

## Questions and thoughts from Petra Zanki's reSET (2018.)

By Ryan Diaz

- The overarching theme that I was working with, juxtaposing your piece with Straight White Men, is what the absence of women in domestic spaces does to men, how women operate in domestic spaces and how they communicate with and react to the narratives or archetypes of the Domestic Woman.

- Coming out with Christmas lights around their bodies, how do women behave as decoration, another beautiful background piece or object, how does it illuminate them as a beautiful object or set them off as things? How do women decorate themselves to fit with their surrounds, how do they decorate or add to the lives of men and others in general? How does the act of taking off the lights in front of the audience resonate with them, does that mean there is agency?

- The social-dancing, more sensual movements, and pop culture, music video influenced work continues the idea of decoration or idea of a woman, what do people want to see? what do people find intriguing or natural about this movement when set on a femme body, especially when you compare it to the dance scene from Straight White Men using the same song? When women dance to this song with their bodies does it seem more fitting or "normal" compared to when straight white men attempt a similar movement vocabulary of gyrations, hand flutters, and hip movements where it seems "funny" or out of place? Again, what are expectations? And how does this movement also give these women and men power? How does it give them agency? Is this a choice they're making? Is this a freedom of expression as much as it can be an obligation of holding the viewer's gaze and attention? The costuming was very interesting, given the material and cut implies some reference to sexiness (to whom? for whom?) while also implying that the space is an intimate space to the dancers, that they are wearing casual clothing because they themselves are entering as if to expect some privacy.

- The Microphone section was so surreal and delightful, the constant repetition of "don't speak, DANCE!" was brilliant, that the phrase itself is a powerful message, how are women stifled, how do they stifle themselves and/or others. I loved the microphone interaction, how it seemed to reference sexual gestures, how that isn't their fault or perhaps even their intention but my own addition as a viewer, how that speaks to how I've been socialized and how I assume those behaviors in very mundane actions of raising and adjusting a microphone stand or opening their mouths to speak into what I might be unfairly regarding as phallic objects (the mic itself). I also thought the humor in, the acting was a great too to include to the dancing, how it forced the audience to use a different set of skills to regard the meaning or make sense of it.

- I also loved the allusion to 50s/60s singers with the trio and the old-school style mic stands, like the Ronettes, the Shirelles, and Marth and the Vondelles. I especially think the later section with solos doing the violent pantomimes felt like the song "He Hit Me (And It Felt Like a Kiss)" by The Crystals was especially appropriate to think about in the context of the piece.

- The section where a male audience member wreaks havoc on the set speaks again to the dialogue between the dancers and the setting, the domesticity of women cleaning, the classical music and the references to ballet poses felt like the work was reaching into history, that these are pictures of something familiar to the point of normalcy: "Women cleaning up after men." The reaction of the

dancers to the man tossing chips and bottles everywhere was palpable, the disgust and the frustration. The man messing up the room felt like a bigger metaphor of not only how men abuse spaces and bodies, but the female bodies and domestic spaces are SITES of abuse and trauma by merely existing where gender expectations and sexism/misogyny exists (which is everywhere).

- The solos where performers danced their individual moments depicting some violence, especially done in the domestic space, was the most explicit communication of violence (vs the violence of silence or the violence as metaphor in the havoc/chip scene), but didn't feel forced. It felt earned given the lighting and the lack of music, the set itself a horrifying reminder of how abuse and violence happen most often in spaces where people should feel safe, i.e. their homes, with the ones they love. The range of violence from simple tugs to full-on impact blows was disturbing in the honesty and the truth of trauma. Doing the actions individually felt right, rather than as a group, because abuse often feels isolating, lonely, and so personal.

- The final scene where the girls face the audience was a brilliant rework of the final scene from SWM, the way it causes discomfort in the audience, how it interrogates them, demands they think critically about what they've just seen, to think harder, to do better. I honestly wish this went on longer because the more discomfort this scene can squeeze out of the audience, the more powerful it could feel. That the women stare out together speaks to the community of women trying to weather the storm together, how change can only happen when people come together.

- OVERALL: Very, very exciting work! I loved seeing this compared to your more gestural and more personal work I've seen before from SWM. I think Young Jean Lee would be proud of what you've done, how you used vignettes to speak to a larger picture. I loved it and I'm so glad I got the chance to witness it!!

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