

**SPRUNGBRETT <>
TANZRECHERCHE NRW #20
in Düsseldorf**

RESIDENZORT:
tanzhaus nrw, Düsseldorf

TITEL:
Melanism

STIPENDIATIN:
Wilhelmina Willie Stark

PRÄSENTATIONEN:
Köln TanzFaktur 5.5.2017;
Düsseldorf tanzhaus nrw 6.5.2017;
Essen PACT Zollverein; 7.5.2017,
Bonn theaterimballsaal 12.5.2017;
Krefeld Fabrik Heeder 13.5.2017

You have now finished your three weeks residency in the frame of SPRUNGBRETT < > TANZRECHERCHE NRW at tanzhaus nrw. What was the topic of your research?

What does it mean to be a woman?

What does it mean to be a black woman?

What social or political implication gender has or should have in this society? What is feminism for me? What does it represent? Why are the sex roles so predominant?

My topic is a mix of differences, clichés, mindsets. Being a woman in a male's world and more precisely being a black woman in a white male dominated society.

Inspired by Ugandan traditional music I explore the connexion between art, society, sex roles and minorities by using a positive and powerful narrative.

How did you approach your research? What inspired you?

There are so many clichés about women, about black women, some of them are said by ignorant people and others are racists and inappropriate comments about my appearance, body or hair ...

Many black women are living the same types of injustices and judgmental behavior and through this research I wanted to tell my own story.

This work is based on my experiences, my personal social and political experiences as a black woman. It is dealing with feminism and race. I dive into the clichés and stereotypes that society target/uses for black women.

This mind set/way of thinking, the gender difference appears at a very young age. Education could be a way to change that → same education between boys and girls, with different backgrounds and origins.

Through my reading process, I was strongly drawn by the poem "I rise" by Maya Angelou, famous activist, poet, writer and feminist who died recently. I also realized that a lot of black women used this poem as support for speech, work or research. For me, it is one of the most powerful texts I've ever read.

What is your background in dance? How did you start working for this project? In which way is your research for this project and your way of working different from previous work?

I've always been around the traditional African dances while growing up. I come from the urban dance scene. I fell in love with House dance and the urban dance scene 15 years ago.

Everything came from the idea that I wanted to tell a part of my story with my own voice. The way I worked on

this research is totally different than how I usually work. It wasn't about how well I apply the technique on the music and making combos but more about the research on the topic, the scores and creating my own voice through a different movement quality.

How to talk about my topic through house dance, in term of movements, music choice?

House dance is a club dance, born in the 70s 80s in New York City and Chicago.

It is a social dance that put on accent on the community and the togetherness aspect.

There are two main sources for this urban style to exist. One is where House Music takes its influence: Jazz, Soul, African music, Funk, Tap ... The other one is the people, the different human beings part of this movement/style, their characteristics and origins, all those people being part of the same «house». There is a strong feeling of community, everybody is accepted regardless differences, social background, skin colour ... As if we were all one.

You had a mentor for your research at tanzhaus nrw. Who was it and how did you work together?

My mentor was Ligia Lewis. I wanted to work with a black woman who is also a minority and share the same characteristics in order to exchanges points of view.

Talking with her, having conversations about society behaviour and clichés helped me a lot in my research process.

At the end of the residency you have showed the first result of your research in five different NRW cities. The final presentation really developed through all the showings, it was also a different experience every

night due to the stage/space that was very different every time. As a conclusion I can say that my work gained in quality and confidence.

What kind of feedback did you get in the talks after the presentation? Did you get unexpected reactions from the audience?

As a first work, I didn't expect to get so many positive reactions. The talk/feedback was a very important part of the research process. Working on a solo can be very complicated and the fact that we had the chance to talk with the public helped in the development of the research.

That was important for me because one of the goals of my performance was for the public to join me in this trip, this experience, my story.

I gave them energy and they gave it back to me by being there, watching and participating in the talk at the end.

Can you please tell us about the music you have chosen? What is the role of the music?

I have chosen to use traditional African music, it was very hard to find. I didn't want to use the type of music that I dance on usually, I needed something that would fit with my topic, what I want to express and that gives me new input and hypes me. The music has a different role in the research of this work, it accompanies me in this exploration, it's not based on it but it still is a very important part of the process.

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What kind of light did you choose to support you on stage for the presentation?

I wanted the light to fit with the topic, the dance ...

It was the first time I had to set the light design, it was a new experience. If there is one thing I can say about it, it's that cold lights don't fit this research.

Are you planning to develop the research to a piece now and what support do you need?

I want to turn this research into a solo piece by working on the material I already have and going deeper in the research by making a solo performance of 40 minutes to an hour.

This new research performance will combine dance, music and speaking. I will examine my use of scores in my own improvisation practice and find which can relate to the composition of my dance work because they are essential to the movement material. I will also use fixed points during the performance that will lead in having a trajectory for the work, shifting, travel and movements. The result of it will define my relationship with space.

I want to keep going in the same direction and I am looking for residencies that would be interested in my work.