

DIAZ CONTEMPORARY

Brendan Fernandes

Encomium

26 November 2011 to 7 January 2012

Opening Saturday 26 November from 3 to 6

In this new body of work, Fernandes draws on his background as a dancer to further develop his interest in codes of language as they relate to cultural modalities. He has created a performance piece inspired by Plato's *Symposium*, a classical text in which love is examined through a sequence of *Encomium*, or speeches of praise. In a display of physicality and prowess, two men perform a dance as described and instructed by three narrative texts written by the artist that refer specifically to the speech of Phaedrus, in which he describes the asymmetrical love between a man and a boy.

On the floor, serving as a stage for the performance, and bringing in a motif found in much of Fernandes' work, are three words translated into Morse code: love, eros and desire. The choreographic patterns recall the movement of the dancers and lead the viewers through the space, as the dancers are lead by the text. The text itself is printed on posters, which sit like artifacts on plinths. They are meant to be taken away by viewers, so that one can leave with the possibility of re-performing the gestures described, but in another form and place, reinterpreted and reconsidered.

In this exhibition, Fernandes explores the way in which codes of language are articulated through classical ballet, and the way dance acts like any other language form, creating barriers that allow for understanding within specific groups and communities. The various layers of code and text that run through the space, and the bodies that animate it, serve to complicate our perceptions of how we read and reproduce cultural forms, and how we might reassess our relationships to them. Based on his training in ballet and modern dance techniques (Limón and Graham), Fernandes explores movement and language through the dynamics of power, particularly with regard to gender and sexuality.

The performance will occur once at the opening and again on the last day of the show, Saturday, 7 January, 2012. It will be represented in the space during the rest of the show through video documentation and the written instructions.

Fernandes completed the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and earned his MFA from The University of Western Ontario and his BFA from York University in Canada. Recent solo exhibitions include *until we fearless* at the Art Gallery of Hamilton (catalogue) and *From Hiz Hands* at Art in General in New York City (catalogue). Recent group exhibitions include *Found in Translation* at the R. Solomon Guggenheim Museum, NY, and *Barroco Nova* at McIntosh Gallery, The University of Western Ontario, London. He recently collaborated with Danish artist Nanna Debois Buhl on *In Your Words* at the Karen Blixen Museum in Denmark. He is based between Toronto and New York.



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