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Choreographer Makes Dance Dull

By Hewell Tircuit

Well, he's done it! Dancer-choreographer David Gordon has managed to strip away all sense of visual pleasure from dance — or nearly all.

Gordon is one of a series of lesser modern dancers from the East Coast, invited to make guest lectures and appearances at the Margaret Jenkins Dance Studio. It is a most worthy series, but with obviously mixed results.

Friday's performance by Gordon and Valda Setterfield was presented without passion or profundity. It cannot even be considered as ritual.

Gordon, rather behind the times, subscribes to the "nothing is everything" school of dada as mantra.

The basic idea, as with composer John Cage, is to proceed with deliberate pace and absolutely straight-faced mask to do the silliest things one can think of. What form there was, was achieved by literal reiteration.

One interesting element of Gordon's work is his passion for canons. Ensemble pieces are a bit out of phase, one dancer imitating the other at a distance of a few seconds. It did not seem better the second time around.

There was little dancing at all. Most of the gestures looked like class exercises, done in place.

In the opener, "Wordsworth and the motor," the dancers talked their "music." "Squat," "mark one," "arm down," "arm out" and the like were announced, as each dancer stood there and performed his own commands.

The result was like a premature commitment to purgatory — more effort to watch than to perform.

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