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Weesageechak Begins to Dance 28: Annual Festival of Indigenous Works, Toronto, Tame, Lara Kramer

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Weesageechak Begins to Dance 28: Annual Festival of Indigenous Works

Fabien Maltais-Bayda (</en/auteurs/fabien-maltais-bayda>)



Lara Kramer, *Tame*, 2015. Photo: Stefan Petersen



***Tame*, Lara Kramer**

Weesageechak Begins to Dance 28: Annual Festival of Indigenous Works, Toronto, November 12 and 14, 2015

There is a moment of ecstatic abandon in Lara Kramer's *Tame*. Two of the performers, Karina Iraola and Amélie Rajotte, move objects through the space, and this motion develops into revelrous dancing. As the other dancer onstage, Angie Cheng, joins them, the scene rapidly intensifies. Cheng's enthusiasm modulates to rage, as she shoves Iraola onto a sofa, dashes objects across the stage, and screams viscerally. This sudden combustion just as quickly flickers out, and the piece returns to the dynamic it previously sustained: an ambulatory, almost sedate, slowness,

both mesmerizing and disquieting. In a sense, this timbre is reflective of the work's provocative title. A term loaded with associative baggage, *Tame* evokes enforced passivity, uncomfortable containment. The characters that inhabit the piece experience these constraints both conceptually and physically, on a stage overwhelmed with furniture, objects, and appliances.

In her previous work, Kramer also foregrounded materiality and objecthood. NGS (“*Native Girl Syndrome*”) enacted a sense of fraught attachment between the dancers and their object-filled strollers, situating this dynamic in a horizontally expansive stage space intended to evoke a city street. Alternatively, in *Tame*, the relationship between dancers and objects feels more ambivalent, filled as much with desire as apathetic coexistence. Confined by so much matter, the women claim what little space they can. At one point, Iraola sits in an old wheelchair covered in paper, which crumples audibly under the weight of her body, sonically rendering the stage's fullness—anywhere they move, the performers' bodies rub up against its cluttered materiality.

The interaction between performer and material, however, is not restricted to the body's surface. Eating, drinking, and consuming are repeated actions throughout the work, imbued with eroticism, abjection, and dissatisfaction. In one sequence, Iraola consumes marshmallow after marshmallow. With a full mouth she moves to centre stage, and spits them all out, catching the white substance that gushes over her lips in a tissue. In another moment, the dancers, still and trance-like, watch a microwave as popcorn pops. When the appliance beeps, a would-be satiating end to this reverie is thwarted: Rajotte opens the microwave door, but Cheng immediately slams it shut.

This action feels like a metonym for the work as a whole, and recalls the question of the climax. *Tame's* sudden eruption into movement and energy avoids catharsis in the Aristotelian sense. The work refuses to release us as audience members with a satisfying culmination, just as Cheng's frenzy does not release her from the overfull space. Rather, as the violence subsides, the three dancers return to approximately their original positions, amidst the proliferation of objects, all of which Iraola and Rajotte have moved slightly to the right. The work's affective embers continue to smolder quietly, intensely, confined just a little more tightly than before.

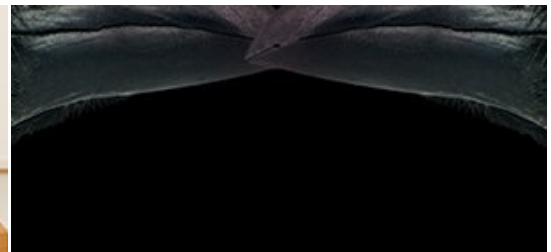
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