

## A Twist on Getting Dressed: Try Doing It While Dangling

By: GIA KOURLAS

Published: February 14, 2010 in *The New York Times*

BEACON, NY — “I always feel sorry for the parts of the stage that aren’t being used,” the choreographer Trisha Brown said once. “I have in the past felt sorry for the ceilings and the walls. It’s perfectly good space, why doesn’t anyone use it?”

On Saturday afternoon, the Trisha Brown Dance Company returned to Dia:Beacon for the second round of a series of performances held in the gleaming white galleries there. The museum houses an array of art mainly from the 1960s and ’70s, but there are also columns and ceilings — in other words, fuel for Ms Brown’s fertile imagination.

The performance opened with two of Ms Brown’s “Equipment” pieces beginning with “Floor of the Forest” (1970), in which Todd Lawrence Stone and Samuel von Wentz dressed and undressed their way through a 12-by-14-foot web made of ropes and clothing.



Tony Cenicola/*The New York Times*: Tamara Riewe of the Trisha Brown Dance Company flirted with gravity in “Spiral,” set in the galleries of Dia:Beacon over the weekend in Beacon, NY



Tony Cenicola/*The New York Times*: In “Floor of the Forest,” two company dancers, Todd Lawrence Stone and Samuel von Wentz, dress and undress their way through a web that has clothing attached to it in a performance at Dia: Beacon.

In her forest, Ms Brown reverses the ordinary posture of dressing — from upright to horizontal with the added strain of gravity — and cheekily provides a new visual picture for the phrase “Slip into something more comfortable.” Fixating on his task, Mr. Stone struggled into a pair of shorts and a T-shirt and, once in, dangled like a well-worn hammock.

“Spiral” (1974), another “Equipment” piece, incorporates 10 columns. Harnessed dancers climbed on top of ladders, stretched one leg to a column and then wound their way down parallel to the floor. The brief work elicits wonder and awe, but the journey isn’t as important as how Ms Brown tinkers with perspective. For a moment it seems

that you are the one suspended in space, not the dancers.

In an excerpt from “Foray Forêt” (1990), a work from Ms Brown’s “Back to Zero” cycle, she shows her affinity for enigmatic, slippery movement forms that create the sensation of a delicate wave. “You can see us” (1995-96) is a reworking of a solo that Ms Brown danced with her back to the audience. At Dia, Leah Morrison, who recalls Ms Brown’s lanky grace but moves with her own rangy distinctiveness, performed with Dai Jian; the duet remains a virtuosic exploration of presence and expression.

For the finale, Ms Brown went back to basics with “Skymap” (1969): the action is the sound of her voice reading a passage instructing the audience on how mentally to create an overhead map. (Instead of figuring out a way to dance on the ceiling, Ms Brown sent her voice there instead.) The best way to experience “Skymap” is not to stand or to sit, but to lie down, as many in the audience did.

“People unable to control coughing or sneezing,” her voice recites, “should be chastised by those people in the audience who care about state lines.” It is sometimes overlooked that along with her risk-taking intelligence and avid curiosity, Ms Brown — rather like Meryl Streep — can be a comedian. Stepping back in time with her art is a wild ride, not just because of how the work has held up, but also because of how wittily relevant it remains.

The Trisha Brown Dance Company will perform again at Dia:Beacon in Beacon, NY on May 1; (845) 440-0100, [diabeacon.org](http://diabeacon.org).