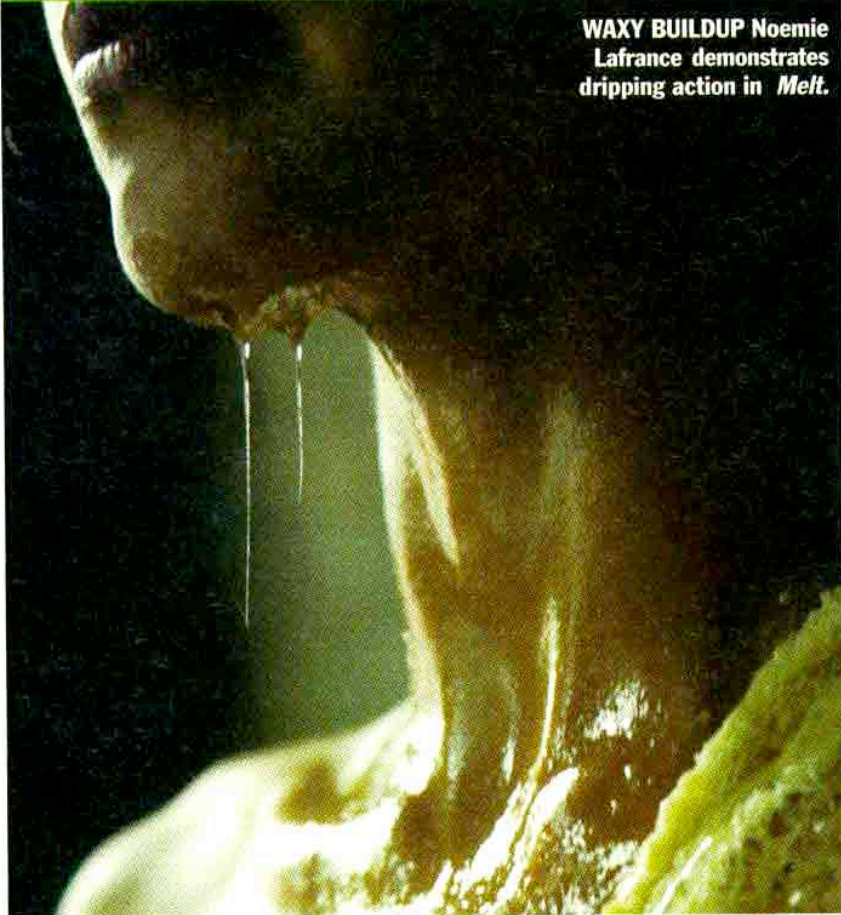


# DANCE

**WAXY BUILDUP** Noemie Lafrance demonstrates dripping action in *Melt*.



## Buzzworthy

Noemie Lafrance draws a swarm with

dries and hardens just from the temperature,” she explains.

In the work, dancers perch upon wooden seats—the highest is ten feet above the ground—which are bolted to a cement wall. The dancers are strapped in with harnesses, but Lafrance will disguise both the straps and the chairs so that it appears as if they are floating.

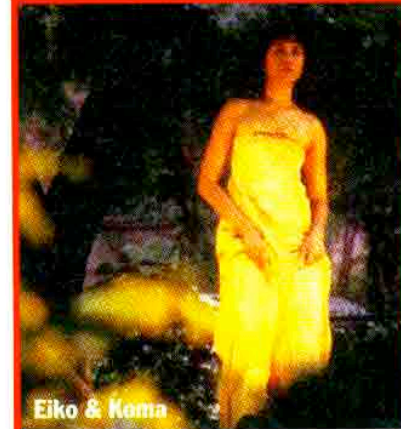
“It’s kind of *Alice in Wonderland*-like,” she says. “Even though the dancers are women, I don’t want this to be about feminine characters like *Descent* was. *Melt* is more about textures.”

For Lafrance, creating *Melt* also serves as a break from planning and fund-raising for her next site-specific project, *Noir*, which will take place in a parking garage. The new work takes its cues from film noir. “This piece is going to play with cinema, so I want to create an illusion that you’re in a film,” Lafrance says. “It’s about the history of suspense, so the whole thing should feel scary. I want to spend some time creating that piece.”

Lafrance, who is 29 and hails from Montreal, began dancing and choreographing when she was in high school. She moved to New York in 1994 to attend an intensive workshop at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary

Dance | Listings

## DON'T MISS...



Eiko & Koma

### Eiko & Koma

(See Thu 19) Eiko & Koma present free performances of *Offering (reconceived)* in the yard of St. Mark’s Church.

### Noemie Lafrance

(See Sat 21) Choreographer Noemie Lafrance unveils her latest site-specific installation, *Melt*.

### American Ballet Theatre

(See Mon 23) Alessandra Ferri and Ethan Stiefel kick off performances of Frederick Ashton’s *The Dream*.

### New York City Ballet

(See Tue 24) NYCB wraps up its spring season with a week of George Balanchine’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

DANCE

## her new work's necessary provisions: lanolin and wax

By **Gia Kourlas**

In her glorious *Descent*, Canadian choreographer Noemie Lafrance transformed the Clocktower, an unglamorous 12-story city court building downtown, into a magical landscape. The dance took place in its vast stairwell; audience members, who started by watching the performers from the top floor, trailed them all the way to the ground.

For Lafrance's latest project, *Melt*, she takes over the outdoor space at Black & White Gallery in Williamsburg Saturday 21 and June 28. With the aid of heat lamps, three dancers—seemingly plastered to a cement wall—gradually dissolve into a gooey mixture of lanolin and wax. This melting process, which Lafrance describes as “disintegrating into light,” lasts 15 minutes. During the course of both evenings, *Melt*, which promises to be a blend of the grotesque and the beautiful, will be performed four times.

Working out the details of such a creative venture hasn't been easy; when Lafrance decided to accept gallery owner Tatyana Okshteyn's invitation to create a new work, she

had just three weeks to figure out the logistics. Her sculptural costumes, constructed from cheesecloth, will be covered in a blend of beeswax and lanolin. Eager to figure out the proportions of the ingredients, Lafrance, perhaps unwisely, began experimenting in her kitchen.

“Beeswax comes in chips that you melt,” she says over coffee at a French bistro close to the gallery. “The problem was that when I melted it in my house, all the bees came. We had a bee infestation! One day I came home, and there were hundreds of bees around the corner of my street. I was *traumatized*.”

Her neighbors weren't thrilled either. So Lafrance, a charming mixture of aggression and naïveté, turned to the proprietors of Scheel Corporation, where she had purchased the wax, to melt the rest in their shop. They also taught Lafrance about the finer points of lanolin (she is using a synthetic form of the substance), which she immediately realized was key to her project. “You liquefy it, put it on your skin, and it

Dance. She is still attached to the Graham technique, which seems at odds with her experimental, site-specific leanings. Lafrance, however, relishes its tradition.

“It doesn't work for everyone, but it did for me,” she says. “I like the strict attitude of Graham—how when the teacher walks into class, everybody stands up. I hate when the teacher comes, and everybody's stretching, looking around like”—she mimics a dazed tone—“‘Where am I?’ At the Graham school, if your hips are not going to work, then you can just go somewhere else. I enjoyed that I could go to the maximum of sharpness; it made me realize a range of movement that I wasn't aware of.”

She also appreciates the dramatic side of the Graham technique—especially the way it affects the face. “At least if you're going to look heroic, you're going to have something coming out!” she exclaims. “I hate a neutral face—as if you're at a funeral. Face and breath are so important. If people can't breathe, and if they don't have a relaxed face, I can't work with them.”

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***Melt* is at Black & White Gallery  
Saturday 21 and June 28.**

JUNE 19–26, 2003 | TIME OUT NEW YORK 79