



Thursday 10/22/2015

Premiere

HAU3: Jeremy Wade, "DrawnOnward"

In his new solo piece, the American choreographer and performer kidnaps his audience and transports them into a not too distant future, into new worlds that are not so dissimilar to the present time in which we currently live.

Rating: **kkkk**

From the present and into the future, or "DrawnOnward," is one way of interpreting the palindromic title of this piece, which can be read both backwards and forwards. It is a circular movement that rediscovers itself in the continuously recurring circle motif, found in the staging, the set design, in the computer-generated electronic sound world and in the movement.

Possible Autolytic Worlds of the Future

DrawnOnward, as Jeremy Wade announces in a prophetic speech, is a system of thought, a machine of possibilities in which potential forms of existence are created. It offers a way out of the time in which we live, a time allegedly lacking in alternatives. But the worlds of the future that he shows still somehow come across as familiar: Self-dissolution, self-aggrandizement and self-loss. One could also say psychiatry, preaching and hallucinated vision.

These again mark the central themes that have earned Wade both a committed fan base and also some rejection since his appearance in the Berlin dance scene in 2006.

Wade is an extreme performer of the physical and mental states of emergency, a disturber of the peace in the best sense, the racket, the excesses and the virtuosity used to distort the ordinary. He works with crude exaggerations, which can be simultaneously as rude, aggressive and harassing as they are charming and tender.

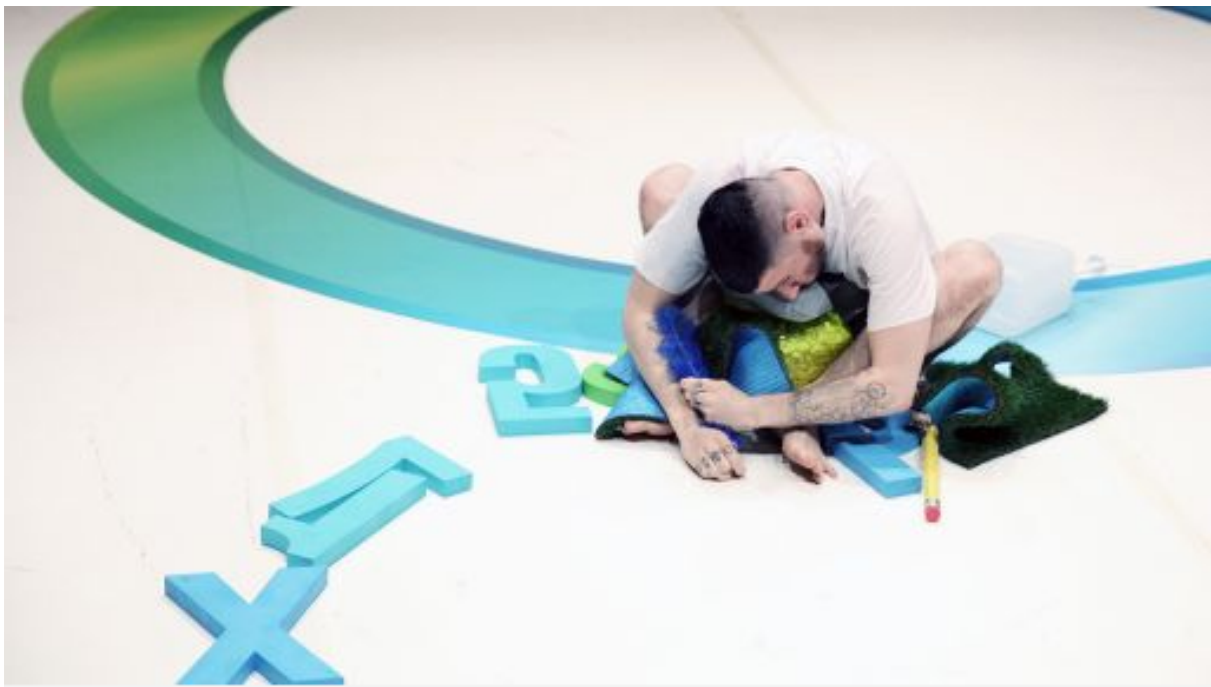
He can appear as a shaman, who knows that he is unable to provide his disciples with the final answers, but he would never cease to look for them.

Dildo Machine and Colorful Plastic World

The opening image of this solo performance is obscene: Wade kneels naked on all fours, being orally and anally treated by a machine. But the pleasure that these dildos and the spanking machine provide does not seem to be so great, regardless of what tempo his caregiver sets for the spanking and thrusting.

It is a horrific vision of an alternative future: A body devoid of will and identity, who voluntarily incapacitates himself, who places himself under the control of his caregiver, who, in a childish regression, busies himself with the objects of a colorful plastic world, to which he can find no contact.

Although he plays obsessively with all the stuff around (neck support pillows, letters, numbers, plants, a pillbox), he remains without any perception of the things, the space or the environment. Wade shows himself as an heir, showing the consequences of a world that is exclusively fixed on desire and ego. The consumption of the body and things no longer provides pleasure, all sensations are stale: The state of autolysis.



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The Stage as a Plaster Sculpture Park

Miet Warlop, as always, designed the stage. It's easy to imagine it at Documenta. The room is black and white, unlike their last piece, *Mystery Magnet*, where innumerable paint bombs flew around the space. A black curtain hangs upstage; Miet Warlop sometimes disappears behind the curtain like a magician preparing his next trick.

Plaster torsos stand around the space, along with balls made of foam, which are impaled onto rods and resemble globes, and vats filled with gypsum and other materials.

Miet Warlop runs throughout this sculpture park. In using these objects, she brings them to life or shatters them. And she does so in a way that is always new, in a way that provides the audience with a very innocent pleasure, one seldom felt in the theater. There are lighting effects, optical illusions and tricks. As a spectator, you feel like a child given the opportunity to unwrap one present after another.

Preaching and Hallucination

In order to preach, Jeremy Wade employs the customary microphone, panting through a speech on creative and cultural history and in a few sentences, he comes around to our society today, marked by drive, fatigue and permanent depletion. We are always at the verge of collapse, we know what is going wrong in our lives, in society, in politics, but that's all we know.

The only way out is *DrawnOnward*, a reality machine that can give us that for which we yearn: To feel life again, to communicate with others and with the world. Such prophetic moments, like when Wade plays a self-intoxicated preacher and salesman of his ideas, always belong to his repertoire of quasi-religious devotion, which also always includes a criticism thereof, presented through exaggeration that moves into the grotesque.

The hallucinatory aspect comes in with the most powerful image of the evening. Wade's naked back, face and torso are sprayed with a layer of shaving cream, centimeters thick. He turns into a sculpture, pushing out incomprehensible sing-song sound, and slowly revolves around himself, while his caregiver treats him with a delicate electroshock device.

His DrawnOnward machine has now placed him in transcendent world, bodiless and timeless. The escapism, which ultimately hides in his possible future worlds, that of self-loss, is perfect. In the end, it is a state from which he can only emerge, like in the foam, as a groundless, slippery, toppling, fidgeting, plaintive being.

Irritation and Deep Disturbance: Escapism

DrawnOnward is a complex performance, one that is simultaneously visionary and critical of the present, a caricature of our time, a unified performance. If you can let yourself revel in the extreme states of consciousness, in the unsteady flow of energies and emotions, if you don't resist the obsessive images and scenes of a twitching body ridden with impulse and madness, if you can endure this unsparing, excessive self-surrender, you won't just see some impressive images and some painful truths, you will allow yourself be irritated and deeply disturbed.

The fact that Jeremy Wade's proposal of the future is ultimately only escapism, only a means of escape instead of any real alternatives, is part of the insight being offered this evening.

Frank Schmid, *kulturradio*