

# The New York Times

## Dance

DANCE REVIEW

### A Female Exploration of Myth, From Salzburg to New Zealand

'I came here on my own.,' by robbinschilds at Art in General



Kimberlee Venable

**robbinschilds** This duo's video installation "I came here on my own." finished a run at Art in General this weekend paired with its dance work "Salzburggrubzlas, Grubzlassalzburg!"

By CLAUDIA LA ROCCO

Published: December 16, 2012

A mythic quest involving fellowship and solitude; the startling beauty, by turns lush and austere, of a wild land; imposing jewelry possessed of special power: if you now have visions of "The Hobbit" floating in your heads, please banish them. The matter at hand is "I came here on my own.," a video installation by the duo robbinschilds that had its premiere this fall at Art in General.

That work wrapped up Saturday night, accompanied by "Salzburggrubzlas, Grubzlassalzburg!," a silky layering of recorded text, live movement and projected slides. A roughly hourlong performance enfolding "I came here on my own.," "Salzburggrubzlas, Grubzlassalzburg!" was

conceived, written and directed by Layla Childs and Sonya Robbins, who make up robbinschilds and who also choreographed it, in collaboration with two other performers, Vanessa Anspaugh and Aretha Aoki. (Megan Byrne designed the subtly shifting lighting design.)

That work wrapped up Saturday night, accompanied by “Salzburggrubzlas, Grubzlassalzburg!,” a silky layering of recorded text, live movement and projected slides. A roughly hourlong performance enfolding “I came here on my own.,” “Salzburggrubzlas, Grubzlassalzburg!” was conceived, written and directed by Layla Childs and Sonya Robbins, who make up robbinschilds and who also choreographed it, in collaboration with two other performers, Vanessa Anspaugh and Aretha Aoki. (Megan Byrne designed the subtly shifting lighting design.)

The two works, which took place for a small audience seated on two sides of the Art in General gallery in Lower Manhattan, at first might seem to be an unlikely pairing. In “Salzburggrubzlas, Grubzlassalzburg!” Ms. Anspaugh and Ms. Aoki functioned as avatars for robbinschilds, moving like finely tuned mirror images of each other in a bisected area of the columned, wood-floor space. Ms. Childs and Ms. Robbins flanked the dancers like sentries, cycling through slides of Salzburg and its surrounding countryside, and manipulating two sets of recorded text in which they outlined a sometimes comically frustrating creative process around building a site-specific piece.

By contrast “I came here on my own.” is wordless and dreamlike, drenched in colors so rich they seem edible. Here is a sovereign final work, unmoored from whatever went into creating it.

On Saturday four large screens were rolled into the center of the space, so that each section of the audience was presented with a double screen. (Everything in this installation was carefully doubled and split, form merging with content.) One video captured Ms. Childs, the other Ms. Robbins, as each struck out through the same wilderness, but alone, beginning with snowy, forested mountains and moving through verdant fields, pebbled coastlines, lunarlike rocky outcroppings and dense cushions of moss. Like those in “The Hobbit” these improbable landscapes are in New Zealand.

But “I came here on my own.” is a female quest, turning the mythic male journey on its head in favor of something quieter and more mysterious, and conjuring images of other performance voyages, like Marina Abramovic and Ulay’s epic walk toward each other on the Great Wall. The two artists are dressed in changing, layered outfits, distinct yet similar in their whimsical elements: detailed embroidery, rich hues, chunky knits, fanciful hats and, for swimming, plain white undergarments. Each wears an amulet around her neck.

Their soundtrack is sometimes the wind, sometimes a terrifically changeable score by A V Linton, with additional music by Juliana Barwick. Fairy tales and lullabies are evoked, as these two explorers continue on their inscrutable way.

Or is it “ways”? They are alone yet together, at times acknowledging the diptych nature of the journey by mirroring their movements — simple rituals of bowing, walking and balancing — that the audience saw earlier in Ms. Anspaugh and Ms. Aoki’s dancing. Striking out in the studio or the wilderness: in the end the two quests aren’t so different from each other.

A version of this review appeared in print on December 17, 2012, on page C5 of the New York edition with the headline: A Female Exploration of Myth, From Salzburg to New Zealand.