

SLEEK, COOL, QUEER

AN KALERS "INSIGNIFICANT OTHERS (LEARNING TO LOOK SIDEWAYS)" AT TANZQUARTIER VIENNA

By Astrid Peterle

(Translation An Kaler)

Three performers enter out of breath. Exhaustion precedes the performance without anticipating the choreography that follows. The new creation of Austrian choreographer and dancer An Kaler excels in its specific quality of „un-exitedness“ of the movement vocabulary that operates in concentrated and effortlessly connecting sequences.

Here the three (An Kaler, Alex Baczynski-Jenkins, Antonija Livingstone) are dancing next to one another and past one another without ever entering into intensive contact or exchange. A brief crossing of the axes of gaze is the climax of interest. It is through speed and rhythm that the movements are structurally conjoined. The English term „sleekness“ touches the depths and contours of this dance, without indicating any superficiality.

What is remarkable besides this dancing in Kaler's choreography is two further aspects. One concerns the postures of the performers as well as the overall „aura“ surrounding the choreography. In its tableau-likeness it occasionally evoked Robert Longo's graphite- and charcoal-drawings of the late 1970ies, early 1980ies that are titled „Men in the Cities“. Longo captured his artist-friends, e.g. Cindy Sherman, in twisted, curved postures during dancing, blurring the boundaries between dance and pain.

Without Decadence

Longo's drawings seem chic, in the „casual, nonchalant“ sense of the word. They emerged from the avantgarde-circle New Yorks in the period of transition from Hippie-culture to the decadence of the 80ies, capturing a distinct sense of time – with artists dressed up as Yuppies dancing between ecstasy and pain. An Kaler's choreography also represents a certain urban hipness that is oftentimes related to the cities the performers are living in, Berlin and Montreal. Stephanie Rauch (space), Bruno Pocheron (lightdesign) and Brendan Dougherty (music / sound) contributed in impressively concise ways to the atmosphere of sleekness of the choreography on stage and its rootedness in the urban off-art.

Another aspect is androgyny, or from a queer-feminist perspective the aspect of gender ambiguity. The three strong performers with very distinct qualities have a remarkable resemblance in the ambiguity of their exterior appearance as well as their genderly unmarked body- and dance-language.

Even without being explicitly mentioned in the program-notes by the choreographer, who premiered the queer solo *Save a horse ride a cowboy* at Tanztage Berlin in 2010, the performance achieves a complexity through this layer of perception that distinguishes it from other decadent and pretentious danceproductions this year, tackling standardized constructions of gender as presented in this year's ImPulsTanz-Festival.

Some more cool genderambiguity would matter in contemporary choreography. Insignificant others – take over!

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<http://www.corpusweb.net/sleek-cool-queer-2.html>