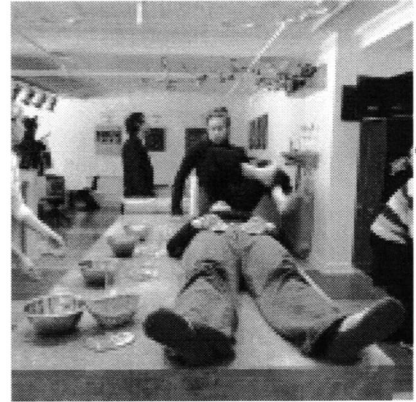


Review: 9 1/2 à part.

by Sylvain Verstricht

It's in a luxurious apartment near Place Saint-Henri metro that La 2e Porte à Gauche invites us to witness their latest dance project out of the usual confines of the stage. Produced in collaboration with Le Festival Montréal en Lumière and Tangente, this in situ work is the baby of no fewer than eleven choreographer-dancers, not to mention artistic directors Frédéric Gravel and Katya Montaignac.

In this particular setting, it's not surprising to see certain themes emerge. For example, one of the Lombardo sisters takes a glass out of a cupboard and pushes it across the counter, only to then walk around the oversized marble-top counter to fill it with water. With this small gesture, we suddenly come to realize how this initially enticing apartment has crossed over into luxurious excess and become impractical.



9 1/2 à part., photo by Amélie Bédard-Gagnon

But she's not alone in the kitchen. There are five other dancers there, each performing their own loop in this choreography of the everyday. They turn on the radio to a top 40 station, take out various objects from the cupboards, clean up after each other, and turn off the radio in this speeded up ritual of the annoyances that build up from living with others, each set in their own ways. This may be a large apartment, but with thirteen people (not counting audience members), even in this spacious setting conflict is inevitable.

Between what is possibly a living room under usual circumstances and the bathroom can be found three portholes, allowing us to see directly into the latter. At first, a woman appears in the middle one wearing a tiara. Next to her, Andrew Turner is wearing a cowboy hat (not to mention a disturbing smile) like an oil magnate. These live portraits, while still playing into the idea of luxury, also have the added connotation of narcissism that can often inhabit such spaces.

Later, another woman begins to take off her clothes in the same spot where our princess was just a few minutes earlier, all the while winking at us. We are being treated to a peep show filled with irony, making us aware of our position as voyeurs. But, in the window next to her, Emmanuel Jouthe is busy observing us and taking down notes, reminding us that the windows are not one-way mirrors and that those who observe can also be observed.

This is only a glimpse of the many themes touched upon in this show that crams a lot into 75 minutes to offer a full, satisfying evening. As Gravel would probably calculate, 9 1/2 à part. offers thirteen creators for about 15\$, meaning you're paying little more than a dollar per artist. It's no wonder I'm hearing that tickets are selling quickly, so make sure to get yours now for this unusual experience.

9 1/2 à part. continues until February 27 at the rhythm of two shows a night, at 7 and 9pm. Tickets bought in advance are 17\$, 13\$ for students (and, at the door, respectively 20\$ and 15\$). For more information, call Tangente at 514.525.1500, or visit : www.tangente.qc.ca / www.la2eporteagauche.ca.