

STILL LIFE

RHONDA HOLBERTON'S LIQUID ELEGIES

Tanya Gayer

I stand in the dark interior of a metallic structure. As my eyes adjust to the surroundings I begin to see ghostly ballerinas who are twirling around one another. Their tutus softly bounce with each step they take and their hands gracefully trace their bodies. As legs lift into pirouettes I become distinctly aware that I am surrounded by strangers and wonder if they can make out this faint scene as well. I blink and the dancers disappear. My eyes now begin to trace a long and thin horizontal line of light. Does it flicker? Or hum? I find I cannot trust my senses as I continue to adjust to the darkness; unsure if I see a soft glow of delicate bodies, or if I hear sound, or if I can give into the simplicity of a band of light.

The portal of time and vision I experienced in the installation, *The Invention of the Ship Was Also the Invention of the Shipwreck*, replicates many of the inquiries and experiences with which artist Rhonda Holberton imbues her oeuvre. I conjured what Holberton describes as a "human vernacular within digital semantics." There were in fact no bal-

lerinas whatsoever in her work, but instead an amalgamation of movie trailers spliced together and projected on a CRT monitor orientated downwards towards the floor. The result of the converted projection was a narrow horizontal line reflected from the ground. And most surprisingly, the movie trailers were chosen by the artist based on their representation of the apocalypse. Rather than a soft and romantic vision of tulle-clad dancers as I envisioned, Holberton's compressed images within the horizontal line were actually of death and destruction.

What is evident in *The Invention of the Ship*, considering my experience and Holberton's intentions for the work, is the notion of disassembly and reinstatement. My senses were stripped away in the installation, which led to the fabrication of my surroundings, and resulted in my doubling back to reconstruct the images and environment altogether. For the artist, the act of disassembly and reinstatement is identified in her compilation of similar conceptual movie trailers, the distillment of im-

