

TIME

to fight a lot of fights," she says.

Since moving from Montreal to attend New York City's Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in 1994, LaFrance has choreographed breathtaking shows in imaginative settings. *Descent*, which debuted in 2001, followed 12 dancers down 12 stories of a stairwell. Her 2004 *Noir* was set in a parking garage. Last summer, after initiating the restoration of Brooklyn's McCarren Park Pool, a 50,000-sq.-ft. monstrosity that had stood abandoned for 22 years, she staged *Agora* to rave reviews.

Like its predecessor, *Agora II* centers on people struggling to connect with one another. The show's title originally referred to agoraphobia—anxiety in public places—but LaFrance

Get the Picture?

MAKING PAINTINGS MOVE

STAND IN FRONT OF CERTAIN GREAT PAINTINGS, AND YOU CAN'T HELP wondering about the backstory. Who are those men striding out of Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*? How did those French guys in jackets end up on a picnic blanket with a naked woman? That kind of question inspired *89 Seconds at Alcázar*, the video-art/costume drama that abruptly made Eve Sussman an art-world celebrity when it stole the show at the 2004 Whitney Biennial. For 12 murmurous minutes, we spy on members of the Spanish royal household just before and after they assume their poses in the glorious Velázquez canvas *Las Meninas*. By showing us ordinary mortals as they prepare—without realizing it—to take their places in eternity, Sussman not only made good on the claim that every picture tells a story, but she also offered a poignant reflection on time itself.

For *The Rape of the Sabine Women*, her new feature-length production, Sussman's point of departure is a 1799 canvas by Jacques-Louis David. It shows us the moment when the Sabine women attempt to intervene in a battle between their

INNOVATORS

STORYTELLERS



▲ NOEMI LAFRANCE

A dance pioneer who says our need for space is being repressed. With her site-specific installations, she is creating public platforms for communication

▶ EVE SUSSMAN

Although her video has no dialogue, it has a sound track—by Jonathan Bepler, who scored Matthew Barney's *Cremaster* films—of coughs, electronic thrums and bouzouki music



BOBBY NEEL ADAMS

Roman abductors and the Sabine men. But this time Sussman, who works with a creative collective called the Rufus Corporation, uses the painting as the very loosest framework for meditations on loneliness, longing and the failure of Modernist utopian schemes. Men in dark suits wander enigmatically among Greek statuary in Berlin. Women in dresses from the 1960s arrive by subway. There's no dialogue, though there is a cocktail party at a sleek International Style house and a climactic free-for-all in a Greek amphitheater. And the story this time? "This is implied narrative," says Sussman. But the implications are very intriguing. —By Richard Lacayo