

Review: Three Ideas in One

A SAVVY Contemporary Performance at AAA (Abteilung für Alles Andere)

by Christian Burnoski (USA) and Andrea Jenni (CH)

Friday, 27 March 2012

The performance lasted about 10 minutes. This text will take you less than 5 minutes to read. How long does it take to look at a painting? How long did it take Christian Burnoski and Andrea Jenni to look at a particular photograph by Ludwig Windstosser and get inspired by it?

It was dark when we entered the room and found our way to the improvised seats: a bench, some hard carton boxes, pillows lying on the floor. Then our eyes accommodated themselves to the environment. There was some dim light inside coming from a green-orange lamp on the stage, where one could also distinguish some blue paintings and 2 more lamps hanging low, close to the floor. And a woman's silhouette, back turned to the public, arranging her long hair.



Two more women appeared and went to the red wall, always with their back towards the viewer. When the music started they began to move and slowly approach the public without turning their face towards us. When it finally happened, we could see their colourful, glowing disco-pop make-up and their 80's outfits. The music was also disco-like, the girls seemed to have a kind of a party.



The performance had a changing rhythm and also played with interruptions, moments when the music would stop and the girls would freeze in a certain pose, then repeat the same pose about three times in a row. Throughout the performance the girls' movements varied from fluid, disco-like, to more linear, making me think of lines in an abstract painting. But I guess my association was triggered primarily not by their dancing, but by the blue painting on the right wall. By the overall setting of the room: a red wall, a blue canvas, an orange-green lamp. Just like in Windstosser's image. One should not forget what one knew before attending the performance: namely that the piece is inspired by a photograph. This was the context set for our perception of the show, and the décor made you feel as if you were inside a painting. With moving figures, with music and energy filling the frame.

And this is where the performance reveals its challenge: in showing the interplay between stillness, characteristic to two-dimensional images such as paintings and photographs, and movement, between abstraction and dancing, between flatness and perspective. The artists' endeavour becomes one of translating a photograph (Windstosser's) into a performance.

Three Ideas in One can also be viewed as a variation on the theme of keeping still, with the three female dancers alternately embodying sitting, standing and lying down. Paradoxically, these forms of stillness prove to be necessary and inspiring phases in a complex process of transition and movement from numbness to dance, from passive to expressive. Another significant detail: when the piece started the performers had their backs turned to the audience; when they ended the show, they were standing, facing us. A decisive moment, when their gaze expanded the frames of the performance and the canvas-like stage opened up to the viewers...



Text and performance stills: Ioana Muntenescu