

June 3, 2000, Saturday
Arts & Ideas/Cultural Desk



DANCE REVIEW; Of Men Who Go Naked With Women Who Aren't

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

A choreographer who combines formal purity and pungent social comment is rare amid the confessional outpourings on the postmodern dance scene. **John Jasperse**, one of the best of the truly experimental artists, allows for no excess. New ways of moving are at the heart of his work and his dramatic images, especially in sly uses of nudity, and they can be startling. Yet there is no uncontrolled spillover.

Like the superpolished furniture of a master artisan, Mr. **Jasperse's** works are made of discrete parts fitted together meticulously with craft and intelligence. A possible attempt to break from this restraint is seen in "Fort Blossom," the premiere that the **John Jasperse** Company is presenting through today at the Kitchen, at 512 West 19th Street in Chelsea.

"Excessories," the 1997 piece that put Mr. **Jasperse** on the international map, is the stronger work. One can be fascinated just by the way the dancers (Miguel Gutierrez, Larry Keigwin, Parker Lutz, Juliette Mapp and Mr. **Jasperse**) move: fluidity is not antithetical to isolated movements. Dolls with collapsible components come to mind, although the separate vignettes speak of many things. These include the relationship between torturer and victim, the individual within the group and the way identity changes as the self and others perceive it. Thus a provocative image of fully clothed men pulling their penises and women jiggling their breasts to the beat of James Lo's score suddenly looks playful, even innocent.

The chaste and the clinical go together in "Fort Blossom," which is less rigid in its formal construction. Like Anna Teresa De Keersmaeker, the Belgian experimentalist with whom he has danced, Mr. **Jasperse** incorporates emotional images into overt structures.

begins the piece prone and nude on a white floor cloth, then propels himself like a caterpillar onto the bare half of the floor. Meanwhile Mr. Gutierrez, also nude, has entered to lie down on a plastic hassock, and Ms. Mapp and Ms. Lutz, in red dresses, arch back on similar plastic cushions. Eventually the women, with the pillows attached to their backs, resemble make-believe butterflies.

The contrast between the clothed women and nude men is furthered by the delineated movement of the women and the more spontaneous look of the men's wrestling style. In their implied coupling, the men sandwich a plastic pillow between their bodies as they lie on top of each other. The women's courtship is more subtle: they lie face down and one woman's foot imperceptibly crosses over the other's calf.

The merging of the two pairs in a martial arts finale results in an abrupt ending. "Fort Blossom" suggests an uninhibited search for a new direction, not yet defined.