

descontextualización estamos fixando a nosa ollada en algo máis alá, dende una perspectiva diferente. Unha hora de tomar distancia e reflexionar sobre o xénero humano por medio dunha observación estreita dun ser humano capaz de estirar o tempo e o espazo coa súa danza. Fitamos a este bailarín porque transmite este exceso de enerxía, este poder sobrehumano de alterar o espazo e o tempo. Non estou seguro de se estamos agardando a nosa fin ou a ser salvados pola ciencia. Pero mentres tanto, estou seguro de que estamos a vivir unha experiencia, xa que probablemente a diferencia dos rinocerontes, nós somos capaces de vivir unha experiencia mentres aparentemente só abrazamos unha almofada, probablemente porque necesitamos vivir unha experiencia, xa que seguimos vivos malia todo e, como fan os filósofos, como audiencias somos capaces de tomar distancia, reconsiderar as cousas e cambiar.

O 11 de novembro do 2021 ás dez en punto, saín da Sala Hiroshima. Realmente só pasara unha hora?



*Un monitor mostra a inseminación de óvulos das dúas últimas femias de rinoceronte branco do norte, con esperma conxelado de dous machos da mesma especie, no laboratorio Avantea en Italia.*

*Antonio Calanni / Associated Press*

\* ORIGINAL EN INGLÉS

On the 11th of November 2021, at nine o'clock, I went to watch what ended up being the last show ever performed in Sala Hiroshima before the definite closing of its barred doors. A couple of weeks before that, when I decided I didn't want to miss this show, I read the title, "The Very Last Northern White Rhino" and I immediately opened a new tab in my browser in order to further understand what I was going to watch. At that moment, at that tab opening, at that first reading about the northern rhinos, the dance of Oulouy (the fervent dancer Gaston Core directs) started already to dance, at least to my perception.

Entering into the theatre space that night, in proximity with the bodies of the rest of the audience members gave me the feeling of a common goal. The main common goal, possibly, was to observe dance movements and everything that this artistry encompasses. Apart from entering as a spectator, it also felt important to be entering as an artist who has been previously programmed in Sala Hiroshima. Sala Hiroshima was really about to close down and at the same time, I had never seen a show made by Gaston Core before! Something that finishes and something that begins. The former scary and the latter exciting...making sense of those two feelings demanded some life skills of my own.

I am sitting very close to a woman I do not know, both of us are hugging a pillow, waiting. I read the brochure and the short description of the piece sets me up intellectually and emotionally on a high voltage. So the white northern rhinos are on the brink of extinction. To some extent, they could already be considered extinct since the last male northern white rhino is already dead. There are only two female northern white rhinos left in the whole world. When those will die the species dies...or not? Scientists are desperately trying to find ways for new baby rhinos to be born and consequently ensure the continuation of the species. You can read about the eggs of the female rhinos monthly flown by helicopters and airplanes from Kenya into Italian laboratories, about sperms of long gone male northern white rhinos that perhaps are not as fertile as they were thought to be, about surrogate mothers of other species, about skin cells that can be transformed into stem cells, then into egg cells and eventually host potential life even long after the death of the two last female white rhinos. It's fascinating! I am glad that I am living in this future but unfortunately the success of those scenarios is not yet guaranteed.

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Back to the theatre and the pillow hugging, these stories confront us with the possible auto-destruction of humankind. It is too real to be a metaphor; we really might just be another species to be soon extinct as we are gradually destroying our natural habitat. And now Core invites us to watch a dance! He allows us to renounce any responsibility however and directs our attention into dancing. And he definitely succeeds. We do avoid confrontation by watching the excessive energy of the dance of Oulouy taking over instead. Because we have more energy than we need? Because there is nothing else to be done? There is more to it I think.

The actual choreography begins with Oulouy who is performing praying-like movements where Finger Tutting and other urban dance techniques are employed. In a few magic seconds, we already surrender to the abstraction of his movements and the transcendence begins. As Paul Valéry puts it: "my ultra lucid eyes transform everything they see into a prey of the abstract mind". But the piece does not solely rely on this. The dancer's movements are performed in the absence of music at the beginning and at times later. At first, one thinks it is silence but a microphone that captures the sounds of everyday life from the streets outside the theatre, is kindly inviting us with slight amplification, to not forget the outside world. On the one hand, we are entering into the intimate heterotopia that this piece is creating for us and on the other hand random talks and traffic sounds are leaking inside this constructed reality, reminding us that realities are multiple and that they can cross each other. So I enrich my perception from this crossing and the deciphering of the dance becomes a constant interchange between multiple potential meanings and emotions.

Dancing without music is what I call hardcore dance. Dance, whose core and motive is dance and no other trigger external to the dance. The presence of music would justify movement. But here the dance begins unjustified. As a hardcore dance, there is no justification needed for it to exist. The only premise is the excessive energy beyond one's needs for surviving that Paul Valéry praises and Core captures. Later, Bach's Goldberg Variations and other pieces of music follow, showcasing the dancer further, justifying the skillful dance. Justified and unjustified movements create a choreography, and from it, a universe one can allow themselves to be immersed into in a fulfilling manner.

Back to the rhinos (in English) and their full name; rhinoceros, a Greek word deriving from that that is constituted: from rhís (ῥίς) which means nose and kéras

(κέρας) which means horn. Ironically the word (in English) is abbreviated by amputating the horn word. Devastating enough as it is the extinction of a species alone, I get to know that these animals are on the brink of extinction because of poaching and the amputation of their horns. It is a widespread belief around the world that the horn of rhinoceros has special-healing properties. But we know that they do not have. Horns are simply made of keratin, just like our fingernails which unfortunately have no special powers. And yet humans kept on killing those beautiful, peaceful, massive animals to their extinction. Back to the theatre, hug a pillow, watch a dance with this aspect of human nature in mind. That's what this piece is also about.

Oulouy is an amazing dancer. He manages to carry this weight and responsibility that Core entrusts him with, which is why he is an amazing dancer besides his indisputable refined qualities and capacities. To me, a dancer is not amazing only because he/she moves amazingly. This is passé, yet a condition as well. A dancer is amazing when he/she manages to carry the responsibility of the context of the piece in case. When he/she is involved in the process and is conscious of what the maker wants to communicate. A simple walk can mislead the audience's attention if not performed accordingly.

Altogether the dancer, the director, and the collaborators made it one of those pieces where everything fits satisfyingly within the context, whether it was foreseen or not. One of the many fitting parts is the fact that we were communally putting Sala Hiroshima to euthanasia. Who is on the brink of extinction in this case...experimental performance spaces? I hope not, and yet bittersweet pessimism fitted all too well that night. Seeing the lights and the ceiling of the theatre lit towards the end of the piece created another plane within my experience. As if from a future moment where I can't interact anymore, my consciousness is still observing. I looked at both Oulouy and the fully lit stage as if extinct entities who are stuck performing within a different time zone (the one that dance is able to create). And artists and audiences from within a different zone, through our swimming consciousness, as sperms intending to inhabit the performance's reality, are striving to bring back to the past and into existence the performance spaces that Barcelona and the medium of dance deserve.

"Well, how did we get here? What have we done?" as David Byrne would ask. How could humanity let rhinoceros and experimental performance spaces disappear? An hour of space and time bending allows us to reflect.

During the piece "The Very Last Northern White Rhino" time and space bend and suddenly we find ourselves elsewhere. The urban dancer and the urban dance techniques he employs are also found elsewhere. Core

decontextualized those movements by exhibiting them in the theatre space. The sound from the streets outside the theatre is similarly decontextualized by making it audible in the theatre space and therefore in the performance's reality. This is an hour of decontextualization, an hour of taking distance from everyday life, since by decontextualizing we are looking at something from further, from a different perspective. An hour of taking distance and reflecting about human beings by the means of closely observing a human being capable of bending space and time with his dance. We stare at this dancer because he carries this excessive energy, this superpower of space-time bending. I am not sure if we are waiting for our end or for science to save us. But meanwhile, I am sure we are having an experience because probably unlike rhinos, we are able to have an experience while seemingly just hugging a pillow, because probably we need to have an experience, because we are still alive after all and, just like philosophers do, we are able as audiences to take distance, rethink and change.

On the 11th of November 2021 at ten o'clock, I exited Sala Hiroshima. Was it really an hour?



*A monitor displaying the insemination of eggs from the last two remaining female northern white rhinos, with frozen sperm from two bulls of the same species, at the Avantea laboratory in Italy.*

*Antonio Calanni / Associated Press*

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