

# Arts & Entertainment

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jitsu, Avedon uses the superficial to transcend it. "You can only get beyond the surface," he says, "by working with the surface."

The slyest instance of this comes in the two appearances made in the exhibit by Andy Warhol. Oscar Wilde was the supreme aesthete of the 19th century, and Warhol was of the 20th: equally gifted as aphorist, bellwether, and self-publicist. Avedon knows perfectly well how important — or at least emblematic — Warhol was. Nonetheless, he doesn't merit a portrait, per se. Instead, he's shown showing (how very Andy!) his abdomen, with its tangle of surgical scars from Valerie Solanis's shooting of him; and then he appears as but one figure — off to the side, no less — in Avedon's mural-sized group portrait, "The Factory," comprising various members of the Warhol scene. The moralist doesn't dismiss the aesthete. Rather, he puts him in his place (to interpret is to judge).

Avedon once remarked that he could not "make a picture that doesn't make a moral statement." Again and again, the images on display at the Met bear this out. Avedon offers Ezra Pound as blind seer, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor as mannered Maggie and Jiggs, Jean Renoir as 20th-century *philosophe* (it's hard to overstate how beautiful Avedon has made the great filmmaker's wrinkled, bald head look — every eyebrow hair is eloquent). This is not how these individuals appeared in, say, *Life* — or even, surely, in their own reveries. It is how Avedon saw them, though, and in at least some cases he has made his way of seeing them ineradicably ours.

The essential tension in Avedon's portraiture is between simplicity and staginess — or, better yet, simplicity *as* staginess: the af-

## Opening

**"THIS IS THEN"** — Memory is the theme curator Steven Holmes has selected for this show of work by half a dozen important contemporary artists. Among them are David Small, whose "Illuminated Manuscript" is an interactive digital book that is truly magical, and Shellburne Thurber, who photographs empty psychoanalysts' offices, which, in this context, suggest all the memories that have been poured out in these rooms. "This Is Then" is at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor St., Hartford, Ct., from Saturday through Feb. 15. 860-232-1006www.realartways.org.

**"PRINTS FROM THE SERENISSIMA: CONNOISSEURSHIP AND THE GRAPHIC ARTS IN 18TH-CENTURY VENICE"** — As Venice slid in political importance, it maintained its cultural vigor right up until Napoleon's conquest in 1797. Part of the vigor was due to great activity in printmaking that described, documented, and decorated life in La Serenissima. Part of the fun of this show, organized by Darius A. Spieth, is that so many of the artists are unfamiliar to all but experts. Opening on Saturday at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, 32 Quincy St., Cambridge, where it remains on view through March 9. 617-495-9400; www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

## Now showing

**"NEW YORK, NEW WORK, NOW!"** — New Hampshire's Currier Museum is making it possible for you to see the latest from New York without leaving New England. New media projects including Jeremy Blake's video projection about a woman haunted by ghosts and Josh On's Web site "They Rule," an interactive exploration of the power structure of corporate America, are among the offerings. There's also — good grief! — paint on canvas. At the Currier Museum of Art, 201 North Weymouth Street, Manchester, N.H.

# Thinking small could be just the ticket for local dance scene

By Christine Temin  
GLOBE STAFF

Both of Boston Ballet's "Raw Dance" performances — works choreographed and danced by company members and presented last weekend in the Cyclorama — sold out. There were 280 seats for the Friday show; when it proved a hit, another 40 seats were added for Saturday.

Jose Mateo's Ballet Theatre sold out all nine performances of its recent "Then, Here & Now" program in its 90-seat Sanctuary Theatre in Harvard Square.

Shows in the Emerging Artist Series at Cambridge's Green Street Studios have also been selling out: The studio-theater holds an audience of 125, with another 25 places on mats on the floor.

At the other end of the scale, for its most recent Wang Theatre program, John Cranko's stunning "Onegin," Boston Ballet had more than 43,000 seats available for the 12-performance run. The total ticket sales — through subscriptions, group sales, and single tickets — numbered around 18,000, a sad statistic, especially since "Onegin" earned rapturous reviews.

"Think small" might be a good motto for Boston dance institutions to

## A spin around town

From Cambodian and Senegalese troupes to experimental collaborations, upcoming dance offerings abound. **N6**



GLOBE FILE PHOTO/ANDREW PAGE (TOP)

Clockwise from top: Linda Chan Thou takes flight with the Angkor Dance Troupe, performance artist Marjorie Morgan teams with trombonist Tom Plsek, and Le Ballet National du Senegal heats up the stage.

adopt just now, not only because the Boston Ballet's big, splashy productions aren't selling, but also because intimate, informal performances can build audiences — and loyalty — far more effectively than can anything in the chill cavern of the 3,600-seat Wang.

The Wang is one of the chief obstacles to developing an audience for dance in Boston. Its sightlines are awful, even after attempts to fix them. In a proper opera house, balconies are stacked so that even in the highest, audiences are closer to the stage than they are in the Wang, where the balconies stretch so far back that people in the last rows might just as well rent a dance video and go home.

Audiences in the Wang have a tough time connecting to what's on-stage, even when it's high-level fare such as this season's two productions: a repertory program that included bold work by choreographers Mark Morris and William Forsythe, and the sumptuous story ballet "Onegin."

But when it's a question of other recent Boston Ballet productions that were swamped by decor and costumes — "Dracula," "Cleopatra" — and that had very little actual choreography, audiences don't learn about dance. And learning is the key to enjoying. They

**CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK, Page N6**