

Dance Beyond Borders: Jill Sigman

-Eva Yaa Asantewaa

Many of us have this crackpot idea that we exist only within the flimsy vessels of flesh we've been issued. But a world of shamans—and some dancers—think otherwise. Jill Sigman seems to be one of those people who defy the little ego's fear of annihilation by sloughing off notions of personal identity, loosening the constraints of physical form, reaching into a universe teeming with energies, and remaking themselves right before our eyes. She walks right out into art's wild places.

Jill slips easily from one porous, blurry-edged version of reality to another—from one body to another and from one gender to another—re-surfacing at different spots within the endless stream of being. She merges with the sites of her performances, lending them luminous ideas and energies; in turn, these sites participate in her dance.

It's reasonable to imagine Jill's life as one continuous dance, and dance, as she sees it, as one continuous thought—the body and mind indistinguishable. By making thoughts visceral, she grounds them for us and renders them accessible, even irresistible. Using skills honed by classical training and non-classical investigation of movement, she employs a subtle, transparent virtuosity that packs an emotional wallop.

Jill's dancing draws from her exploration of the cultural and political currents of our times. About performing *Pulling the Wool: An American Landscape of Truth and Deception* (2004), she writes, "I began to see myself as the body of this country, a metaphorical body of ideals, principles, hopes, and rights, a body that is currently undergoing surgery." In this way, she dares take on the shamanic mantle, dancing our wounds, confusions, and ecstasies in the clear light of day.

By watching Jill, we recognize ourselves and discover options for what it is possible to feel, be, and do. She invites us not only to watch shift happen but to be radically shifted.

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