

9/15/06

New York Fugging City

6:30 pm

## Grey Ant's Pajama Pants-Off Dance-Off



Inspired by Bette Midler.  
Photographs by FirstView

When the lights went down at Grey Ant's show, a group of models filed into the room, faintly visible in the shadows. Suddenly, one of them contorted himself into a twisted claw shape and stood motionless.

It was then that we heard a whispered, "Oh, *no*," emanating from a few seats away.

This was no ordinary runway show. This was *interpretive dance*. Herky-jerky, half-naked interpretive dance. And judging by the woman in the front row who watched the entire first half with her eyes saucer-wide and her hand clamped over her gaping mouth, we knew not everybody was quite prepared for it.

The information sheet claimed that the Grey Ant aesthetic this season was inspired in part by "the back cover of Bette Midler's album *Songs for the New Depression*." And if indeed that cover features Bette convulsing in a shredded white mask, then the enterprise was a totally rousing success.

In the first segment, dancers lurched and gyrated in lavender-and-cream pajama-themed skivvies. And, yes, masks. Shredded white masks. We affixed our very best nothing-in-this-room-surprises-us expressions on our faces throughout, but seriously, the entire routine was as if designer Grant Krajecki got hopped up on NyQuil one night, fell asleep during a Yoga Booty Ballet TV infomercial, and had a fiendish nightmare about a deranged Jazzercise student who lived in the studio basement and demanded an appearance on one of the DVDs. It was so bizarre and so far out of left field that it came back around to being amazing — loopy as [Heatherette](#), but without those boys' need to pat themselves on the backs for their non-conformity. We never wanted it to end.

It did after a very long minute or so, at which point eight models came out and walked the catwalk two by two in high-waisted denim cut several ways — boot-cut, flared, tapered, you name it — and tiny, skintight early-eighties leotards. All we could think of was the girl in *The Warriors* who decides she wants to join the intrepid titular gang as it runs for its life from the Baseball Furies.

Woefully, the uniformed, face-painted Furies didn't make an appearance in the final segment of the show, but it was special nonetheless. This much-longer dance piece featured thong bathing suits; a wan, shaggy man in a nightdress; and a dude in black spankies and a ruffled shirt who could have been the lost, sweaty love child of Martha Graham and Freddie Mercury. It was *hypnotic*. The outfits were again more like something you'd wear to sleep or underneath your *actual* clothes on a cold day, but by now everyone knew that the garments themselves were completely and utterly beside the point. Why should the audience focus on the clothes when instead they could walk away with the memory of Nightgown Boy leaping skyward from the floor?

Well, maybe one person.

"I thought Grey Ant did menswear," mused the woman next to us.

Then she pursed her lips and said, in deliciously soft, enunciated tones, "I am underwhelmed."

We were not.

— *The Fug Girls*