

Salt Marsh Suite

It's called "an inter-media installation," and it works because of just how smart the "inter" is. It's not the operator you can use in academia with *disciplines*, which can be Inter, multi, or trans, because disciplines are the smugglers of the intellectual world with whole political and ethical world views secreted under the false bottoms of their baggage. So "inter" and "multi" link a few or host a few, but it's still the disciplines there, men in suits, policing boundaries and devoted to the hidden agendas they serve more zealously than anything else.

But in media, yeah, you can still say "inter-media" because image and sound and movement work differently from each other at that deep level of the visceral where the real work is done. It isn't that the work makes no room for the "knowledge" produced by the disciplinary factories. Some of the visuals are lessons on tides complete with schematics, for example, and the first segment of the piece wonderfully bridges between why tides work the way they do and the visceral experience of flows affected by gravity, rotation, and movement, a dancer who follows the pattern of the hula hoop we see pulling its yellow rope along with the tides and speaks the information that shows what science has to say about it.

But all this is not about making STEM studies somehow more palatable than they already are. Artists harbor the same suspiciousness about knowledge per se as Zen masters do about words and what we ideate about. Zen masters know the huge difference between a visceral internalization of processes and knowing how those processes work. There are other points where the presence of art triggers a flash of satori about the five sectors in this piece. In *Crabs* Ann Kilkelly's tap dancing skills find that visceral rhythm of crab claws scuttling along the bottom, the sound they'd make if they shared the air with us instead of doing their crustacean rag under water (even though Carol Burch-Brown's hydrophone recordings bring us more of that underwater palace of sounds than most of us hear. In *Grass* the dancers give us the peril of the marsh grasses by going up against the wall, literally, the projections of the grasses on their bodies, their motions what it would feel like if humans were planted ankle deep in mud and turned with the flow of currents and tides and absorbed the stresses of the marshland ecosphere. In *Birds* the same dancers evaporate the distance by which spectators amuse themselves at what we call the "antics" of birds as they strut and

shake out their tail feathers. On all fours, their shaking tails might have amused some in the audience with all the slightly off humor of a Disney nature film celebrating our superiority with comical music. But, really, as with the *Grass*, it's a moment when the feeling of bird-being sneaks in past concepts and labels and happens viscerally.

A moment of interbeing? Perhaps? Yes, *of course* that's what it is, and what happens in inter-media and inter-action among world, science, and art when the makers understand how to add to the piece's stunning technology (the extensive recording on site, the remarkable mix of still and video imagery, the drifting effects from layering imagery, all of it exquisitely coordinated as if despite massive technological resources the gap between a richly saturated "there" and the here of an exhibition space were transcended along with any of the often sterile intrusive feel of technology per se. When you add in the amazing vocal punctuations from the piece's mysterious woman in white, you have a bit of trans-species sound-making that conveys what it would feel like if our communication system were more birdlike or more crablike. Nor can one discount the subtle effects wrought by the bassist, Geoffrey [last name] who bowed, plucked, struck and cajoled his big string bass to enhance the pulse of life in the work.

In what are perhaps rightly called "multimedia installations," what you see is *juxtaposed* to what you hear, or read, or whatever. You feel that way about a Joseph Borofsky piece like *Chatterers*, 2D human cutouts with machinic jaws that open and close while a tape plays voices repeating endlessly "Chatter chatter chatter chatter ..."—clever it is, memorable, point taken. What I liked about *Salt March Suite* is that it triggered that flash of experiential wisdom when, suddenly, we embody the salt marsh ecology rather than know things about it. We are all those species and the grand physical stage they animate. The work effects that ongoing deep kernel shift of our logic from humans as Masters of the Universe and lord of all things to being "just" another manifestation of cosmic matter and energy—from the relative triviality of anthropocentrism to an ecological "ism" that still too often feels like a minority opinion.