

Darkpart



February 2006, North Bennington, Vermont
Photo: Victor Morales

When I made the docu-promo-pretend-it's-the-real-thing-video I laughed because "Darkpart" can't be *seen* on video, or *smelled*, and what you hear is not Zeena's sound installation but a compressed recording of what could be captured. This piece that was so much about not being able to capture time or experience, not being able to "see" what you know, was staying true to the end, resisting arrest. I referred often to the fable *The Emperor's New Clothes* during the process. The story reminds me of how people who work in theater, or any artist, are kind of con-artists. The thieves convinced the King by boldness and fancy language to let them stay in town for months and fatten themselves up and stay at his castle, in order to create this magic invisible suit, that only the most intelligent could perceive. In the end it basically proves that *believe what you see*, and *imagine and believe*, are like two twin sisters who wear different colored hats.

This is the text that rolls on the screen in the video documentation of "Darkpart", the last part of *Notthing Is Importantttt*. "Darkpart" lasted about 25 minutes but the video of it is three minutes long.

The ushers and choreographer gently guide the audience to their new seats, in the dark room.

Darkpart lasts about 25 minutes.

It was impossible to document with our cameras, so I will briefly explain.

There are two rows of audience seating, facing each other, with an aisle between them of about two meters wide, plus an aisle of the same width behind each row.

Everyone is seated and the music begins. There is very little light. You can't see the audience across from you.

The soundscore consists of 47 seconds from the movie score you just heard, stretched into 23 minutes.

Above and unbeknownst to the audience there are 25 small speakers hanging 9 feet from the ground.

The sound seems sourceless, you can't tell where it's coming from.

The small amount of light initially present comes from the other side of the curtain

(the cinema where you just watched the two first parts).

These lights fade over two minutes, once the music begins, leaving the space completely dark.

The rest of the lighting consists of two long swells of miniscule amounts of light focused away from the floor.

Like the sound, the lights also seem sourceless. They are high in the air. You can't see the instruments.

There are times when it's pitch black and you can't see your hand in front of your face.

At it's brightest, the light reflects off the skin of the nine dancers' bodies as they move through the space.

You can feel the air move as they quickly pass by,

and you can smell them.

When you can see them, the dancers look like ghosts. Their faces are never discernible.

They use their bodies as sound instruments, crossing the space, falling in place, sliding along the floor.

They use their bodies to make collective ark shapes, not quite perceptible as such in the dark.

Finally, there is a coda of falling and running, followed by a stream of bodies sliding along the floor down the center aisle and close to the audience.

They make their way toward a small gap in a curtain in a corner of the room.

The lights fade out completely one last time, as the light from the cinema comes up and spills in through, and over, the curtains.

As the dancers leave, you hear them climb onto the cinema stage. The music ends.

Something is being repeatedly thrown at the cinema wall, the same invisible something that was being thrown during the first section of the piece.

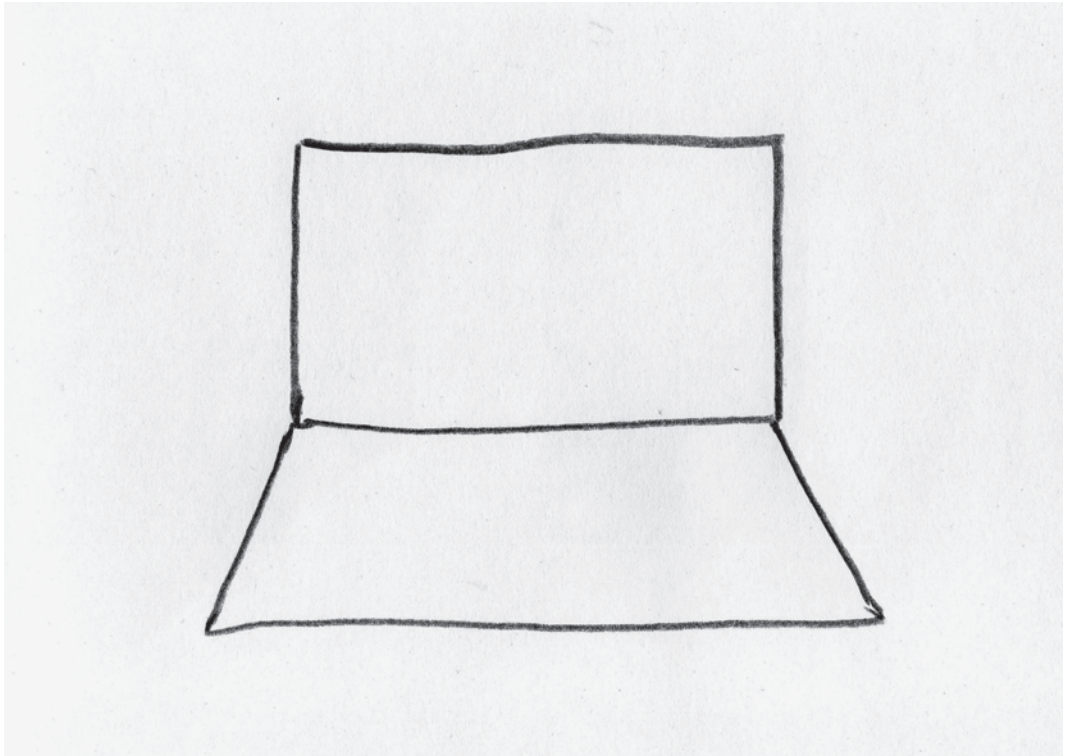
You can hear the dancers run back and forth in a familiar rhythm, as they pick up, throw, run, pick up, throw.

The sound in the room fades. The dancers vanish into silence, unseen.

Sidelights, just above head level, fade up to reveal the silently hanging speakers.

There is no bow. The audience is free to leave in their own time.

^^^



Illustrated

Cho-

**reogra-
phies**

Figure 1. (9B's 1)

Place a hand on the drawing. Moving it slowly across the page, conceal and expose details of the drawing while noticing the sound being produced. Place the other hand on top of the first, moving it over the surface of the bottom hand, as you conceal and expose details of that hand plus the drawing. Notice differences between sound, visual, and touch perceptions as skin rubs on skin while other skin rubs on paper, the visual composition shifting continuously, accompanied by changes in timbre, volume, and intensity of the sound being produced.

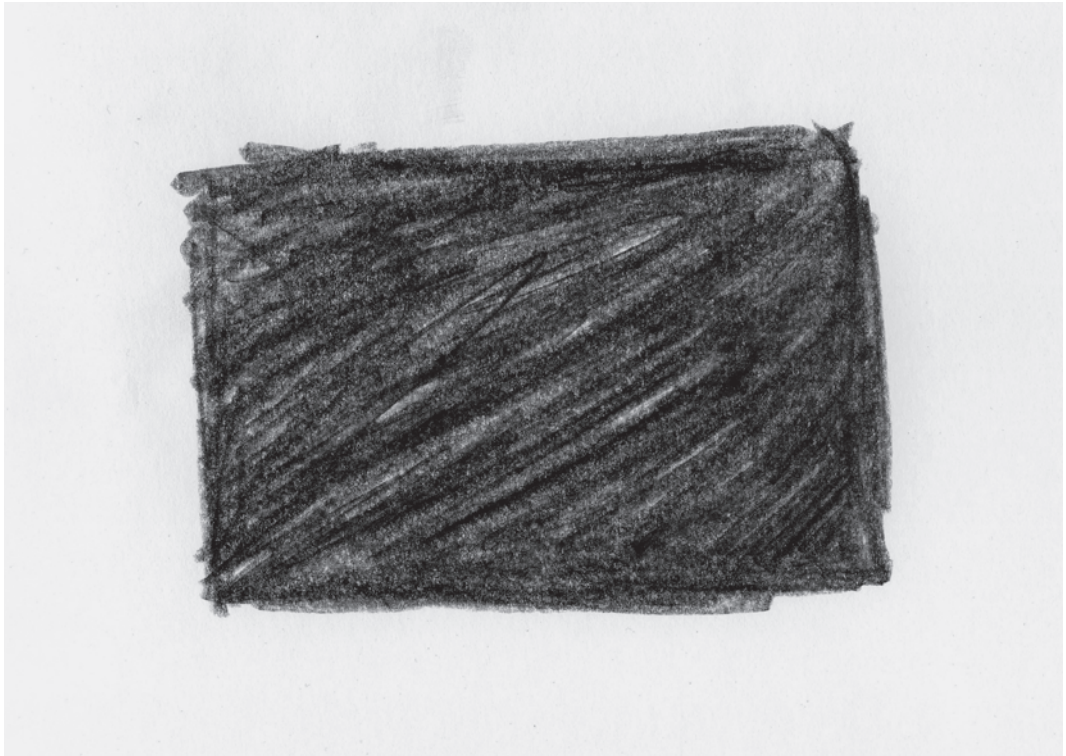


Figure 2. (DP 4)

Place a hand on the drawing. Cover your eyes with the other hand. With your eyelids closed, peer into the darkness and notice the density/intensity, depth, or color of what you are looking at. Listen as you begin to move your hand across the surface of the page in easy random swirls, occasionally reversing the direction of your movement. Notice the distance / space between sound and visual perception, as you move your hand while looking and listening.

^^^\\^^

**Zeena
Parkins,**

**Winter
2006,
E.
9th Street.**

**Letter
to**

So it turns out that the sounds not only of the subject (santa, chairs, water) but the production team itself, create this unexpected intimacy. All of us working together toward an end. Even though this santa is isolated, the fabrication of the image is collective. It doesn't merely depend on the performer (me, my ego, my desire). It is exactly the way I love to work, and what I crave to see in a production, in a performance. The hand of the maker is not blurry, but it belongs to many.

I have been having super frustrating problems, first with computer, then with a camera that fucked up three tapes worth of footage, the image intact, but of course the sound completely out of sync, interrupted, muted at moments, etc. I am also having some pretty ugly emotional battles with myself, which you pierced on friday with your text message. All of these excuses to just, well... make an excuse... BUT ANYWAY

Dear Zeena,

The Movie

The santa footage is full of sound.

You hear the camera man, the tapes being marked with claps, repeatedly, the sound of water dripping, leaking, my heavy scruffy footsteps, the hammer dropping, conversations between me, the camera, the lighting guy, the girl pouring water over my head... the team.

Then of course there is the sound of the chairs or chair being eaten with a sledgehammer. Sometimes really dramatic and thundersome and sometimes kind of a whacky thud.

I'm here.

At least here is a list of things/ideas/details that are interesting to me soundwise at the moment.

The fucked up tapes had a great quality of DELAYED or out of sync response to the what was happening with image. Also the drop outs sometimes happen at exactly the loudest moments of the crash. You anticipate a terrible crash and then suddenly nothing, completely muted silence.