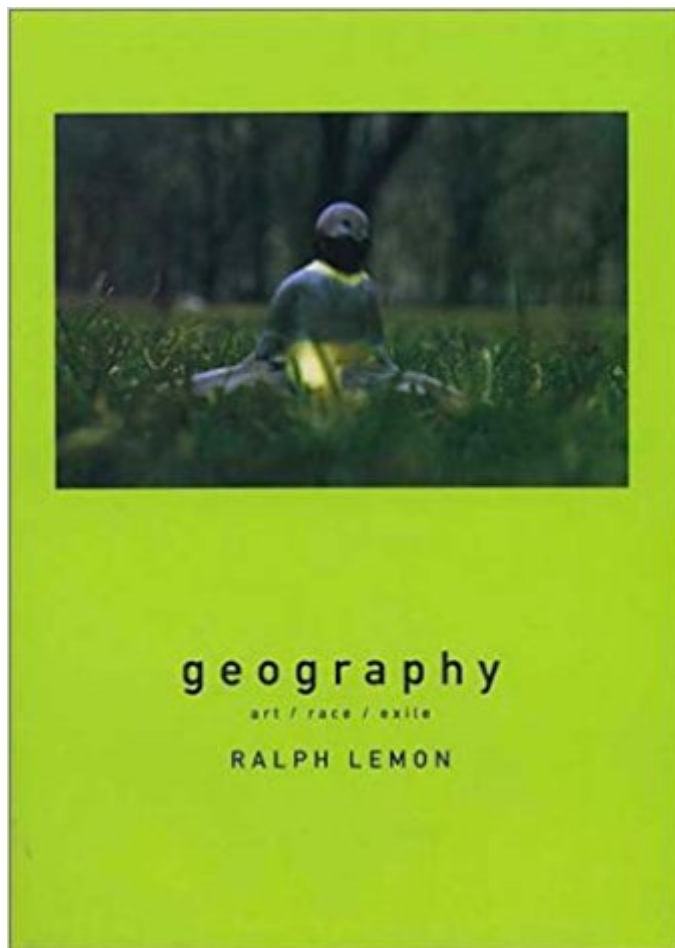




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Geography: Art / Race / Exile



Synopsis

Geography, a rich tapestry of journal entries, choreographic scores, drawings, and photographs, leads us through the creation of an evening-long dance, "Geography," a collaboration about being American, African, brown, black, blue black, male, and artist. This dance piece was a major departure for Ralph Lemon. In it everything is at stake -- his identity, his politics, his art, his very way of moving. In order to create it, he traveled to Africa in search of dancers and a new relationship to the stage. The intimate, keenly observed passages in this artist's journal give us extraordinary insights on the process of dance-making -- from the discovery of specific movements to the sometimes uneasy relationships between the dancers. Aeschylus' Oresteia forms the subtext of the dance: Lemon subtly portrays the exiled son of his mother Africa. Dancing is his crime, a stoning his trial, and an ancestral chorus his threshold to the future. At every juncture the collaboration posed difficult questions about representing African dance and culture within the context of modern America's post-slave heritage. The book beautifully documents Lemon's ability to negotiate different dance traditions without either erasing or cementing them.

Book Information

Hardcover: 208 pages

Publisher: Wesleyan; 1st edition (November 24, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0819564435

ISBN-13: 978-0819564436

Product Dimensions: 10.3 x 7.4 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds

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Best Sellers Rank: #730,942 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 in Books > Arts &

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Customer Reviews

The downtown New York City choreographer and dancer Lemon investigated the African side of his African-America creative identity, traveling to Cote d'Ivoire in the mid '90s and assembling a dance troupe there. This book is Lemon's searching, brutally frank travelogue, a cross-genre combination of journal entries, photographs, drawing and a variety of performance plans--plans Lemon and his eventual troupe collaborated on and subsequently performed throughout the U. S. to critical

acclaim. In Orestes-like fashion, Lemon probes the trip, his creative process and his ideas about himself in direct and unstinting prose: "I think of what it will be like to let seven blue-black Africans into my hermetic interior... I cannot come up with anything that seems immediately useful to them or me. I am not particularly in love with African dance. I am not particularly in love with any tradition." The book is most powerful when Lemon hones in on the physical, spiritual and cultural contradictions inherent in his attempts at placing the rhythm-based sensibilities of the African dangers into formal Western structures, making the book an informally paradigmatic case study of cultural collision and collaboration. (Dec.) Forecast: This book requires a certain familiarity with and sympathy for the vicissitudes of the art world, but Lemon's reflections will speak to anyone who has attempted to confront the myriad meanings of multiculturalism. The multi-medial presentation will make the book appealing to the visual art enthusiasts, while the prose's tonalities will be familiar to fans of poets like Bill Luoma and should broaden the book's appeal beyond the dance and race smart sets. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Searching, brutally frank . . . a cross-genre combination of journal entries, photographs, drawings and a variety of performance plans . . . In Orestes-like fashion, Lemon probes the trip [to Africa], his creative process and his ideas about himself in direct and unstinting prose . . . an informally paradigmatic case study of cultural collision and collaboration . . . Lemon's reflections will speak to anyone who has attempted to confront the myriad meanings of multiculturalism." --Publishers Weekly

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