightly, slides down it. The hanging balls and cock, the crack between the cheeks become both eroticized and aestheti-

cized—useful and lovely parts of the equipment

Later, the men and women dance together. In a few wonderful minutes, the women spin holding out their pillows, inadvertently (or not) smacking the men with them. The contrasts in *Fort Blossom* are dazzling: black and white color and neutral tones, men and women nakedness and body coverings, intimacy in bloom and tough, blocky structures. *Fort Blossom* is more austere than *Excessories*, but no less brave, no less exquisite.