

## &gt;&gt;EXHIBITION

**NATIVE LAND,  
STOP EJECT**

21 November-15 March

Fondation Cartier, Paris

Review by Vicky Richardson

Right: Sichuan Province, China, 2008: evacuation of Beichuan after the earthquake

Paul Virilio is one of the most important living urban and cultural theorists, whose work has been an important influence on avant-garde architectural practice since he was director of the Ecole Speciale d'Architecture in Paris in the 1970s and Eighties. Yet when it comes to this exhibition, for which he is co-curator, the message is almost simplistic: the planet is getting old, time is passing more quickly, and the natural scale of things is being polluted by the speed of telecommunication and transportation. With his friend, the renowned film-maker Raymond Depardon, Virilio has created a platform through which to explore their anxious rhetorical plea, 'what is left of this world, of our native land?' One wonders if the message is not rather that the curators themselves are getting old.

It's an exhibition of two halves:

in a series of specially commissioned films, Depardon deals with rootedness through the lives of indigenous people and endangered languages. Through nine moving interviews we learn of the hardships experienced by people in remote regions of Ethiopia, Bolivia, Chile, Brazil and France. A common theme is the interviewees' sadness for a way of life that cannot be sustained in the modern world and languages that are disappearing as their communities dwindle. The footage is beautiful, and one can't help but be charmed by the character of the subjects, and the colourful vernacular of their traditional way of life. But they are pawns in the curators' wider polemic.

Downstairs, in an installation by Virilio in partnership with New York-based artists and architects, Diller Scofidio and Renfro (DSR), the gallery has been transformed into a kind of trading floor or NASA control room where a bank of TV monitors shows segments of archive, global news footage of refugees fleeing from ecological disaster. None of this is credited or labeled, in fact it's not meant to be watched. It simply represents a mass of indiscriminate human disaster, and getting drawn in to specifics is not the point.



XINHUA/AFP PHOTO

Adjacent, DSR has created a circular space of dynamic maps, where statistical information about migration and climate change is represented digitally in an immersive environment. If human stories were irrelevant in the control room, here they cease to exist and people are simply represented as pixels on the screen: one green pixel represents a thousand refugees, one red pixel represents a thousand internally displaced people. As the digital clock ticks down, the pixels swarm across the global map. The impression of

insects being driven from their nests is reinforced by the sound effects of swarming flies, interspersed by jabbering Asian voices edited together so that its impossible to make out language.

There is nothing challenging or informative about the display. It is simply shocking that the curators and designers should present such a dim view of humanity and fail to see any potential in the act of migration, which after all, represents human beings trying to make a better life for themselves.

## &gt;&gt;THEATRE

**EPISODES OF FLIGHT**

3-4 November

Riverside Studios, London

By Rosemary Butcher

Review by Gian Luca Amadei

Right: A drawing created by Matthew Butcher and Melissa Appleton for the performance

Bottom left: Stage shot portraying performer Elena Giannotti. In the background is the projection of an ever-changing grid

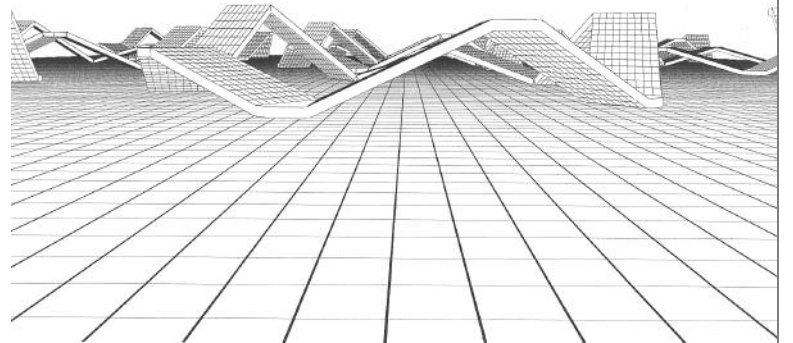
The latest choreography by Rosemary Butcher affirmed her radical approach to visual and performing arts.

Performed by Italian dancer, Elena Giannotti, Episodes of Flight was presented as part of the Dance Umbrella 2008 Festival at the Riverside Studios in London in early November.

Butcher's piece is the result of three years of personal research, which culminated in a trip across America as part of an Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB)

award. Coincidentally, it marked 40 years since Butcher first visited America when, at just 21 years old, she encountered the work of the Judson Church movement, which has since been a huge influence on her work. In the Sixties and Seventies, the Judson Memorial Church in New York was the central hub for a loose collective of choreographers, which, echoing the art scene of Andy Warhol and John Cage, defined post-modern dance movement.

For this show, Butcher re-visited her 1968 journey, isolating the memories from any direct reference to people, events, and landscapes. She kept intact the emotional essence, however, which addresses the juxtaposition of endeavour and dream, as part of the human condition.



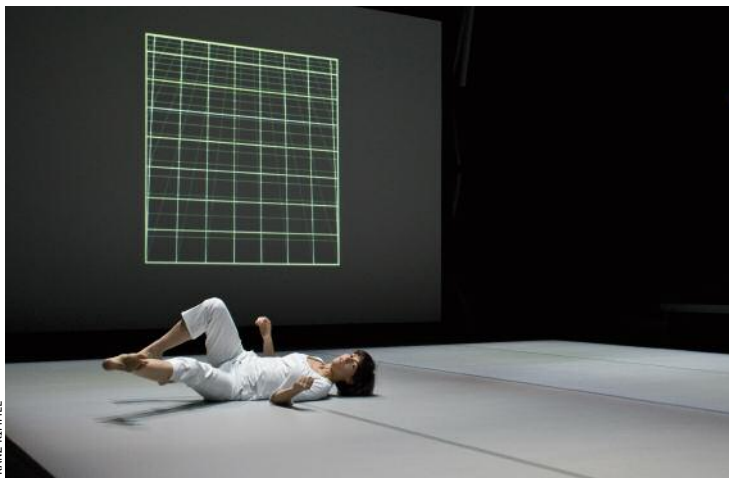
For most of the dance, Giannotti performs on the floor, as though bound to the stage. It is a pivotal moment when she stands upright, or takes flight, as it signifies how Butcher had to overcome difficulties on her trip, but also the wider struggle of humankind. Although based on memories from a politicised era, there is no trace of this being an influence in Episodes of Flight.

The performance space is hemmed in by two facing screens, that define the borders of Butcher's journey. The visual work, designed by two architects, her son Matthew Butcher and Melissa Appleton, complements the rigorous approach of Butcher's work. The distilled utopian, architectural landscapes created by Matthew Butcher and Appleton, evoke the purity of modernist principles, manifest in the regimented urban grid, a recurrent element during the performance. However, the duo

was inspired by avant-garde Italian architectural group Superstudio, which challenged the modernist movement by reinterpreting the use of the grid system in urban developments. In this performance, the grid at times symbolised the horizon in an open landscape as well as the fabric of New York.

Rosemary Butcher's work ultimately reflects on the human condition; our perception of reality, and the experiences connected to our immediate surroundings. Butcher is a choreographer in a class of her own. If she were an architect, one might pitch her radical and inspirational output as being somewhere between the work of modernist Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer and Swiss postmodernist Bernard Tschumi.

*Episodes of Flight will be staged at Theater im Pfalzbau, Ludwigshafen Am Rhein, in Germany in late 2009*



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