

Still Moving: Performance at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Still Moving, 2011. Performance, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Courtesy of Shen Wei Dance Arts.

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Jessica Geiger

Still Moving was a dance performance commissioned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City specifically for the Charles Engelhard Court of the American Wing of the museum. Choreographed by Shen Wei, who also choreographed the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 65-minute performance took place on June 6th and 13th by dancers of Shen Wei Dance Arts, wearing costumes designed by Shen Wei, himself.

Still Moving was, if not a product of traditional notions of dance, an extremely stimulating, thought provoking, and visually stunning performance. Shen Wei is known for creating his own dance technique, known as Natural Body Development, focusing on showing expression through the body. Divided into three parts, the show was an untraditional and eclectic mixture of classical and electric music, rubber suits and nudity, stillness and motion.

During Part I, titled *Re-staging: Near the Terrace*, classical music played as topless male and female dancers alternately posed motionless and slowly glided around the space, moving without seeming to be alive, at times moving independently and at times in pairs. Part II was very different. Transition was performed by two entirely nude dancers, one male and one female, to extremely abstract electric music, and involved their interaction and use of paint to cover their bodies. Part III, *Internal External #1*, closed the performance, with the dancers wearing rubberized and revealing suits. At times the movement was slow, at others fast, at times the dancers carried out the same series of movements individually and out of sync, and at others converging on one area at the lead of a single dancer.



Through a multimedia, intercultural, and interdisciplinary approach, Shen Wei effectively establishes the body as a work of art. The location of the performance—a statue gallery—aids this establishment. Furthermore, Shen Wei's wardrobe (or lack thereof) choices outfitted the dancers in the style of the surrounding statues, influencing the audience to equate the dancers with the gallery's statues; both the body and the gallery's statues became subjects of beauty and craft. But while statues can only be observed in their motionless state, the beauty of the dancer's lines and energy could also be observed in motion.

The unique achievement of this dance performance was to allow for a study of the human body and the energy it exudes on its own, and in conjunction with other bodies. While dance is often considered an art of movement and the creation of energy, Shen Wei's choreography allowed for the spotlight to feature the origin of movement and energy—the very essence of the dancers—rather than the products of their efforts.