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CITY ARTS

APR **Naked Dancers on the Kitchen Table**

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Call me a pervert (I've been called worse), but the intensity of Noémie Lafrance's [latest performance piece](#) had me all hot and bothered.

Lafrance is probably best known for being the person who "discovered" the wonders of McCarren Park Pool. She choreographed a large group dance project there, *Agora* and *Agora II*, and the place took off as a hipster fun-time venue and now it will eventually be transformed back into a playtime pool playground.



For her latest boundary-pushing site-specific piece, *Home*, she has decided to go small-scale and domestic and as invited spectators into her Williamsburg apartment (Lafrance is currently pregnant and that is reason enough for her to decide to choreograph close to home) to participate in an erotic pagan ritual that can totally [freak out someone](#) not ready for the pleasures of face-to-face performance. It's set to close this weekend, but I hope as many people as possible decide to experience it.

After performing ablutions (washing your hands at the kitchen sink), 22 people were invited to sit at a long dining room table facing on which Lafrance was lying prostrate, nearly naked, her large pregnant belly resting on the polished wood surface. We were handed magnifying glasses to inspect the bucolic landscape that had been constructed on her right thigh and shin. Miniature trees, pigs, horses and sheep grazed on her leg hair, which had been spray-painted green. Yes, calves were even glued to her calves. Lafrance began to slither down the length of the table, as we passed off the magnifying glasses for the rest of the group to scope out the tableau of pores and fake trees. This may have been the most "normal" part of the evening.

Lafrance wore antlers and later sat at the head of the table, staring us down, and performed a ritualistic tea ceremony. If we didn't believe in the fertility of her body from the livestock metaphor, then we got it when she poured hot water over her very ample bosom and erect nipples. The two handmaids—Celeste Hastings and Melissa Lockwood—were the eldest of the group, and they helped Lafrance (Mom) and Maré Hieronimus (the youth) as they engaged in a series of vignettes ranging from dusting, cleaning, brushing teeth, to more sensual scenarios. Hieronimus, who also wore antlers (which seemed a little *too* Brooklyn designer perfect), is the real star and astounded in her trust of those of us gathered around her young, nude body. After she coyly played with us, she also laid herself on the table, and we are invited to write on her with watercolor crayons. Then we were given plaster of Paris and wrapped her naked, rigid body until she was mummified. It's a sensual, chilling, emotional moment that left me feeling spent.

No applause, no curtain call, no closure. We've just experienced the stages of life (and death) in Lafrance's home—aided by Thomas Dunn's lighting and Brooks Williams compositions. I am aware of the clumsy intervals and how thin it is on theory (didn't Yoko Ono already do this to greater effect? Doesn't Marina Abramovic take us into even deeper territory? Didn't Matthew Barney create a complete world that amazed in its abundance of metaphor?), but the sensual generosity is overpowering, and I can't deny the emotions this piece resurrected within me. I wish Lafrance would ditch the Tom Waits sounds and discover something that would suit this piece even more—like the boozy, woozy, damaged voice of Shilpa Ray. In fact, the biggest mistake is that it's being considered dance. Why was I sitting across from dance critics Deborah Jowitt and Gia Kourlas? I should have been sitting with art critics Jerry Saltz and Paddy Johnson. The only reason I could guess is that you can charge \$30 for a dance performance, while an installation art piece is usually experienced free of charge.

Lafrance is known for safe, inclusive works, but *Home* may be the beginning of a breakthrough. While we still know we can trust her, it's the amount of trust she has placed with us, the permission she has granted us, that is truly astounding. The sort of generosity is rare and I applaud her for it.

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