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That David Gordon and Valda Setterfield do some unusual things might be presumed from this picture of a maniacal-appearing Gordon looking cross-eyed at Miss Setterfield on the bridge of his nose. Miss

Setterfield is standing on a prop from "Chair," one of the two new pieces they will perform next weekend in the auditorium of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Unusual dance team returns to Walker Art Center Nov. 29

By LINDA SHAPIRO

When David Gordon and Valda Setterfield return to the Walker Art Center next weekend to perform their illusive brand of theater, there will undoubtedly be those who say that it's not really dance.

Although both are accomplished technical dancers who have performed with various companies, they are not interested in the bravura display of super-humans defying physical laws while stoically concealing their efforts. They deal instead with the familiar madness of everyday life — putting ordinary words and movement in outrageous contexts (or vice versa) and evoking what one critic has called "trivia raised to epic heights."

They perform as themselves, two rather nonchalant and sophisticated people going about their business. No matter how crazy that business may be, they perform it with the low-keyed concentration of skilled craftsmen attending to their tasks. In Gordon's "Chairs," one of the pieces to be performed at the Walker, they engage in some complicated maneuvers with two chairs while describing in meticulous detail how the dance was made, conversing with one another, and singing "The Stars and Stripes Forever." They show everything — their exertions, their vulnerability, the humor and horror of two people just trying to make it through a somewhat absurd ordeal.

portant role in the New York dance avant garde for over a decade. He feels the term "modern dance" is outmoded, referring to the work of earlier choreographers like Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham who were revolting against certain traditions of ballet.

In the early 1960's, Gordon and Setterfield were part of a group of artists centered ^{around} on the Judson Church in New York who were involved in a series of radical experiments to "debunk" art. They believed that even modern dance was too concerned with art as grand illusions and sentiments — art with a capital A. Operating on very little money and the belief that anyone should be able to try anything, they produced a series of events in which dancers, artists and composers collaborated. Choreographers like Gordon and Yvonne Rainer worked on the premise that anything could be a dance, no matter how bizarre or mundane. They experimented with ways of combining the ordinary and the offbeat, sophisticated technology and craftsmanship with "found" movements or objects or sounds.

They wanted more freedom in determining what combination of elements was dance, what sounds were music, what situations considered performances. Dances could be constructed by change methods as well as by conscious design. They could be set in city streets or theater lobbies as well as on the proscenium stage, and performed by dancers and non-

tificial theatricality, they performed as neutrally as possible, avoiding contrived effects or imposing meanings on their work.

There have, of course, been numerous critical analyses of this "post modern dance" movement. Gordon's works have been described as revealing the process of artist making art, or the disjointedness of modern life, or even as parodies of more traditional dance tenets and styles. Although Gordon only smiles and lets his dances speak for themselves, he's adamant on the subject of style. Humor—or lack of it—in dance is of particular interest to him; "Most dancers don't take humor seriously," he claims.

GORDON BELIEVES that style can't be superimposed on content. If the performer deals with the material directly without trying to be funny or profound or a virtuosic dancer showing his tricks, the style will come naturally out of the material. "You just get out there and do it without all that stuff," says Gordon. Such honesty in performing is risky, but to Gordon and Setterfield, who has performed with Merce Cunningham since 1965, it's the real business of dancing.

Gordon and Setterfield will perform at the Walker Art Center Auditorium at 8 p.m. on Nov. 29 and 30 in conjunction with the exhibition "Nelson - Eames - Girard-Propst: The Design Process at Herman Miller." Tickets are \$2, members free.

(Shapiro is a Twin Cities dancer.