thINKingDANCE
Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Image: Artblog

To Signposts and Light Poles

by Nicole Sonsini

thINKingDANCE recently partnered with local online publications Artblog, Velvet Glove, Curate This, and Title to judge submissions to Artblog's 2017 New Art Writing Challenge. We are thrilled to share Nicole Sonsini's "To Sign Posts and Lightpoles," our first prize winner. Congratulations, Nicole!

To all of you.

To the artists whose names I've come to know, those I've admired near and dear, but mostly from afar. To those of you who've paved these streets with the glittering gold of knowledge, power, wit, and whimsy. I see you. I hear you. You save space for artists like me in this moving, gliding, gilded metropolis. To those who rise up and rise above the tide of hate and mud and ugliness. Who tell their stories amid the towering steel and crumbling concreteness of it all; the signposts who lead us home.

To **ESPO**, only and always a Chinatown bus ride away from where you left us. Your poetry guides us home to the hearts whose claim we stake. Every word a journey, a truth in every inside joke on every outside wall you've crawled and climbed and conquered.

To **Amberella**, for putting hearts in the hopes of others, for softening the hard edges, and hardening the soft edges, and for gutting us to our core in the name and in vain of love.

To **Kid Hazo**, for allowing us to laugh freely, wildly, wryly with a wink and a nudge. For tickling the stiff upper lips of critics andcriticizers. For putting the “fun” squarely inside “dysfunctional.”

To **Michelle Angela Ortiz**, for pushing back and pushing forward. For giving a voice to the voiceless, the afraid and the unafraid. For painting a portrait of the real us, you, them. For art into action. For believing. For *being*.

To **Aubrie Costello**, you’ve got the world on a string, the thing that makes us pause, the cause and the effect. Your words tied tightly around the hearts of the city, unexpected; breathless. Your breakups and makeups, your mess ups, and fess ups, strung and hung for all to see. A documentarian of truth and I believe every word you speak into these streets.

To **Nosego**, the flash of life, the color bomb, the real and the surreal. Modern totems, joy explosions, carved into the earth of cities with stories not nearly as beautiful as the work you bless them with.

To **Tatyana Fazlalizadeh,** the city still considers you one of its own, its prodigal daughter and sun. Our fearless truth-teller, our revolution and resolution, our true north when it’s all gone left. Push, pull, repeat. There are no days off in the business of living one’s truth.

To **Nero One**, succinct, unsettling; sincere and sincerely. For always knowing what to say and when to say it. A bullseye on the end of a crosswalk.

To **Shira Walinsky**, the optimistic outsider willing to listen, to learn, to stand up and stand down. For always enriching, empowering, envisioning. For shining the spotlight and never stealing it. The stories will live on, new life breathed into them, passed on and around like a shared meal or a family secret. I honor them, I honor you.

To **Bruno Guerreiro,** the medium, the knowledge-dropper, leaving breadcrumbs and bits and bobbins, the words of those who’ve said it better, of those who’ve come before us. A trusted messenger of truth and insight, notable quotables, messages from beyond the grave.

To **Ishknits**, the left coast may have tried to court you with its sun-soaked everything, but home is where the heart gets stitched 6 by 6, 10 by 10, larger than life or smaller than a secret. Thank you for telling your story and the stories of others. But especially for those of us too afraid, too un-ready, to not-brave-enough-just-yet to do so.

And to those artists whose names I’ll never know. The youngins repping their set in Sharpie scrawls, a secret written between two SEPTA seats; to **215 Rell** and **North Philly Banga**, your art is a mile-marker, a touchstone, a nod to the culture, to the streets that owe you nothing and everything all at once. You capture time and space, mark-making milestones like love, and life, and loyalty, and death. I see you, I hear you, and I save you space here in this womb and tomb of a city. Raise up and rise above, write your name high atop our makeshift monuments, the trestles and turnstiles, the light poles that guide us home.

To all of you:

In honor of and in homage to.

From all of me.

By Nicole Sonsini
November 29, 2017