

# Los Angeles Times

Theater review: 'bobrauschenbergamerica' at [Inside] the Ford

January 28, 2010 | 6:46 pm



Charles L. Mee's "bobrauschenbergamerica," now playing at [Inside] the Ford, sets itself a difficult challenge: To translate into theatrical form the unique sensibility of the late, great American artist Robert Rauschenberg, whose extraordinary combines blurred distinctions not just between painting and sculpture but more crucially between reality and representation (more commonly known as life and art).

TheSpyAnts present the Los Angeles premiere of Mee's collage-homage, a fluid series of riffs on the raucous dynamism of everyday American culture that inspired the Texas-born Rauschenberg's delight in jarring, yet somehow inevitable, juxtapositions. Bob's Mom (Mari Marks) keeps mentioning that "art was not a part of our lives" during her son's Port Arthur childhood, though the carnivalesque energy that surrounds them clearly left unshakable impressions.

Bart DeLorenzo directs a bouncy, colorfully-clad cast — think roller skates and tube socks, shower caps and towels, prim taffeta and white gloves — and an ever-surprising potpourri of props, including a bathtub, giant whisk, hanging bicycles and, naturally enough, a few loopy animal figures. Choreographer Ken Roht intensifies the kaleidoscope reel on Marina Mouhibian's set, which transforms in a blink from bland warehouse clutter to circus magic.



Mee's play sets generous parameters, freely inviting theater artists to collaborate in the imagining of stage possibilities. Lacking the resources Anne Bogart and her SITI company enjoyed when I saw their ultra polished production at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2003, DeLorenzo's handling has a more accessible rawness. Green but game, his ensemble scurries in search of the serendipitous grace that Mee interprets as a defining feature of Rauschenberg's innovative vision.

Amid all the giddy to-ing and fro-ing, however, lies an unavoidable textual shortcoming. Theater, unlike the visual arts, is temporal as well as spatial, and the play has a rhythm problem that the production can't quite resolve: The cascade of lunatic images is wearying. Still, the experience of seeing this oddly titled piece may help you to discover the unexpected beauty in the quotidian jumble that habit, an

inveterate deadener, has taught us to overlook.

-- Charles McNulty

"[bobrauschenbergamerica](#)," [Inside] the Ford, 2580 E. Cahuenga Blvd., Hollywood. 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays, 3 and 7 p.m. Sundays. Ends Feb. 28. \$20. (323) 461-3673 or [www.FordTheatres.org](http://www.FordTheatres.org) Running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes.

*Photo: Top: Eric Bunton and Jennifer Etienne Eckert. Bottom: Breeze Braunschweig  
Credit: Jeff Ellingson*