

à propos de Habits/Habits (2013)

Driven to Accumulate and Dancing Till Nothing's Left

Ashley Chen and Dylan Crossman at the Club at La Mama By
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The sidewalk in front of the Club at La MaMa on Friday night was teeming with people needing a fix of Merce past. The lure was a shared program featuring Ashley Chen and Dylan Crossman, two much-admired former members of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, in a dual presentation by Danse: A French-American Festival of Performance and Ideas, and La MaMa Moves! Dance Festival. Before the house opened, Mr. Chen joined the crowd to smoke a cigarette; as he put it, "It's the French warm-up." In his solo "Habits/Habits," the more sophisticated of the two offerings, Mr. Chen explored the idea of accumulation, in which movements are repeated and layered to create a textured whole. Mr. Crossman, in "Every Me Sees Thou a Little Differently," used text and movement to reveal, as a program note stated, "a story of our human complications." (...) At least Mr. Chen had the sense to explore a sure thing: his still astounding virtuosity. In "Habits/Habits," the cellist Pierre Le Bourgeois, performing live over a track of electronic music, started a digital clock. Wearing a brown suit and dress shoes, Mr. Chen began with methodical walks and everyday gestures — like checking the soles of his shoes — but quickly picked up velocity as he repeated movement phrases and added new ones: a jump with his legs sprung forward or a whipping roll to the floor that twisted into a shoulder balance. All the while, Mr. Chen removed his clothing bit by bit — there were pants under pants and shirts under shirts — folding each item with origami care until he was naked. Then, he dressed again, this time in pastel layers, and repeated his striptease. The second time was messier. As he darted through the obstacle course of clothing, he didn't disguise his exhaustion. It was real.