Sensibly Manipulated Reality

The dance-performance "La Démence des anges" opens the CYNEart festival.

The Canadian dancer and choreographer is a visionary performer. She goes beyond the body's expressive power to experiment with perception, with the in-between spaces of the real and the virtual. As the director of the Corps Indice company she has, in her singular way, combined modern dance and electronic media since 1994. Her associates are the light designer François Roupinian, the costume designer Cheryl Caterall, both from Canada, and the French sound artist Thierry Fournier. The company's first production Communion (a multimedia piece in which dance movements are interpreted via video and computer images) received wide acclaim at festivals around the world. Sensors on the arms and legs of the dancer captured the movements and guided the images on the surrounding screens. Through this image producing body the artist confronted the intersection of the real and the electronic body.

In the second production "La Démence des anges" Isabelle Choinière takes this approach one step further by "overcoming spatial barriers." This parallel performance—it takes place simultaneously in the main room and a studio room of the Hellerau festival theater—opened the eighth edition of the International Dresden Media Art Festival. This year's festival theme, the interrelation between human and machine, made the Canadian artist's work a fitting introduction to this five-day presentation of media art.

To use the language of artistic concepts "Démence des anges" combines two complementary dimensions: a performative and a telematic dimension. Or more simply said: a real body and a projection. The majority of the audience saw the real Isabelle Choinière in the main room, while they witnessed the electronically treated rendition of the second dancer via a projection. For the thirty viewers in the adjacent room it the second dancer that is real, and Isabelle who is a projection. The independent representations in two different places are integrated through multimedia network technologies to form a coherent whole that can be perceived from two different perspectives.

This is a technically sophisticated project that is overseen by a small team of collaborators. However, this is a far cry from a sensationalist, pompous multimedia show. This well thought out production has been developed for particular spaces, originally museums and gallery spaces. The interplay between spherical sounds, punctuated, linear and unsettling light and the corresponding dancers creates a mystical atmosphere, which almost makes one forget the physically parallel spaces. What is particularly interesting are the sequences in which the three components, music, light, dance are creatively interwoven and evoke associations, such as the high frequency flashing light alongside sounds that reminds one of a rapidly passing train whose draft lifts the real bodies into a whirling dance. The projections, though not ground breaking, demonstrate a rare and sensitive poetic approach to manipulated reality.

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