

THE Arts

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In Brooklyn, a Boschscape Of Vows, Song and Flesh

"I don't want to miss my cue," the festively dressed man sitting next to me explained as he edged his chair closer to see the left side of the tableau before us: 120 people

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**PERFORMANCE
REVIEW**

arrayed over tiered platforms at one end of the extraordinary Skylight One Hanson, a majestic Art Deco

space in the former Williamsburgh Savings Bank building, a towering landmark in downtown Brooklyn. His cue, it turned out, about halfway through Sarah Small's "Tableau Vivant of the Delirium Constructions," was a signal to go and get married. Up he went on one side, joined by an elegantly dressed woman who mounted the tiers from the other end. And amid the gorgeous array of bodies, naked and clothed, very fat and extremely skinny, pierced and tattooed, wrinkly and smooth, with a Bulgarian a capella quartet singing dreamily and the Brooklyn Rider string quartet playing, they appeared to plight their troth as Ms. Small officiated. (A press agent later confirmed they were renewing their vows.)

Then Ms. Small, a photographer and singer who has created a number of smaller-scale tableau vivants around the city, moved to another couple dressed in white. Before, the pair had seemed simply part of the strange scene, in which the naked reclined on the formally suited, the young embraced the old, and a woman in an elaborate dress and tall feathered headpiece stood in front of the immense mosaic map that adorns the far end of the gigantic space.

The man of that second couple then produced a ring, and Ms. Small spoke quietly to them as the singers' voices resounded thrillingly. They kissed, and the woman cried as the crowd gestured to them. A real marriage, it turned out, had taken place, and the emotion felt oddly appropriate in the midst of the sea of hu-

Tableau Vivant of the Delirium Constructions

Skylight One Hanson

manity all around.

"Delirium Constructions" was, according to program notes, inspired by Ms. Small's visit to the French and Italian painting galleries in the Louvre. "I became enchanted by the dramatically disparate groupings of characters and emotions," she writes. "I imagined what it would be like if the frames melted away."

With the piece's director, Adam J. Thompson, Ms. Small gives those imaginings remarkable visceral impact in "Delirium." Nothing much happens, ostensibly (except marriage, that is; another couple were married in the previous evening's performance), over the course of the 45-minute work, which begins with Shara Worden singing "Deh vieni non tardar" from Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro." (Another singer, Abigail Wright, nude, also performs extensively throughout and ends the piece alone with Offenbach's "C'est l'amour vainqueur.")

The figures, which seem at first to be asleep, are summoned to life by Ms. Small, who walks among them, motioning like a conductor. They perform repetitive gestures — wiping away a tear, a move in and out of a hug, a silent scream — until Ms. Small directs them into unison chanting and rigidly synchronized movements. (Choreographed by Vanessa Walters, this section was the piece's weakest moment.)

As with looking at a painting by Bosch, the more you gaze at the panoply of human figures that Ms. Small arrays with a painterly eye over the stage space, the more you see. By the end, the ordinary — the imperfect, real human bodies in their astounding variety of shapes, colors and forms — seems like a miracle, and "Delirium" like a gift.