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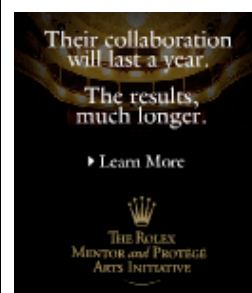
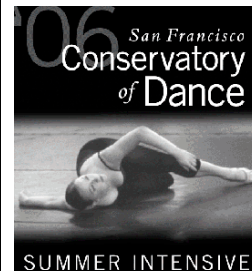
**Dancing Asia/New York
Asia Society
New York, New York
May 14–15, 2004
Reviewed by Susan Yung**

Eiko and Koma create sublime, glacial meditations on time and being, in high contrast to the convivial atmosphere of Dancing Asia/New York, a salon-style event where the audience sat packed around the stage. The duo professed to organize but not curate the event, to which the participants brought "his or her own vision of Asia" (according to the press release), be it performance art or folk dance. The technical parameters were strict: Twelve New York-based Asian American choreographers performed for seven minutes each on a six-foot, square platform. The variety of this subset testified to the richness of New York's cultural landscape.

Muna Tseng encapsulated the criteria for participation simply. Wearing an elegant, white, pleated tunic and sunglasses, she paced the square's perimeter, quick feet pairing with slow arms in a contemporary urban ritual of indifferent haste. Koosil-Ja's more complex approach filtered source material—a film of Maria Callas played on a laptop—through layers of media. She mimed the singer's gesticulations and breathing patterns while a voice-over discussed the music's significance.

Yoshiko Chuma's formidable presence met its match in a bass viola. As she tussled for its possession with its player, Robert Black, Chuma stamped her feet and knotted her face; then she cradled the instrument in her arms and strummed it like a giant violin.

Yin Mei's conceptual performance works have an unmistakable Asian aesthetic informed by the intensity of European dance-theater. Her knees buckled and her head pitched toward a mic, into which she said, "My father had a radio . . ." Her hands climbed up her red-crushed-silk-clad torso, and she shuddered climactically. Aki Sasamoto, a sculptor, quixotically shuffled a stack of blue and yellow fabric-wrapped dishes, slamming them down and shoving them offstage.


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Several folk-based dances stood out in sharp contrast. Keo Woolford's serene, confident bearing transformed his simple Hawaiian hula dance into an enchanting fable, while Rajika Puri mixed traditional Indian dance and storytelling with other dance forms and, jarringly, some English. And U Win Maung's dazzling costume, bedecked with lamé and sequins, outshone his tentative performance of a traditional folk dance from Burma.

A brusque John-Mario Sevilla blended club dance and martial arts, commanding the periphery of the stage, grazing the feet of alarmed viewers as he flung his body about. HT Chen exuded a revolutionary fever, scrawling chalk diagrams on the floor; his wife, Dian Dong, charged through fighting moves as Chen grazed the audience's heads with a yellow banner on a pole. Uttara Asha Coorlawala, intensely meditative, moved aggressively through yoga positions that were surely more rewarding to do than to watch.

Hosts Eiko & Koma showed the ultimate in concentration, performing a riveting duet at a quicker than normal pace. Eiko maintained an enraptured visage even as a toddler viewer shadowed the pair about the stage's edge. The child inadvertently became part of the performance, but as an Asian in New York, she too fit the bill.

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