

ELIZABETH STREB

The choreography of Elizabeth Streb has a very distinctive style and incorporates her early interest in sports, where movement is constantly attempted beyond ones known abilities. Her movement is based on the laws of momentum - once you put something in motion, it doesn't stop until an outside force stops it. Streb's exploration of movement tests the limits of dance and space with feats of power, risk and endurance.

Elizabeth Streb graduated from the State University of New York at Brockport with a degree in dance then spent two years in San Francisco studying and dancing with Margaret Jenkins. After this time she moved to New York City where she attended daily ballet and modern technique classes and danced for seven years with independent choreographers, including Molissa Fenley. In 1979 she began to create her own work.

Since 1982, Streb has toured the country as an Affiliate Artist and for the past four years, she has been on the faculty of the Harvard Summer Dance Center. In addition, Streb has taught and given lecture/demonstrations at colleges and universities including Rutgers, St. Lawrence, Princeton, Oberlin, Adelphi, Hofstra, Sarah Lawrence, Cornell and State University of New York at Brockport.

In 1985, Streb began her collaborative efforts with Mary Lucier and created her own dance troupe, Ringside, Inc., which has toured and performed nationwide. Streb received a Bessie (New York Dance and Performance Award) in 1988, and in 1989, received a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship and was awarded a three-year choreographic fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Arts Center of the Portsmouth Museums is devoted to offering cultural and aesthetic experiences for museum visitors of all ages. Works from international as well as regional artists are featured regularly in temporary exhibitions providing a complete spectrum of visual art.

The Portsmouth Museums are open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00a.m. to 5:00p.m.; Sunday 1:00p.m. to 5:00p.m. Admission pass is \$1.50 per person excluding children under two and grants admission to the Arts Center, Children's Museum, Naval Shipyard Museum and Lightship PORTSMOUTH.

M A S S

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE



a
video installation
by

artist

M A R Y L U C I E R

and

choreographer/dancer

E L I Z A B E T H S T R E B

at the
Arts Center
of the
Portsmouth Museums

September 18 - November 21, 1992

INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of the telegraph in America, by Samuel F. B. Morse in the 1830's, communication by electricity has been possible. In the late 19th century, the telephone and the cinema were introduced; it was widely expected that electricity would somehow provide the means to transmit moving pictures in the future.

The first attempt to transmit still pictures was by English physicist Alexander Bain in 1843. He devised an electromechanical scanning system that would transmit a facsimile of an image over telegraph lines.

In 1925, Scotsman John Logie Baird conducted the first public demonstration of the television in a London department store. His apparatus was rather crude, but relied on a scanning device similar to Baird's, albeit more rapid.

These television scanning devices later gave way to the cathode ray tube. These tubes were also developed for use in cameras. Camera tubes were eventually fine-tuned with increased sensitivity and fidelity, giving both to a new medium. By the early 1970's, the Japanese produced the most powerful and efficient camera tubes.

As video cameras became more sophisticated, the cathode ray camera tube was replaced by the integrated circuit imaging chip or charged-coupled device (CCD). A CCD is more reliable, sensitive and compact than a tube.

Unlike the movie camera, which requires the interaction of light and film to record, the video camera requires the interaction of light and electricity. The focused image must be converted into an electrical signal which can be transmitted either by cable or radio frequency. Recording is done on magnetic tape. Both record sequentially, but the video tape produces a sharper, more real-time image.

Cover photo:
Mary Lucier and Elizabeth Streb
"MASS: Between a Rock and a Hard Place"
Video still
1988-90

During the 1960's, artists began experimenting with video to produce an array of ideas. Korean born composer, artist and performer, Nam June Paik is credited for much of the growth in video art. In 1963, the first documented exhibition of video art was held at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, West Germany.

Video art has evolved into a widely accepted medium in fine art, but in the process has raised numerous questions, issues and speculation.

The content of "MASS: Between a Rock and a Hard Place" examines the nature of man, a place where the artists contend is "between a rock and a hard place." To explore this notion, three types of motion are employed, consisting of human, natural and that of inanimate objects. Dancers collide, explore, push, spin, leap, fall and rebound in anonymous space and engage in confrontation with the urban environment.

While viewing this work, we should take into consideration: (1) How the nature of contemporary life has changed, (2) How norms, values, pace of technologies and economies have changed, and (3) How the rituals that express the myths surrounding these phenomena have changed.

More specifically, when these questions arise we should ask ourselves what role the medium of video has played in these rituals and in our own lives. As an informational tool, we are now able to watch global events concurrently as they happen, and to record personal and familial events that are sacred to us. Some of us now have video libraries and games used as entertainment. In addition, there are a multitude of uses for video in education and fine arts. The selection of this exhibition at the Portsmouth Museums is intended to offer alternative views into the nature of art, as well as to relay what contemporary artists are saying in the medium.

MARY LUCIER

Mary Lucier came to video in the early 1970's after nearly a decade of work in sculpture, photography and performance. Since 1973 her work in the area of pictorial-narrative installation has helped to define a public art that functions both as a delineator of three-dimensional space and as television.

Born in Bucyrus, Ohio in 1944, she attended Brandeis University where she graduated with honors in English and American Literature and received the President's Award in sculpture. Following several years of post graduate study, she began a series of mixed media installations and performances which were presented between 1970 and 1974 in locations ranging from the grounds of St. Clements Estate in Connecticut, to the original Kitchen on Mercer Street in New York. More recently her video installations have been exhibited at various museums throughout the United States and abroad. These include the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Fukui Fine Arts Museum, Japan and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

A Guggenheim Fellow in 1985-86, Lucier has also received grants from the American Film Institute's Independent Filmmaker Program, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Jerome Foundation, the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities' New Works Program and the Creative Artist's Public Service Program.

Lucier has lived and worked in New York City since 1974. She is currently in the final stages of preparing two commissioned works of art, "Noah's Raven" and "Oblique House: Valdez." These works are to be presented by the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio and at Montage '93, Rochester, New York, respectively, in 1993.