



Museums get an upgrade EXHIBITS REFLECT MOVE TO ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Anna Halprin in front of the video projections of "Out of Boundaries," (L) shot in 2004, and "Who Says I Have to Dance in Theater," shot in 2006, which are part of the exhibition on Halprin currently on display the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. The exhibition about the famed Marin choreographer includes photos, videos, drawings and documents that chronicle Halprin's career. Photographed on February 27, 2008. (Jeff Vendsel / Bay Area News Group)

Most museums have discovered in the last decade that merely hanging art on a wall won't cut the mustard in a world where they can download a universe of audio and video.

Some of the first museums to change how they present exhibits have been in the Bay Area, where gadgets and gadget-heads have lived happily for many years. That kind of environment is proving to be a grand field for the successful introduction of the tech-enabled, extra-dimensional museum experience. Years ago, the Exploratorium in San Francisco and the Tech Museum in San Jose were built on that principle.

The San Jose Museum of Art has begun to win awards for its podcasts and is working with a group that includes the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., to track the effect on visitor traffic.

The Los Altos History Museum's current show, an audiovisual biographical look at David and Lucile Packard, comes not only with boots and china service, but also with three charming films, one museum-produced.

At the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, a retrospective of the career of post-modern dance legend Anna Halprin includes almost two hours of film and audio tracks of her dances, along with music that inspired her, and filmed interviews with her, her friends and colleagues. The complex tapestry of 40 years of Halprin's work is released from the silence and immobility of still photography and instead appears in its original form - moving, with the noise of props, dancers, nature and, sometimes, the street.

The logic of this presentation is unquestionable and creates a sizzling portrait of the artist and her work.

When museum backers, including some of Silicon Valley's software giants, built a brand-new Los Altos History Museum in 2001, they made sure it had state-of-the-art computers and screens as exhibition tools. When its curators began to assemble "Lucile and David Packard: Valued Partners," they had lots of material on David Packard.

By comparison, there was very little recorded material about Lu, as her friends and family called her. The Packard family was generous in contributions of entertaining letters Lu wrote to her parents in the early years of her life with David, but curator Nan Geschke wanted something else, too, and made a 45-minute film that features several of Lu's friends reminiscing. They tell stories that bring her to life - someone you'd want to know. That film and two others made in the past by Hewlett-Packard are popular features of the exhibit.

Geschke knew that would likely be the case. "The videos are not interactive," she said, but they add "another dimension. It's another way to learn the same information you get on the panels, and some people actually prefer that."

Two years ago, when the museum hosted a six-month series of events and programs on noted Western writer Wallace Stegner, there were many visitors who, Geschke said, "instead of reading the panels would just sit and listen to a film narrated by Robert Redford. That's how they absorbed the exhibit's information. We're finding more and more that people learn in different ways, so we have to put out the same information in different ways."

Producing and showing filmed interviews is also another method of capturing history that is ephemeral. One of the women Geschke interviewed for the Lu Packard film has since died.

By Sara Wykes

'Anna Halprin: At the Origin of Performance'

By Sara Wykes

Where: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Third Street between Mission and Howard streets, San Francisco

When: Noon-5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday; noon-8 p.m. Thursday, through April 6

Tickets: \$7, \$5 seniors, students and teachers

Information: (415) 978-2787 or www.ybca.org <<http://www.ybca.org>>