

Local Gestures

Waiting for a Light(er)

29/10/2015



Lara Kramer's *Tame*, photo by Frederic Chais.

We live in an environment of banality. For most people, that's enough. But how do you get through? How do you rip off that coating of banality? You have to make people descend into the depths of themselves.

—Svetlana Alexievich, winner of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature

A cigarette is dangling from each of three women's mouth, but they remain unlit. So do the women.

With *Tame*, choreographer Lara Kramer introduces us to three women who are fully domesticated, as portrayed by Angie Cheng, Karine Iraola, and Amélie Rajotte. But also tame as in not exciting, adventurous, or controversial; for an example, Google gives “network TV on Saturday night is a pretty tame affair.” That is precisely the world that lies before us. The stage is cluttered in articles that are usually found in the home: a couch, a microwave, lamps, a radio, a television...

The women sluggishly wander from nothingness to distraction, the home appearing like a waiting room inhabited by comatose ghosts. Paging Dr. Godot. Their movement is that of everyday gestures: brushing one's hair, picking at something stuck in one's teeth, scratching whatever itches. Idle hands are the devil's workshop, they say. These women don't have to worry about that though; the devil is only interested in the living. Cheng has already mummified herself using a roll of paper towels.

Iraola can very well shake a green plastic bottle (7Up? Sprite?), when she opens it, the expected explosion doesn't come. She has to take a sip and spit it on Rajotte herself, like a pathetic cum shot.

Rajotte is occupying herself by watching television. All we can hear is static. Just watch something, anything. Silence is death. Noise is the illusion that we're not already dead. She urges Cheng to come look at what she's watching. "You're going to miss it," she says, as if the image isn't going to be followed by a different version of the exact same image in an endless looping stream.

In the opposite corner, Iraola's ears are covered with headphones. These women are not living together. They are merely coexisting.

The first time they do come together is to watch a bag of popcorn as it pops away in the microwave for the five minutes it takes and why not? The sporadic popping is slightly less predictable in rhythm than that of the white noise on TV. This tableau ends with one of the few physical interactions, the always awkward one-sided hug.

Many directors and choreographers would have undoubtedly provided these characters with laptops, iPods, and smartphones. In doing so, they would have cheaply and mistakenly made their work about contemporary issues. By surrounding her characters with items from the 70s and 80s, Kramer smartly avoids this pitfall and makes *Tame* about something profoundly human. Before it was laptops, it was television; before iPods, the radio; before smartphones, magazines. We've always done whatever there was to do to pass the time while waiting to die.

Cheng, so perfectly apathetic you always need to remind yourself she's not actually a teenager, talks about someone who's late to pick her up. What was their name? Was it Godot? It's hard to tell because the women are only mumbling. Whatever their name, we know they're not coming.

By muting the women's speech, the radio, the television, Kramer also avoids us falling into their world of distraction, much like we would fall into a hockey game if the TV was on at a bar even if we couldn't care less about hockey. We are doomed to watch them distract themselves without becoming distracted ourselves, stuck in the same position we are in when watching someone play video games without getting to participate. We just want to yell "You're dying for nothing!" but we know we would only be screaming at ourselves.

October 28-31 at 7:30pm

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