

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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IMPERMANENT COLLECTION

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Going to look at art in a museum usually produces immediate impressions: "I hate it," "I love it," "I don't get it." Then we move on -- apparently the average time spent looking at a work of art is five seconds. Watching a performance, on the other hand, demands that we accept a slower accrual of thoughts and feelings during an event; we know -- in fact, we hope -- that our first and last impressions could be very different.

In "Impermanent Collection," to be performed tonight and next Friday as part of the Whitney Museum of American Art's Whitney Live series, the Moving Theater directors Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly use five dancers, the new-music group International Contemporary Ensemble and a series of videos by Brock Labrenz to blur the boundaries between those experiences: permanence and impermanence, art object and live performance, the historical and the contemporary.

That's a tall order, but Mr. Gerard, who comes from a theatrical background, and Mr. Kelly, a former New York City Ballet dancer, are in the business of blurring boundaries with Moving Theater, an interdisciplinary collaborative that has produced a number of provocative, poetic pieces since the two men founded the company in 2002.

In "Impermanent Collection," Mr. Labrenz's video portraits of the dancers (including Marion Ramirez, above) responding to an artwork of their choice intersect with the dancers performing amid the audience in the Whitney's Lower Gallery, and with the music. These tensions -- between the captured moments on film (ultimately as fixed an art object as the surrounding paintings) and the transient intimacy of live performance; between the personal interpretations of the art and the public setting -- are just some of the facets of Moving Theater's inquiry.

And just as important, Mr. Labrenz said, the piece offers the museumgoer a more intimate acquaintance with the Whitney. "It begs them," he said, "to go upstairs and look at those paintings again."

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