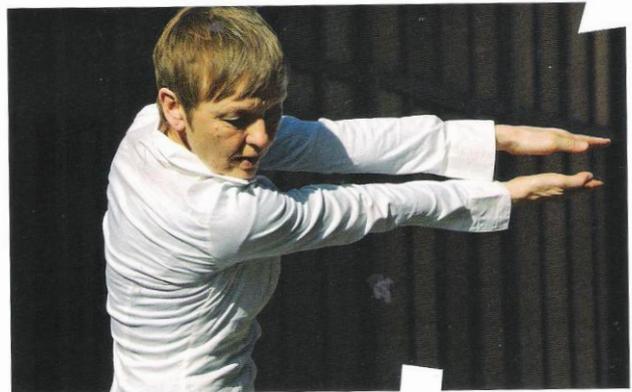


5-6/2010

Geometric Feelings
Riki von Falken speaks about her work

“The Geometry of Separation” was created in 2009, after which Riki von Falken went to Malaysia for a three-month work residency. Here she speaks with *tanzraumberlin* about the creation and development of her piece. Conversation: Elisabeth Wellershaus



Riki von Falken zerzeit den Raum in „The Geometry of Separation“

Foto: Franziska Schwarz

What inspired you to create “The Geometry of Separation”, what was the determining factor?

I had the impression that I had somehow marginalized myself, moved into the periphery both in my work and my private life. From there, I began to think about a performance space, whose architectural structures would have an extreme influence on me. I did then actually find a space with high concrete walls in which I could gaze into the space from different levels and which conveyed this feeling of being locked in. There I experimented with drawing lines through the space using ropes in a very restricted way. What emerged were a number of new ways of structuring the space which I could organize myself in. I exposed myself for quite a long period of time to this space.

How did the piece then take shape?

A new challenge came up. I met the filmmaker Mareike Engelhard and we worked on a story, which describes a woman in various phases of her life as an outsider. We wanted to include a second woman as my alter ego in the film. This woman is forced to organize herself both in real and simultaneously surreal spaces – in a bedroom, a

kitchen, a bathroom and on the roof.

How much is visible of these rooms in the piece?

The atmosphere in the surreal rooms came from my immediate surroundings. I observed myself sitting at the kitchen table, trying to grasp a coffee cup. I missed. A strange feeling, perception shifted. For a moment my habit of grasping something, of having the sense of doing so and making a connection was interrupted. I had a short 'loss of reality'. My body demonstrated a reaction to this shift, which then formed for me the basis to redefine this body in a state of 'insecurity'. In the same way, I also collected impressions in the bathroom. I sat in the bathtub and saw by chance details of my body in the mirror. It was like a montage: the body part that I saw in the mirror had nothing to do with my own perception of my body. In this way, four different rooms emerged, in which the person in the film lives with a feeling of being marginalized. My dance on stage is meant to take place in close interaction with the film. In order to thus integrate the film into my actions on stage, I built a de-constructable cube of Styrofoam. Together with the video installation projected on this Styrofoam block, I then construct my own abstract space on stage.

Has the "The Geometry of Separation" changed over the past year – maybe also because of your residency in Asia?

"The Geometry of Separation" will never remain what it was. It will change as my experiences change. A little bit every time. My work in Malaysia will surely contribute much to this. The contact with the culture and the people – especially the dancers there – touched me deeply. Their energy lent their movements a tremendous clarity. That alone will inscribe itself into my body. In addition, I greatly enjoyed watching the students. The traditional forms of Malay, Indian and Chinese dance and the martial arts form Silat fascinated me just as much as the movement material, which they developed in my class.

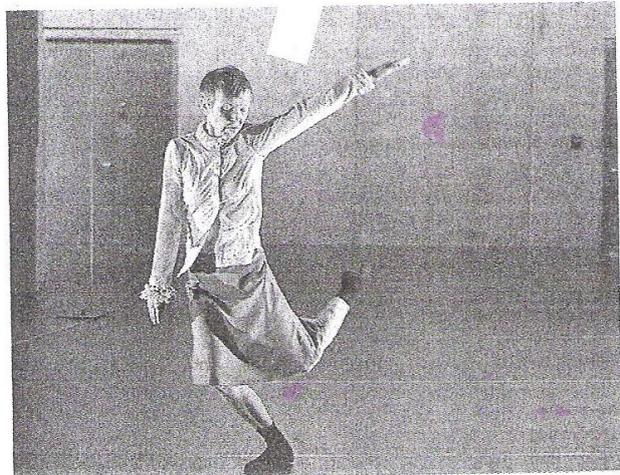
What does the piece mean to you one year later?

It keeps getting more important for me, especially with respect to my time in Kuala Lumpur. There I experienced myself in a completely new space. I am very curious to see how my extraordinary encounters with the people in Malaysia will be reflected in "The Geometry of Separation".

On the Invisible Border to the Exterior

Dance theater – Minimalist and personal: “The Geometry of Separation” by Riki von Falken and Mareike Engelhardt at Radialsystem

The vectors of movement space.
Photo: Gerhard F. Ludwig



Die Vektoren des Bewegungsraums Foto: Gerhard F. Ludwig

This body contains itself. It makes itself narrow, takes the short, straight path, keeps the arms close to the ribcage. This is how Riki von Falken enters “The Geometry of Separation” surrounded by a constricted, densely packed energy. Only to then assert her position with sharp and short movements, distinct and tidy, sparingly and precise. Her hands spring forward and take themselves back, arms thrust upwards and sink back down again, then cross over straight in front of the body. The hem of the blue skirt stretches as she curves into the diagonal with a large step and becomes a rectangle and other parallelograms.

Not only the title that Riki von Falken and film artist Mareike Engelhardt have given their joint piece “The Geometry of Separation” emphasizes the meaning of geometry for the composition of movement in space. The division of planes, thinking in graphic lines, the formation of space between the elements, all this is contained in every detail of the movements on stage and on film, in the set design and on the projection surfaces. These are formed out of blocks that can be rearranged by the dancer. The closed surface of the screen thus breaks open into a multi-dimensional collage. The fragmentation augments what is taking place in the film. Here, a second, younger woman appears in her apartment. She gets up in the morning and can’t manage to slip into any of her clothes. She fingers her dishes as if these everyday objects could reveal to her who she actually is. Full of transitions and close-ups, Mareike Engelhardt’s film turns tiny, everyday movements into a dramatic,

emotionally loaded situation, which escalates into despair and hopelessness. The young woman's turmoil (Friederike Pflafki) corresponds to the turmoil of the dancer on stage. She could be the embodiment of a character stuck in different time periods. What they share is the feeling of being cut off from their surroundings.

A soundscape of noises and long stretches of instrumental minimalist music increase the feeling of tension, building bit by bit. In neither of both worlds - on stage and in the apartment, the public and the private space - can the question of personal identity be conclusively solved alone. "The Geometry of Separation" again, like Riki von Falken's previous pieces, originally developed out of a biographic experience. The topic, the feeling of being foreign in one's own life, of being thrown back onto oneself, is more however than mere navel-gazing: it concerns every entity that doesn't conform to market standards.

Katrin Bettina Müller



_____ Riki von Falken: «The Geometry of Separation»



potsdam _____
RIKI VON FALKEN «THE GEOMETRY OF SEPARATION»

RIKI VON FALKEN << THE GEOMETRY OF SEPARATION >>

Some words lose their corresponding real-life equivalents over time. “Aura” is such a word. Hardly anyone uses it anymore. And yet it still applies to a very special dancer: Riki von Falken, 56 years old. In her newest production “The Geometry of Separation”, she once again demonstrates what is possible, when an artist with a temperament that resists currying favor with the zeitgeist concentrates on her own interests: a truly auratic and captivating performance. The video sequences by Mareike Engelhardt between the solo dance passages function like welcome breaks in the maelstrom of the dance. In the video, Friederike Plafki appears as the younger alter ego of the dancer on stage. This doubling of real and virtual woman is just as much basis of the piece, as are the topics of young and old, fear of exclusion, but

also fear of separation and of being trapped – trapped, like in the film sequences, in a room or, as on stage, in the body.

There Riki von Falken builds constantly new constructs out of white Styrofoam cubes and surveys the space with a blue rope – but in light of her dance, all this becomes irrelevant. The mature dancer appears slender and frail in a white, slightly ruffled blouse and a blue flouncy skirt. The upper arms tightly embrace the body over long periods, first one lower arm swings outwards, then the other; the head executes an almost indiscernible eighth of a rotation, a shoulder rolls.

Redundancies, but also variations and the intensification of individual sequences are part of the magic of Riki von Falken. Her arms swing straight and clear, lift upwards and fall softly. A foot veers out and back from a standing position, a minimal rotation of the upper body, the arm follows. The movements seem in no way mechanical and are accompanied at first by birdsong and then increasingly by industrial noises.

The side-by-side of organic softness and austere execution of the movements is the result of many years of work: from the tiniest of shifts and engravings in the body, sometimes no more than a breathe, to movements, which are so precise and exact that the dancer seems to stab the empty space. Her specific quality is nourished by the conviction that emotionality can be cast in abstraction and in doing so, be enhanced. By carefully binding feeling to and into a meticulous severity of form, Riki von Falken's art gains its auratic intensity.

Elisabeth Nehring

The Geometry of Separation was created in collaboration with video artist Mareike Engelhardt. The Radialsystem V in Berlin is well suited – hermetic enough as a functional space with an extensive stage and closed doors – to poetically interweave two media – solo dance and film.

As the dancer delicately treads her path forward, she resolutely pursues the geometrization of the body with increasing intensity. This time, she encases her long, clear lines, her signature style, in white cubes and blue ropes, which she constantly relocates in order to redirect the strategy of her course. With circular steps, figure-eight twists of a wringing torso, arms flung out close to the body, she spells out a Morse code that is well aware of the higher mathematics of inner limitations. Like in clockwork, precision and order are the encrypting powers. One cog gripping the next. Rigorously she defends her terrain, wrapped in a sound landscape that brings her closer to the night calls of an owl.

In a parallel film universe, we see a young dancer. Moving between table, bed, closet and bathtub, Friederike Plafki seems unable to cast off her own skin to put on her shirt. As she stretches out her hand, the teacup flees from it as if in a nightmare by Luis Buñuel. Her virtual home is narrow, oppressive and filmed in extreme proximity. The real dancer – hounded by compulsive action – restructures the styrofoam blocks that serve as the projection surface for the psychological thriller being played. She adds more on, deconstructs them again. A black hole emerges creating a fascinating third dimension in the film. The highly talented dancer Plafi also appeared in Falken's previous piece in 2005 as her twin. Now there is no physical encounter of any kind. The surreal film alter ego disappears through the bathroom window over the rooftop into the night sky. In the raw here and now of the extensive stage, time no longer drips linearly for the woman of flesh and blood, it stretches horizontally and circles outwards. The narrative claustrophobia is over. As she drops to the floor and sheers



out of her stylistic structure, it becomes clear that she carries the essence of the younger self inside her, using it to gain strength.

Falken persistently defies the fast pace of the dance business. She takes the time she needs, goes deeper and forward in the refinement of her art, year after year. Her fascinating trilogy (created between 2000 and 2003) about illness, loss and death are proof of this. Today, her dance distances itself from personal concerns. She rises to face the challenge of relentlessly progressing time and the isolation that people and dancers are increasingly subjected to. She bravely confronts the uncertain future. The geometrical structure of the piece holds the chaos at bay polyphonically - until annoying industrial noise swallows the dancer.

Irene Sieben