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Dance

## Natural Acts in Artificial Water: A Real Beauty

By Abby Koenig Mon., May 21 2012 at 11:00 AM

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Choreographers find inspiration in a number of places, people, times and emotions. For renowned choreographer Stephan Koplowitz, inspiration comes from the architecture of a specific region, city or state. Koplowitz and his initiative TaskForce choose a region based on its architecture, history, culture and ecology and create a collaborative dance performance piece. In his latest work, *Natural Acts in Artificial Water*, Koplowitz found inspiration in the metropolis of Houston, and what transpired was a visually impressive piece of modern dance.

*Natural Acts in Artificial Water* is part of an international project that, among other things, travels to various locations and creates site-specific performances utilizing the structural design of the areas. The performance, which occurred this past weekend, was a part of InsightOut, a weekend-long arts festival presented by Aurora Picture Show, DiverseWorks and The University of Houston Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts.

The performance took place at the Gerald D. Hines Waterfall Park in uptown, not your average dance space. The piece was broken into six sections and moved around the entirety of the park. The audience was invited to follow the dancers, who were members of the Core Company Performers, as they transitioned from one section of the park to the next. I am not a fan of art that comes with instructions as I usually find them to be unnecessary, but given the nature of the performance, it was acceptable.

The performance began at the far end of the park where Williams Tower prominently stands. The dancers used the building as a prop, erecting their bodies into rigid angles and

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stanzas. The dancers used the building as a prop, creating their bodies into right angles and straight lines. The dancers became a part of the building and encompassed all its concrete limitations.



The dancers then transitioned to the large field, where they become jovial and childlike, rolling down the small hill like five-year-olds. Their movements were much more fluid and, dare I say, "fancy-free." The next phrase of the piece took the dancers to the wooded area on the left side of the park. Each dancer took to a tree, wrapping him or herself around it and melding into the trunk. They hid from the audience and re-emerged. Given the gorgeous scenery and the shaded lighting, this stanza was one of my favorites.

The performance made its way over to the fountain for the big payoff. Each dancer took a space in the fountain and made it his or her own. Soaking wet, they pushed and pulled at the fountain's walls. Several of the dancers kept their eyes shut and moved in slow motion through the running water. Eventually, the audience was ushered around the corner to the center of the fountain, where several of the dancers were already in place. The water poured down, and the ground felt like it was shifting as the dancers struck a pose.

And then the fountain turned off and the crowd went wild! The effect of the fountain turning on and off was awe-inspiring; it became another dancer in the company. It was a wonderful conclusion to the piece.

*Natural Acts in Artificial Water* was a visual journey that found natural beauty in an unnatural setting. Houston was fortunate to have been one of the chosen ones.

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Akindred

This sounds so deeply beautiful and the pushing and pulling of the water wall has me dreaming awake. I am so the piece of stephen's dance that now enters my imagination. Brava!

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