

In This Room

*Two men at their desks.
Static from the microphone.
Language for everything, language to make nothing.*

I suppose you could say that the company Findlay//Sandsmark makes art that moves between various disciplines and traditions within experimental dance, theater, music and video, sucking in the various offerings of a growing cohort of collaborators (including me, since 2012, when I was stranded in Norway by the giant hurricane “Sandy” that hit New York, and then one thing led to another after Iver and Marit took me in). And that synopsis would tell you something. You could say, “Findlay//Sandsmark’s work is situated within a certain hybrid stream of performance and installation,” at a cocktail party, for instance, and sound like you know what you’re talking about.

*I don’t know how far to go back.
I always think everything matters.
It was cold I remember that.
Very cold and colder even with the wind coming off the
water how it does.*

But I think it’s better, as you sit down to watch whatever it is you’re about to sit down and watch (or even if you are only imagining watching, maybe especially if you are only imagining; maybe it doesn’t matter so much what it actually looks like or sounds like, so long as it does something)... it’s better in any case to begin with an idea of art as the organizing principle ... a container to hold onto what doesn’t want to be held—i.e., the world. That’s how I would talk about the art that Findlay//Sandsmark make. That’s how I would ask you to receive it.

There’s never enough time to be in the present moment. There’s never enough time to deal with the past. Art is one of the few things that can make a little space for time. Marit and Iver are attuned to that space. You can almost feel their work hunting for it by not hunting, sniffing it out of the places it hides, while the world busies itself with the latest iPhone updates and Facebook alerts.

Which isn’t to say they’re luddites or anything, hiding in a cabin in the woods. The work is swaddled in technology, in complicated systems that allow for the simple but hard business of bodies doing the work that bodies do—in proximity to other bodies, and in isolation. Maybe especially in isolation.

*he is standing behind her
they’re close, parts of them are touching
she keeps reaching
back and behind her, he keeps leaning
away, he keeps leaning
finally she does touch him
her fingertips
on the side of his neck near the shoulder
you want to feel something like that
so small
so significant*

*you want to feel fingertips like that touching you so lightly
lightly but not barely*

I don't think about their work in terms of "aboutness" (that it's about X subject or Y theme), but if pressed, I would say that there is often a beginning backward glance, to get at some experience, or memory of an experience, or sensation around a way of being in the world, maybe a way that is lost, or never quite existed to begin with. And this isn't to conjure that lost thing, but precisely the opposite—that is, to get at that slippery, obdurate creature we call "now." It's one reason, I think, that their way of making is so sunk into process—the doing of the not-yet-formed thing, rather than the perfecting of the finished product.

Does all of this seem terribly unclear? It does to me, Writing it—or, not unclear exactly, but just out of reach, just in the next room, while we remain here, in this room.

*the quiet of stage time
the dancer a moving image in a sea of
it's raining again
clean air and cigarettes
he busies himself with making useless things
she slides down the incline*

We are in a heightened, dreamlike state of attention; you might say, we are in the theater.

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