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Kunstenfestival 08

Until the end of May, the Kunstenfestival presents 31 projects from sixteen countries: From Maori-activists to Brazilian hip hoppers. Our editors plunge into the adventure.

HIP HOP WTHOUT THE CLICHES OF HIP HOP

Whirlpool

Danielle de Regt
Brussels, (about Zan Yamashita)(...)

H3, Brazilian choreographer Bruno Beltrao's and his Grupo de Rua's work excels in extreme limits of formalism, and it works like a good blood pumping circulation! H2, a performance that we saw in 2005 at the Kunstenfestival was a captivating search for the ways/ means on which the angular and rigid writing of hip hop can burst open. Beltrão linked this search to the starting point that the theatre space is a coercive environment for dance that that the street is its natural habitat.

H3 elaborates these questions but is less stylized than its predecessor. Scenography, lighting and music are stripped bare. The window projected on the wall reflects the rehearsal space where the performance was taking shape. You can also see the mirror effect on the glittering floor or in the way the nine dancers let their movements bump or run into one another. This 'breaking-in the personal space' is an unusual twist in hip-hop. Beltrão throws his dancers from the safe glass cage to let them smash one's own windows, watching what it brings about. It is as if the dancers got in a whirlpool that threw them back and forth.

They stay near the floor, another basic principle of hip hop that Beltrão throws open to complex, fluent line patterns of splintered ellipses and crossing glazes. Continually dancing duets and groups come into being and crumble again away in a flash. But these fragile contacts don't happen without striking a blow.

H3 does not only focus on the virtuosity of the dancers but also on the way the audience enjoys this virtuosity. Beltrão consciously inserts blind spots using backwards patterns, making some energetic dance explosions implode. This voltage gives the quality of the movements of this ensemble extra subtlety.

In Beltrão's hands hip-hop extricates itself from the clichés without losing a single heartbeat. The choreographer explores a dimension that is totally averse to showiness, giving instead a reflected register of movements.