



CHRISTINA HOUSE For The Times

SAMUEL WENTZ of the Trisha Brown Dance Company helps perform "Roof Piece" at the Getty Center.

DANCE REVIEW

They've taken their art public

Site-specific performances engage viewers in special ways at Getty Center and on the Red Line.

BY LAURA BLEIBERG

On an astonishingly busy weekend of dance, Angelenos had the good fortune Saturday to experience two exceptional site-specific performances: the local debut of Trisha Brown's historic "Roof Piece" at the Getty Center and the premiere of Stephan Koplovitz's "Red Line Time," a marathon circuitous journey on the downtown-to-North Hollywood Metro line.

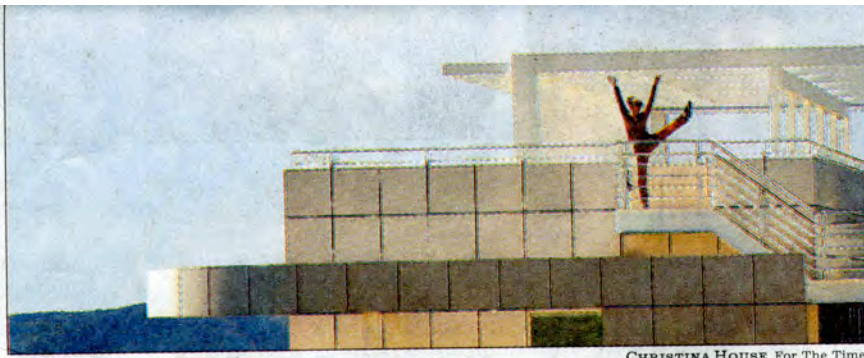
Though sorely overused, the term "experience" is appropriate and deliberate for these pieces. Audiences cer-

tainly may choose to watch a site-specific dance with the same mind-set they would if sitting in a comfortable auditorium (minus the cushy chair). But if they do, they risk missing the unique perspective of dance created for a public place.

Like the shared rituals of millenniums past, site-specific dance begs for communal participation. Viewers can walk around and, if so moved, even participate. Plus, uncontrollable life will inevitably insert itself, and audiences best be as nimble as the dancers.

Brown, an experimental pioneer, crafts dances culled from ordinary movements, and in her early years as a choreographer she put those dances in extraordinary places. "Roof Piece" premiered in 1971, with 12 dancers poised atop different buildings in Manhattan's

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THE HISTORIC "Roof Piece" unfolds with the help of Jamie Scott.

Dance that offers a unique perspective

[Dance, from D1] SoHo neighborhood, each one (except the leader) following the lead of a single colleague.

For "Roof Piece" at the Getty (part of a retrospective of Brown's works presented by the Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA), 10 dancers were placed about the mammoth complex, from a terrace overlooking the Cactus Garden at the southern end to a balcony landing on the Harold M. Williams Auditorium at the northern-most point. Dancers in stoplight red shirts and pants (and wearing sunglasses) graced museum landings, the west pavilion roof, the restaurant building stairs, and so on.

Three dancers, at most, were visible at one time, forcing visitors to grab the hand-out map and scamper about to find all of the performers before the 40-minute piece concluded.

A funny thing happened: People started dancing, mimicking the artists. Brown's basic, repetitive gestures were slow enough to follow. A raised fist. A kicked leg, a twisted waist. Arms flapping, like the crow that sailed below dancer Tamara Riewe. Halfway through, they switched direction and the end dancer became the leader, a subtle but remarkable transition.

These serene solos executed nearly in place, almost in unison, popped against the stark, white buildings and blue sky. The dance became the frame for the architecture, rather than the other way around.

Unruliness intervened as security guards attempted to corral visitors so each dancer was clearly visible.



SCOTT GROLLER

"RED LINE TIME" plays with reference points of public space and riding the subway.

Sounds of walkie-talkies and other ambient noises were the music for "Roof Piece."

In a similar fashion, Kopolowitz's "Red Line Time" played with reference points of public space and of riding the subway — a daily activity for some, a totally foreign means of transportation to others. His five minutes of core choreography for eight dancers changed subtly at each of the 14 stations. The playful leaps, weaving patterns and changing geometric shapes became familiar as this nearly four-hour adventure progressed. (The event could be joined or abandoned at any point.)

At one stop, the "stage" was an outdoor patio (where a security guard with a hair-trigger temper caused a ruckus); at another point, Kopolowitz invited viewers to ride escalators and vary the visual perspective. Watching the minutely calibrated "Red Line Time" meant hurrying up and down stair-

cases but also never seeming to wait for a train.

"Red Line Time" was produced by the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles to coincide with an international conference and coordinated with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Though overly long, it rewarded those who stayed until the end. The final segment was in Grand Park, with majestically illuminated City Hall as a backdrop.

As exhausted participants melted onto steps to sit, the dancers seemed refreshed, exploding through moves with abundant fullness. Kudos especially to Leslie Curtis, Alexandria Yalj and Sadie Yarrington for their endurance and exuberance and to understudy Jacob Campbell for stepping in midjourney for an injured colleague.

Real life insistent, yet again.

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