

## **fiction in between: interview**

**with Fabrice Ramalingom and Saskia Hölbling**

**by Maxime Fleuriot**

### **How and when did you get to know one another?**

Fabrice: Three years ago. We were both playing in a work by Benoît Lachambre ("Lugares Communes"). The chemistry clicked immediately so to speak.

Saskia: There were about ten of us. As soon as Benoît called on us to improvise in Pairs, without thinking about it we always found one another. What I always particularly liked about these improvised duets with Fabrice was that I had the impression that we never got into a man/woman constellation. The question of gender played no role, it was left behind. And that's what I'm always striving for in my own work too. I attempt to liberate myself from masculine and feminine stereotypes that society incessantly attempts to force on us.

### **Why are you producing this work together?**

Fabrice: On the one hand there was the desire to extend the pleasure of our encounter. And since the foundation of my new company R.A.M.a, I have wanted to scrutinise and change my creative approach and production methods, to develop a different logic, particularly also to work outside France. I simply wanted to live out my work, which for me is a human adventure, in a different way.

Saskia: Because we are both well integrated into our respective environment, we wanted to combine our knowledge and our resources from both the artistic and the production-technique point of view (colleagues, programme designers etc.). In order to become stronger. I too had a desire for change, a desire to get off the beaten tracks I was moving on with my own company.

### **What was your artistic approach?**

Fabrice: The desire to dance!

Saskia: And the desire to appear as a duo that avoids the clichés that inevitably arise the moment a man and a woman are in play: the couple, the love story etc. We attempted to avoid all that by creating a space that is open for all possibilities, deliriums, phantasms.

### **You are making a very strong mark on stage (cat suits, neck chains etc.) These naturally provoke fantasies and projections among the spectators . . .**

Saskia: What seems particularly interesting to me about the cat suits is that the disappearance of individuality produces enough empty space for the spectators' projections. The materials of the cat suits and dog-collars in particular to a great extent evoke and suggest projections, including phantasmagoric ones.

Fabrice: We bought these cat suits in a sex shop, so we well know that they are loaded with sexual connotations and create fantasies. What grips me personally is this of the two bodies, which are completely covered – with a collar round the neck. I find that beautiful and terrible at the same time, because of the

chains around the neck. That calls my idea of beauty into question.

**To what extent is "fiction in between" reflected in your current work?**

Saskia: A few years ago I wrote a piece, "other feature", which was a turning point in my choreographic career. There were four naked women on stage, but above all one perceived "essential bodies", without faces, without gestures. This made it possible for me to refine the question that interests me: what remains of the individuality of the individual when one removes all signs of social categorisation? And it is also an attempt to throw another view on the body, which cuts across the codes and stereotypes of daily life. I have further developed this working method in my latest work by situating these "essential bodies" in differing contexts. These were sometimes very abstract, purist, sometimes less abstract, as for example in my solo "Jours Blancs" or as now in "fiction in between". The "context" for me is a possibility to make my analysis of the "essential body" more accessible. In "fiction in between" the phantasms, the eroticism, the sexuality – themes that concern us all – are the context, the access.

Fabrice: My approach is not so far away from Saskia's idea of an essential body, but the way it is applied is different. In my work I always try to transmit the emotion I feel when I just look at someone. More precisely, what I can read from the body and behaviour of a person and also what eludes itself: a fragility, a power, a humanity – but also habits or physical patterns that constitute the individuality. I attempt to demonstrate this and make it the theme in my work "Postural: Études" in which I have choreographically portrayed 15 men of different ages. The emotion I mean generally conveys itself through the observation of the face, hands, the body. "fiction in between" makes it possible for me to follow what happens when one completely covers the skin.

**In the course of the work you introduce to very striking accessories: a woolly hat and a blond wig? Is this about a question of gender?**

Saskia: We are obviously playing with it. But I think actually it is about the fact that these stereotypical signs permit projections at another level. This corresponds to the play with phantasms. At the end of the work, the accessories – woolly hats, wigs, boots – are flung out of the heap under which our bodies disappeared. Body parts, too – legs, arms etc – are flung out and thus become simple accessories. This just means that everything is an element of the phantasm. What I particularly like about this is that this deconstruction comes out of a heap, which is likewise a phantasm (the hidden, the amorphous etc). One deconstructs the phantasm by extending it.

**As interpreters, what do you feel when you are stuck in cat suits from head to toe?**

Fabrice: It is a very strange experience. I have the feeling of losing all my points of reference, being completely cut off from my usual feelings. Maryse Gautier, by the way, interpreted this wavering, this uncertain state of blurring very well through her work with light. I also feel myself as an object with which I can play.

Saskia: What is predominant for me is the feeling of slipping into another skin. Everything that I then do in the work triggers different feelings and associations. This is no longer Saskia, also no longer a pure "essential body" . . . This is something else, something that oscillates between man and woman, between animal and human.

**The music of Heinz Ditsch is as if it were omnipresent. How did that happen?**

Fabrice: The starting point for the music was Saskia's voice, which was changed, dematerialised. For me this makes it possible to enter a fantasy world, to go on a journey into my own ego.

Saskia: In order for it to function, the whole work has to be penetrated by sound. The music does not produce anything specific, but is rather an imaginary vector. A possibility for the observer to confront themselves with their own projections.