



'Passage into a Paper Sea', 1994, handmade paper, millefiori



'Spider and the Buddha', 1996, bronze leaf, silk and wire

EMPIRE OF ADORNMENT

Sha Sha Higby is a contemporary performance artist who breathes life into intricately constructed ephemeral sculpture during haunting presentations of complex theatre events. Text by Robyn Tudor.

AS an artist Sha Sha Higby occupies a nether-world. In a place only ever imagined, objects of her making spontaneously spring to life, briefly share her dance and lapse back into repose as she moves on to explore adjacent dimensions in her solo performances. The narrative is implied and the objects tell but half the story. Abstract energy and a plethora of meanings rise up like dust in that space separating the inanimate from the animate. Objects are defined in relation to the performer who breathes life into the finely wrought costumes, body sculptures, masks and puppets. Yet the paraphernalia of the dance is vaguely familiar. It retains powerful

memories, like the much-loved doll slumped in the corner of a child's room after the play has ended and the adult is grown and gone. The work, however, never gives way to nostalgia in its surreal investigation of the significance attached to the experience of things.

At best the objects are entirely subsumed within the event. They appear transient, like the audience's fleeting glimpses of Higby's creative spirit. The objects represent shards of the art experience, scattered about the stage or temporarily left behind in exhibition, reminiscent of a half-remembered but persistent dream.



PHOTO: ILKA HARTMAN



