

High fibre: Aiko Suzuki's massive space-age scrim

Aiko Suzuki to fibre art what cuisine minceur is to chips and gravy. Her diaphanous sweeps of translucent fabric, or more frequently, shimmering synthetics, embody expressive waves of light as monumental and yet as delicate as Hokusai breakers. It was inevitable that her work would be of enormous interest to the makers of modern dance.

Suzuki began her career in 1967 as a painter of hard-edge, abstract pictures, but by 1969 she was already working in the theatre. Providing sets that same year for Toronto choreographers Patricia Beatty and David Earle.

Her contact with dance was crucial to her work. Gone suddenly were the big stiff paintings (she would continue to make soft, intimately scaled water-colours), replaced by large draped fibre constructions that she referred to as "suspensions". The best known of these is a large sculpture in white nylon called *Lyra* (1977-1980) that hovers like a cloud of mist over a pool in the foyer of the Metropolitan Toronto Library.

This year, Suzuki teamed up again with choreographer David Earle to create the sets for *Realm*, premiered in Toronto by the National Ballet of Canada on May 1. Suzuki provided gargantuan panels of synthetic scrim (fabricated for the artist in Germany) - six of them in all, one of which was 9 metres wide and 24.3 metres long. These huge panels hung over the dancers like an airy firmament, transparent but billowy with volume. Working instinctively within what David Earle describes as the Martha Graham tradition (three-

dimensional space for the dancers rather than the two-dimensional constraint of classical ballet. Suzuki floated her scrim over the heads of the dancers, raising them gradually during the course of the performance until the sweeps of portable weather and mood had disappeared entirely, leaving the heavens open.

Suzuki thinks of her space-age scrim as contributing to the psychological landscape that is the stage itself, with its built-in horizon line and its sweeping planes. Her increasing use of the scrim as light-catcher (and mood control) may be leading her to an art that will consist of light alone: an art as abstract as the music and the movement to which she now gives a controlling shape.

