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DANCE

The real time it takes... ★★★★★

Rosalind Crisp

The blurb advertising Rosalind Crisp's retrospective performance installation describes the Omeo-born dancer and choreographer as the Mick Jagger of Australian dance. It's an irresistible hook, but what does it mean?



Photo: LISA ROBERTS

It's true that she knows how to rock out. Think, for example of the last minutes of her 2006 solo – known simply as *danse (1)* – where she leaps and convulses to revved up sounds classic guitar rock. But that's Janis Joplin, isn't it? Perhaps it's the swagger. The attitude. The aura. Crisp has always had the power to captivate, to draw the eye and orientate a room around her presence. It's more than her wiry strength, her long limbs and loping gait. It's the intensity.

This retrospective features photographs, videos and a few select relics, including a tiny Victorian Ballet School sweatshirt with a roughly scissored scoop neck. She has been making work for more than three decades, but most of the video documentation in this exhibition is from the period after 2002, when she relocated to Paris. There are selections, too, from her more recent environmentally engaged work.

The highlight is an extended live performance by Crisp, during which she muses aloud on what it means to look back on a career. Her improvisations are energetic but inflected by sombre tone. She dances like someone who can't go on – but must. At the end of the show, the light fades but Crisp continues to dance. She is still searching, still questing through gesture, exploring the possibilities of form, cutting, fragmenting and then piecing together. Even now she can't get no satisfaction. She must keep moving and inventing. What is a retrospective if not the creation of a new myth? So embrace the marketing hype, get over to Dancehouse and revel in the presence of this dancer who might also be a rock star.

Reviewed by Andrew Fuhrmann