

LA MUE DE L'ANGE

An electronic art performance by le Corps Indice

The crime: I have undertaken to approach this work without the requisite knowledge or competence to do so; I am armed only with the shock left by the performance (the text was written the very same night), my intuition and a voluminous press dossier (reviews and articles from various media sources) written by people who have neither the requisite knowledge or competence to do so.

This multidisciplinary work is by its nature hard to pin down, and hence difficult to approach: dance, contemporary music, multimedia - communication and translation as understood by Michel Serres when he proclaimed the end of the reign of specialisation. Isabelle Choinière's and her collaborators' [1] performance is a marvel - a charged sensory experience that is both timely and thought provoking. (to call it anything but intense would be to rob it of its eminently personal character).

Did I say 'sensory experience'? Yes, but it is also a bodily and reciprocal experience (spectator/performer). As with all performances, the work engages the spectators senses with sights and sounds (at times bordering on sensory overload [2]) through an act of (first time) perception. The dancer's body creates the music to which she and another figure, a two-dimensional [3] image projected on the stage, dance (sensors attached to the dancer's joints and extremities translate her movements into signals which a custom designed computer programme 'reconfigures' into sounds). The work is thus perceived (for a second time) through the very corporality that also produces it. This is the fundamental question that the work brings up - is there a place for the body in mediation? What is remarkable about this paradoxical work is that no answer is forced [4] but it gives the spectator enough elements to float in and out of a state of reflection and full sensory engagement.

Artifice, www.artifice.qc.ca, december 4th, 2000.

Alone on stage, Choinière is imprisoned in a world of screens: an opaque screen fences off the space behind her, while a translucent screen separates her from the audience. At first she has an almost holographic appearance (the phosphenes, real and simulated, underscore this ambivalent presence) giving one the feeling of being confronted with an absence. Choinière's body wrestles with this absence, becoming more and more carnal and sensual in the process, though she continuously risks disappearing altogether. In fact, for brief moments, she does disappear (or at least appears to, for once again it is our perceptions that are being tested). The effect is anguishing, one has the impression that the dancer is being swallowed by her own work, that she ventured too far in the mediation of her body and thereby caused its loss.

A brief, but incredibly rich performance. Go see it.

SEBASTIAN SIPAT

1. - Cheryl L. Catterall, François Roupinian and Thierry Fournier.
2. - For example, upon walking into the theatre light projectors track the audience, deliberately blinding them. This impacts on one's perceptual mode and expectations from the very start of the performance. The light designer, François Roupinian (absolutely brilliant) then proceeds to mix the phosphenes (the after images one perceives after having been exposed to a bright light source) with light flashes of his own creation...
3. - She is presented as 'another dancer', geographically distant, who joins Choinière only via the 'network'. This not only is a fascinating technical feat, but also a means to reflect on the cybernetic encounter (actualisation versus virtuality), and above all on the pictorial trace left by the absence of this second dancer.
4. - Although the artistic processes (which spread over 10 years) of le Corps Indice give its stance away, it does not show in la Mue de l'Ange.