

Allowing for Perception

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Petra Zanki creates mixtures of dance, performance, and visual art. While still collaborating with Britta Wirthmüller, and working on their *Antibodies*, she began exploring minimalist movement, duration, deceleration, and different bodies from the margins of the society. In *Holding on to*, the emphasis was on the changes of movement as slight as a wink, in *Vierfüßer* it was the small shifts in a “four-legged” perception of the body, and in *Paces* the poetics of swinging. Each of these pieces, owing to the lack of dramaturgic form, could also function outside of the classical stage setting. They have a mantric, soothing, beneficial effect, and after a while bring the spectator into a state of heightened perception capable of noticing even the minimum of movement. In her *Paces*, Zanki also introduced a video screening with which the body correlated, adding an emphasis and a somewhat mystical atmosphere infused by a smoke screen.

This sort of atmosphere has been further enhanced in her new solo performance *Ephemerals*, a result of collaboration between the Perforations festival and Zagreb Dance Centre, where Zanki has also added sound, text, and light. One might say that the movement is here somewhat more complex than in her previous, exceptionally minimalist pieces, but the accent is still on the tiny shifts in the structure of movement. The video screening is here not a discreet stage prop on the side wall, as in *Paces*, but occupies the entire back wall, where it dominates and almost absorbs the body, creating a dynamic multimedia interaction between the live performance, the screening, and its reflection on the semi-dark stage, illuminated by soft, finely tuned lighting.

Zanki slides along the floor in long, spiral rotation down the entire diagonal, gently and cautiously, wrapped in a light blue dress. The sneakers on her feet are a practical aid to her fluid movement on the slippery parquet. The continuity of movement is mirrored by the video screening, which shows one and the same image: it is a misty mountainous landscape, slowly transformed and darkening as time passes. With the onset of darkness, the body calms down and the video is gradually filled with the punctuating lights of the city, then the night sky; and the image is transformed into a dreamlike abstraction that is paralleled by the stage lighting.

The first part of the performance is accompanied by pleasant ambience music, which enhances contemplation. The more vigorous guitar rock distortion in the second part, combined with recited text, introduces dynamism and energy. Zanki returns along the same diagonal, this time on her feet, in more energetic and apparently uncontrolled spirals, with jumps and powerful movements of her head, legs, and arms, as if she recalled dancing in her room as a teenager to a favourite song.

Ephemerals is a self-reflective and intimate piece, different from all that Zanki has done before, as here she has created an interesting audio-visual atmosphere with her concentrated performance. It draws us into a sort of isolated, calm oasis of natural tempo, quite different from the one that is persistently imposed upon us from the outside, a tempo that allows for the perception, reflection, and acceptance of permanent movement, time, and – transience.

Ephemerals was first performed on September 17 at the Perforations festival, Zagreb Dance Centre.