

Bodies strike the right pose in rest and motion

25/8/12

Exhibition about self-image flirts with pretension but is ultimately rewarding, finds **Louise Rimmer**

REVIEW STATUTS

STATUTS is the brainchild of Boris Charmatz, the precocious choreographer who refuses to be tied to his native artform of dance. Part visual artist, part curator and performer, this – an intriguing promenade exhibition – also sees the Frenchman in collaborative mode: no less than 16 artists, film-makers and performers are featured alongside his company, Association Edna.

Above all, though, *Statuts* is an invitation to consider how we perceive the body and at the same time how we receive different art forms.

A dozen different rooms in the elegant Edinburgh College of Art are linked by a single red thread, which lures you to investigate the myriad possibilities of the body. However, some pieces are more successful than others.

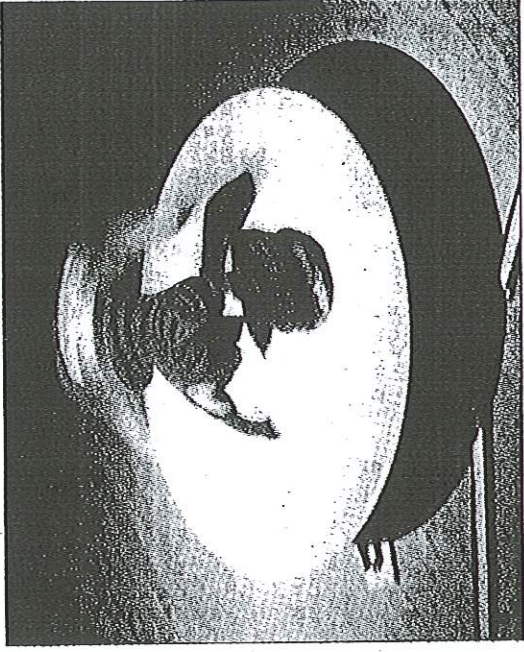
Most striking is the centrepiece, a pun on laundry entitled

Programme Court Avec Essorage, or Short Cycle with Spin Dry.

Two human bodies (one of whom is Charmatz) are placed on a spinning pedestal and subjected to a vicious centrifugal force. There is something beautifully courageous in the way the two dancers – wittily dressed in bright trousers with T-shirts, tracksuit tops and hats – strike their poses as they balance outstretched or curled up during the rotation.

Graceful and strong, they are eventually flung to the floor like rag dolls as the spin stops abruptly. Meanwhile, a tap spews out water into a iron bucket, a possible metaphor for how their poor stomachs are feeling.

Just as memorable is *Digging Up*, an installation consisting of a grid of digital lights suspended in the pitch black. As the eyes become accustomed to the darkness, the lights sway back and forth, then wink cheekily, eventually serving as



In a spin: Programme Court Avec Essorage, with Boris Charmatz and Eric Martin

a starry backdrop to a pair of dancers, who against such dizzy twinkling look positively extra-terrestrial.

Meanwhile, Sylvia Bossu's *Elite est Trop Fraiche* invites the

viewer to stand on sets of bathroom scales, which then instigate various sounds: an irregular heartbeat, a falling scream, quick breathing and a couple apparently in coitus. The shape of the absent body is suggested by the pre-fixed weights that are displayed on the scales – perhaps as close as one gets to occupying someone else's head this side of *Being John Malkovich*. Yet Bossu's work is multi-layered; as you step onto the scales to hear the lovers' moans, you are instantly reminded of the sometimes painful relationship between female sexuality and the body's self-image.

Through these works alone, *Statuts* is a triumph, yet it must be said other works, such as Julia Cima's *Millefeuille*, lack conviction. Here the show flirts perilously with pretension. But these are passing irritants which are swiftly forgotten in Charmatz's world.

Edinburgh College of Art. Run ended

'They are flung to the floor like rag dolls as the spinning stops'

