



## Review: Readymade

By UNCOOLKIDS on Monday, November 14th, 2005

Wonder Women Rock Merce Cunningham Studio

**By Guest Reviewer: Shannon Jowett**

There's nothing I love more than the sound of performers tromping to their places on a dark stage. It's a moment of anticipation both tendered by trepidation (could this be the most painful 70 minutes of my life?) and rife with hope for something fresh, pleasurable, and engaging.

The ladies of Esse Aficionado did not disappoint with their recent program, *Readymade*, at the Merce Cunningham Studio.



In *History*, lights came up on 9 women of all different sizes and shapes. Uniformed by considerable skill and Gina Graham's punchy choreography, they barked the occasional count and worked themselves into near-testosterone aggression while dressed in black, trunk-cut panties and clear plastic, hip-length smocks that rustled furiously with every gesture. Their blocky-solidness—most of it straight-backed with a hearty tilt from the torso—gave way to a recurrent hunching inward dive cut occasionally by broad scissor steps. Hard-edged with lots of stops and starts, the movement was chunky but never clunky (except a brief moment of unison circle work that struck me as that other Graham's "Primitive Mysteries" for the Jazzercise set.)

The music, listed as "to be decided" in the program, was from *Dark Side of the Moon*. The dance actually bullied the thick strains of Pink, and the incongruous music and choreography created a gripping energy that was at times discombobulating, nerve-racking, exhausting, and exhilarating. In fact, the final tableau served as a perfect visual metaphor for the piece, as dancers stood in line at the front of the stage and ripped off their smocks, glistening from the heat trapped within.

Gina Graham also choreographed *Jerrie Gullick*. Performed with a mixture of audacious indifference and languid athleticism by Maki Morinoue, the solo alternated between a demonstrative adolescent temper-tantrum and the irreverent sass of a 14-year old getting ready for Saturday night at the mall. Graham costumed Morinoue in Flashdance fatigues: oversized, long-sleeve gray t-shirt ripped down the back; pink pajama bottoms; and holey gray socks over a fluorescent pink pair. The piece was big, fun indie-rock "Fuck you!" amplified by the Flaming Lips' *Love Yer Brain* that served as underscore.

*Just in Case you Were Wondering, I'm a Mexican American*, the final piece choreographed by Veronica De La Rosa and Maki Morinoue, was set to an aural collage of strange sounds, snippets of Spanish radio, Tijuana trumpets and the occasional south-of-the-border guitar strum. In homage to the titular heritage, six dancers in long, brightly colored skirts lifted the hem and twirled elegantly or crouched and thrashed like life-sized mariposas gone wild.

Things got a little saucy towards the middle of the piece when the performers lined the back of the stage for some controlled, hip grinding in steady repetition. They ripped off their skirts to reveal tight, sleeveless, above-the-knee dresses. These six *Sex and the City*/Robert Palmer girls were suddenly confronted by three dancers costumed as Wonder Woman. The two opposing factions all but battled it out on stage in a final stand-off (Mexican or otherwise) to a synthesized version of the great be-braceleted one's unmistakable theme. Whether fighting for our rights in their satin tights or displaying the scope of all-female energy, *Esse Aficionado* proved a force to count among NYC's up-and-coming dance companies.



*ReadyMade* is closed, but *Esse Aficionado* performs surprise site-specific takeovers on the streets of Manhattan as well as other concerts throughout the year. Check [www.esseaficionado.org](http://www.esseaficionado.org) for the latest news and to join their mailing list.

Photos courtesy of *Esse Aficionado*.