

Published November 1st, 2017

Lafayette experiences art on the cutting edge with Art Moves Project

By Sophie Braccini



Dancers perform Oct. 20 at the Coffee Shop on Lafayette Circle. Photo Sophie Braccini

Something new and fresh recently swept into Lafayette Circle like an invigorating breeze.

People sitting at the outside tables under the trees at the Coffee Shop, as well as passersby, suddenly became a part of a live art experience, which combined visual art and dance. It lasted for 20 minutes and then it was gone. Ravishing, surprising, thought provoking. "Edifice: Uncovered" was a gift to the community Oct. 20 as part of the Art Moves Project, led by three Lafayette artists, and supported by several local organizations.

Yukie Fujimoto, Christy Mack and Lissa Resnick met through their kids' schools and swim teams, and were part of parents-led activities before they realized they had a passion in common: art.

Fujimoto is a dancer and teacher, Resnick is a choreographer, and Mack is an art activist and supporter. They all expressed the same regret that they were able to practice and create art outside of their Lamorinda community, but that nothing really cutting edge was happening here in terms of events. They decided to take it into their own hands.

The idea is to create a live art experience in a public space, combining different art forms. The public is invited to witness and enjoy the art, but also to participate. At the Coffee Shop people were offered paper and pens to express their emotions and thoughts after the performance on a writing wall.

This first public event created a dynamic between visual artist Marcia Barrow Taylor and Resnick's No Strings Attached Dance Company. Their work delved into "What's Inside?" Barrow Taylor is a fiber artist who created a life-size paper mannequin and an intricate yarn display for the performance. The dancers, following Resnick's choreography appropriated and incorporated the displays in their movements, while modern and evocative music played. The ensemble of 10 dancers expressed a quest and a struggle, looking behind appearances.

It was both unsettling and moving to be so close to the artists, feeling their emotions, sensing the work and the gracefulness, immersed in beauty.

Fujimoto, Mack and Resnick were pleased to see how many people came. Some knew this was going to happen, others just stopped, intrigued by the preparations.

Lots of work, of course, went on before the performance. First the three women needed to raise the money to make it happen, adamant that the artists should be paid for their work. AMP is supported by the Lamorinda Arts Council's Arts Incubator Program, the Lafayette Community Foundation and private donors. Last May, a similar event was performed at a private residence as a fundraiser.

The three founders discovered that many local actors, involved or not in the arts, were behind the project. The owner of the Coffee Shop at 50 Lafayette Circle saw the ladies exploring the site one day gave and them free access; Jennifer Perlmutter, who owns an art gallery on Mt. Diablo Boulevard, put Mack in touch with Lawrence Kohl, the president of LAC that became the project's fiscal sponsor.

"The AMP performance at the coffee shop took me away for a brief period of time. The choreography held a strong narrative for me and following the dancers and artist, I was transported," said Perlmutter afterward. "This experience was a gift to guests and even better when simply stumbled upon in the middle of your day. It is transformative to witness art in action!"

Fujimoto, Mack and Resnick also found an early supporter in Jay Lifson at the Chamber of Commerce; Tom Taneyhill on the Lafayette Public Art Committee shared information about the Lafayette public art scene; the Art Room across the street from the cafe gave the space for the dancers to get ready; the Coffee Shop

gave 10 percent of its proceeds during and after the event to the project.

The Art Moves Project ladies say that they will look for grants for the next event. For more information, visit www.lamorindaarts.org/artsincubator or the AMP Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ArtMovesProject.

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