

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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A GRAND SHOWPLACE SEEN FROM ALL ANGLES

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In their new work, “Armory Show,” Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly pay homage to a place, though its setting — the Park Avenue Armory, where the production was seen on Saturday night — really represents something far more grand. For the directors of the interdisciplinary company Moving Theater, the performance, marking the culmination of an 18-month residency in the space, incorporates dance, text, live music and video to offer a dreamlike portrait of the armory’s social and military history.

Debra Ann Servider, who lives in the women’s shelter housed in the armory, recites text from Alain Robbe-Grillet’s “Last Year at Marienbad,” which makes reference to “rooms overloaded with ornamentation from another century.” Music composed by Nathan Davis, Mario Diaz de León and Du Yun and performed by the International Contemporary Ensemble creates a wondrous aural landscape, and Yaniv Schulman’s live video manages to make disparate images whole; it’s a little like peering through a vintage stereoscopic viewer.

In an early scene — a witty reference to the film “The Shining” — video is shown of a child racing on a Big Wheel down a long hallway; soon after, Mr. Kelly and Davon Rainey continue the theme, appearing as twin figures. Standing side by side, their bodies begin to quiver at the core until the motion reverberates, sending jerks through their hips and shoulders. Later, others including Jose Tena, a lanky, flexible 15-year-old dancer, join them in a potent choreographic rendering of militaristic drills. It’s all about the creases — elbows, wrists and knees — until gradually the frenetic movement morphs into vogueing.

For a good stretch “Armory Show” is playful in a serious way, but the spell is broken when the Bonnie Tyler song “Total Eclipse of the Heart” is introduced.

It’s disappointing; for much of the piece Mr. Gerard and Mr. Kelly create their own ghosts by finding unusual intersections between their world and the armory. “Total Eclipse,” which crops up too often in contemporary dance and performance, cheapens the work; it breaks the spell. After “Total Eclipse,” their “Armory Show” becomes just that — a show in the armory. It could have been anywhere.

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