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If Eyes Had Feet: The Kinesthetic Pictorial Interpretive Essay by Kait Strauss

How is dance defined? A performance, a sequence of steps, choreography, motion. A juxtaposition of movement and stillness, of fluidity and rigidity.

How do we define visual art? Sculptures, paintings, architecture, and drawings.

The variances of smooth and rough shapes, colours, and patterns.

Now combine the two and we arrive at Tia Halliday's performed abstractions. Right away the viewer is drawn to that which is relatable to oneself: the feet and legs. More than a sculpture or shapes on a canvas, these works blend movement and art and showcase dancers "within the skin of the painting." By incorporating the human form into her work, Halliday allows the observer to immediately form a connection with many of her pieces.

In creating these works, Halliday has worked with trained dancers, directing them and encouraging non-verbal communication to explore different shapes and tensions with the body. Sheaths of fabric of varying tautness and elasticity draped over the dancers, enhance the visual experience. The majority of the works showcase only the legs and feet of the human form.

While the rest of the dancers' bodies are hidden under an eclectic collection of sewn fabrics, we are left to admire the piece, to feel the work as a whole. It ignites a sense of curiosity about the extremities and allows us to imagine the positioning of the rest of the body beneath. Perhaps one can make out an elbow, or a knee, or the luxurious curve of a back. For some works, additional props were used to generate more rigid shapes of broader reach. Though we are witnessing a frozen moment within these photographs, the artist

wishes to encourage our minds to experience the journey of reaching those points.

By combining dance and visual art, Halliday has created pieces that come alive before the eyes of the viewer. Envision the improvisational movements; the dancers pulling the fabrics tight around their bodies in one instance and in the next, allowing a breath of air to create a bubble, an entirely different dynamic.

Through these works, Halliday has been exploring the idea of a "moving painting." When speaking with the artist about the creative process, we discussed learning about visual art in a classroom setting. Instructors push their students to create works with dynamism. Work that shows a "push vs pull" relationship. The same principles ring true in the realm of dance.

Contract vs release. Fall and recover. Plié deeper to create a higher jump.

When considered in that sense, one realizes the use of opposition is a major player in both art forms.

Halliday successfully steps outside of the box to create vibrant, contemporary, performance art. The beauty, strength, power, and grace of dancers has been delicately blended with her eye for dynamic paintings and sculpture to create a visual feast for observers.



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