



## NELL STEWART

gallery2



Gallery 2: Nell Stewart, "To the Trees"

Opens: Friday, January 6, 7–9pm Location: 487 Driggs Ave, between N. 9 and N. 10

Dates: January 6–February 5, 2005

Gallery Hours: Thurs–Mon, 12– 6pm

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Press release

TO THE TREES Trailer:

Jack the Pelican is delighted to premier Nell Stewart's hypnotic feminist masterpiece, *To the Trees* (DVD, 16 minutes). A former dancer with the Houston Ballet, performance artist and commercial actress, known for her role as the Blood Countess Bathory, among others, Stewart freshly plunges into the medium of video with disciplined abandon.

Prim hysterical nurses wiggle free of their uniforms and parade in crouch-walking dance, axes raised high, as freakish as the winged monkeys in *The Wizard of Oz*. Doctors of psychiatry slur out their rants to the hoard. On the blackboard behind the lectern, a stray, mentally-collapsed nurse chalks out broken diagrams. —All these remarkably realized characters are Stewart herself, painstakingly choreographed and layered into a single progression of scenes. And looking on is the sweet, giant eye of a beast, which, as it turns out is Stewart's poodle Leroy.

A lyrical score drives the montage forward, with glimpses of a handsome, well-dressed power couple in the woods, tugging back and forth at a Duane Reade bag and eating brains and finally swimming away into a lake, like swans. The whole is a sort of graceful post-punk disgorgement, rich, dense and stirringly beautiful in the marriage of audio and image. —This is Eleanor Antin swept up in *The Lathe of Heaven*.

Nell Stewart also danced with the San Francisco Opera Ballet and the Garden State Ballet, among others; studied clowning with Soviet émigré Yuri Belov; and is an accomplished martial artist. But she describes herself mainly as a Throbbing Gristle baby. Her early 80s mock-industrial band Function Disorder and, concurrently, her regular appearances as a core performer in Howie Montague's historic Danceteria cabaret marked a turning point in her life. She broke out in the 80s as a performance artist at such venues as Buskers, Club 57, Mudd Club, Sparkle Sound Studios, The Anvil, Lucky Strike, Late Again, Pier 11 and ABC No Rio.

Later, non-commercial theatrical work, including such notable one-woman shows as *Unpredictable Woman and Monsters*, which she performed at Haunted Studios in LA, and *Ring Rang A Fairytale (life in the mind of a schizophrenic obsessive compulsive decapitator)* at the Westbeth Theater allowed her to plumb her fascination with dark psychological states. Her first short video, *Clydia and Toib* premiered in 2002 at the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival.