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Performing Arts: Dance

LISA PARRA/DANIEL PINHEIRO-NEW DANCE ALLIANCE

June 22, 2021

American Choreographer Lisa Parra and Portuguese digital media artist Daniel Pinheiro have been making remote performance together from across the globe long before COVID-19 rendered such a tactic the only option for performers worldwide. Together as LAND Project, they have, since 2013, explored the video conference room as an alternative performative plane, on which the two achieve an augmented sort of connection by actively using video and internet as tools (in a concept termed "Telematic Art"), processed through a real-time composition practice (after Joao Fiadeiro), to cohabit a stream of consciousness.

Being showcased by New Dance Alliance's Performance Mix 35 as New York returns to live performance with a reticent vengeance, what could be felt as mere quarantine art manages to conjure a space-aged hall of mirrors. In this practice, only the setup is premeditated. Placing cameras, computers, microphones, projectors, and screens in a hyper-intentional way establishes an arena for maximal connection to transpire, and any material to emerge. In the case of "_____nosespaçosescrevemosonossocorpo", Parra and Pinheiro have made novel use of Movement Research's PS122 home, installing all of the performance and most of the technology inside the Courtyard Studio, while situating audiences outside in the eponymous Courtyard.

The studio is wide and relatively shallow, visible from the outside between two stretches of windows. Stage right, a large projection of the conference call shines on the back wall, behind a projector near its connected computer, pointed stage left. Center stage, hidden behind wall, a second computer provides another perspective, which may or may not be the perspective projected outside onto the very wall concealing the computer.

Stage left, a third computer, an independent webcam, an HD camera, a speaker, and a microphone complete the set. Stage left is primarily Pinheiro's, stage right, Parra's; however, their placements, like the equipment, is situated to allow the hybrid digital/live material collectively generated to ricochet and refract through physical space.

Pinheiro is primarily displayed on the large stage right projection, though his voice is only audible from the large speaker on Parra's side. To see him you must venture house left, but to hear him, you must sacrifice seeing him. In doing so, you get full physical view of Parra, who meanwhile speaks into microphones not so that we may hear, but to get through to Pinheiro.

Pinheiro's large projection will toggle, through the intervention of Movement Research stagehands, between full view of Pinheiro and a gallery view of the conference call, comprised of all the cameras being used to bring these two individuals together from as many perspectives as possible. Outside, the projection remains in gallery view, from a different input, though the boxes of video are subject to sudden shifts of position. On both projections, one video box is steadfastly dedicated to double exposing Parra and Pinheiro's video in visual harmony.

In terms of content, the two simply communicate. Parra reads a letter. Pinheiro makes breath sounds. Parra will emulate them, or dance to them, or both. They try to make the same shape via amplified mumbling. There is no sustained sense of leader and follower other than the distribution of sensory information

literally compelling the viewer from one side of the space to another, vainly curious to know what is coming from where.

It is impossible to experience the totality of the work, as well as to fully comprehend how the whole thing works. Still, one stimulus will prompt a search for its cause or effect. Everything else is a digital blur, though equally potential in sparking yet another quest.

EYE ON THE ARTS/NY -- Jonathan Matthews