ALMINE RECH

Dance First Think Later

Sep 15 — Oct 9, 2022 | Le Commun Bâtiment d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland

In summer 2020, *Dance First Think Later – An encounter between dance and visual arts* was presented at Le Commun. Some performances were produced in collaboration with La Bâtie, ADC, MAMCO, the Museum of Art and History and Cinéma Spoutnik. This exhibition/festival is emblematic of the intentions of Arta Sperto, an organisation for curating, producing, organising and publishing multi- and trans-disciplinary artistic projects, which, not having a fixed location, designs its projects in collaboration with cultural partners or in the public space.

Dance First Think Later was understood by many people as a festival and they asked when the next event would take place. I thought about this perspective and was convinced that it made sense. The project charts artistic terrain at the edge of dance, performance and visual arts, fields that feed off each other but operate through very different mechanisms of production and presentation. At the heart of the project is dance, i.e. the gestures and movement of the human body, their meanings and interpretations in different cultures, and how they are considered through various prisms, cultural, sensual, political, social, ritual, technological, gender-related ... This is a very rich artistic field, with multiple issues and perspectives that allow for the development of approaches and experiences potentially over several years.

After more than 30 years of involvement in the contemporary arts, I feel that there is a need to develop types of events that expand established models, especially through projects where artistic fields fertilise each other. The participants in *DFTL* are visual artists who work on the subject of dance, who integrate it into their approach or who collaborate with choreographers who design works for exhibition spaces, or performers, or transdisciplinary artists who oscillate between several artistic scenes. At Le Commun there will be material works (installations, videos, sculptures, paintings, objects, photographs) and performances designed for exhibition spaces. The Pavillon ADC will host stage works by visual and performing artists, and Cinémas du Grütli will screen films by artists working with choreographers.

Multi- and transdisciplinarity is not an end in itself, but an open field for perceiving and questioning the world today. Movement and gesture have specific meanings in all cultures and in many areas of society: politics, diplomacy, sports, the army, communication, social struggles, street demonstrations, rituals ... Everywhere, gestures deliver messages, are scrutinised in the media and on social networks, they bring people together or divide them. Moreover, expressions such as “diplomatic ballet”, “political faux pas”, “political posture”, “pas de deux”, “awkward gait”, “crowd movement”, “body language”, “revolutionary gesture”, “inappropriate gesture”, “misunderstood gesture” testify to the fact that words that are notably linked to the vocabulary of choreography are also used in many other fields.

Moreover, I think that the COVID-19 period was very “choreographic”, since we have never been so concerned about the way we move: we unlearned gestures that were natural and learned new ones, we questioned ourselves about compulsory or forbidden gestures and movements. In this way, we have joined, without really being aware of it, the questions and reflections that choreographers develop on the meaning and scope of a given gesture and movement, whether individual or collective. The impact of these reflections and of certain changes in behaviour will probably last for a long time.

The title *Dance First Think Later* was inspired by a passage from Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. As is often the case with this master of the absurd, a sentence turns out to be more complex than it initially appears. This title aims to challenge and capture attention. The keywords *Dance* and *Think* and the notion of duration (*First* and *Later*) put the thinking body in motion into perspective.

Olivier Kaeser, curator of *Dance First Think Later*