



DANCE REVIEW

Hula Hoop Marathon in the Buff, in Silence 'Duchesses' at Invisible Dog Art Center



Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Francois Chaignaud and Marie-Caroline Hominal performing in "Duchesses" at the Invisible Dog Art Center.

By BRIAN SEIBERT Published: April 26, 2013

On Wednesday, at the Invisible Dog Art Center in Brooklyn, a man and a woman, both naked, hula-hooped in silence for 35 minutes. That may sound like a caricature of masturbatory performance art, but most of the work sustained interest, even fascination. To begin with, there was the suspense of whether the performers could keep their hoops going the whole time. They did.

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It was the American premiere of "Duchesses," by the French and Swiss duo of François Chaignaud and Marie-Caroline Hominal, which they have been performing for five years. At the Invisible Dog, they stood on individual platforms, side by side, lighted from below by neon tubes. The audience, mostly seated on the floor, gazed up at them as if they were royalty or gods or ringed planets. At times the couple resembled mannequins with motorized hips. The spinning hoops recalled gyroscopes and science demonstrations.

The piece was partly a display of attractive bodies. Ms. Hominal's hair was bobbed. Mr. Chaignaud had long, curly

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tresses, and he had painted his long fingernails pink — a slight counter, perhaps, to the obvious differences in the performers' sexual organs.

At first, motion was only in the hips and the hoops. Then the dancers started to shift the position of their arms and tilt their heads. When Ms. Hominal raised one heel, it felt momentous. When she suddenly dropped into a wide squat, it felt shocking. Eventually, both dancers turned in a circle. They traveled forward and back. At one point, they faced each other, and their hoops kissed once, then twice, but did not stop revolving.

Throughout, Ms. Hominal retained her elegance even as she showed strain. Her extended arms or tilted head subtly seemed to be reaching, searching for a way out. When her body crumpled or caved, it appeared to be expressing pain. Sometimes she looked down at her hoop as if it were in control. Mr. Chaignaud was less compelling. His eyes, rolling back or going glossy, mainly suggested that he might have overdosed on the meditative revolutions.

At the piece's moments of greatest intensity, when the hoop spinning accelerated to a furious, almost frightening speed, it was again Ms. Hominal who drew focus. Before, you could hear the platforms creak and the faint slap of hoops on skin. Now all you heard was Ms. Hominal's heavy breathing, dramatizing her stamina, as Mr. Chaignaud more quietly demonstrated his.

That heavy breathing, of course, also suggested sex, as did the naked bodies and the grating pelvises, the speeding up and the slowing down. The temperature of the room seemed to rise, though there was nothing salacious or pornographic. By the end, sunlight from the windows ringing the space had dimmed into night, so that the sole illumination was the pale glow of the neon, also fading. Finally, the hoops dropped.

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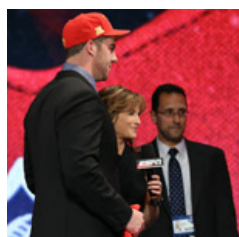
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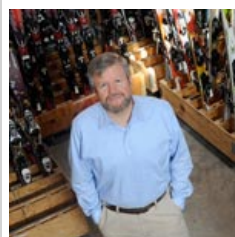
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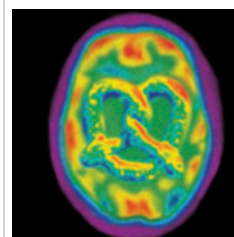
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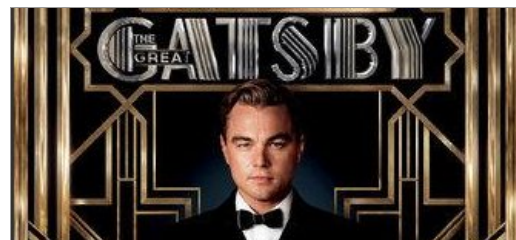
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