

# SPRADLIN'S DANCERS MESS AROUND WITH BODIES AND MINDS: NYC DANCE

*By Tobi Tobias for Bloomberg.com*



Call it choreography if you wish. I think it's Outsider Art.

Roseanne Spradlin's new 60-minute "Survive Cycle" opens with six long minutes of head shots on an oversized high-definition video screen. One by one, four people -- two men, two women -- stare at the camera, almost unblinking, as in the video portraits of Thomas Struth. The piece concludes with 20 minutes in which the four, live, methodically arrange a huge wardrobe of clothing item by item until the entire stage is covered with an intricate, vivid mosaic. (Spradlin trained as a visual artist before she turned to performance.)

Creating this design, the human figures are as unobtrusive and matter-of-fact as stagehands. Meanwhile, their video images (created by Glen Fogel) reappear behind them, talking now. Their disclosures, made with the difficulty that accompanies accounts of deep personal pain, seem to be autobiographical.

These "true confessions" register as raw material that Spradlin has ruthlessly appropriated to feed her imagination. In between the two non-dance events, the four performers move, obsessively. Positioned on the four corners of an imaginary square, they twitch and flail spasmodically, clawing at their bodies with grotesquely articulated fingers. Eventually they couple up, bodies stuttering as if wires were horribly crossed in their brains.

Their interaction looks like a violent, deranged parody of copulation. The speed and fury of the movement escalates, the dancers' sheer virtuosity ironically co-opted to evoke extremes of physical and emotional impairment.

"Survive Cycle" can't be categorized as dance, psychodrama or fabric art. The piece is arresting on its own peculiar terms. Spradlin might take as her motto the painter Pierre Bonnard's declaration, "I do not belong to any school.... I am only trying to do something personal."