

In a Thick Green Space an Illuminating Multi-Sensual Experience is Created: of Visuals, of Music, of Movement

In her work "Faintings" Nina Traub is dealing with the constant battle between the wild and the tamed and draws the spectators into an elusive adventure in time.



"Faintings". time and time again a turbulent inner reality emerges, angry | Photo by: Sara Siegel

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"Trees warp time" writes the British author John Fowles in his poetic essay "The Tree", when describing how he feels as soon as he enters "one of the countless secret little woods" where he lives, almost like "leaving land to go into water, another medium, another dimension". The same feeling applies to spectating Nina Traub's new extraordinary work "Faintings", which begins with a beautiful Mise-en-scène: at the center of the large stage is a smaller, round, stage and in its heart a minimalistic wooden sculpture, resembling a weeping willow, whose naked branches canopies Zoe Polansky that sits in their shadow surrounded by musical instruments. The entire back wall is an acrylic painting on paper, huge in its dimensions, and in it more and more jets of green branches are bursting, slanting downwards, bending with tears.

When the eye gets used to the greenish darkness, it observes three additional characters: dancers Meshi Olinky, Tamar Kisch, and Traub herself, all in dark long wigs and greenish shiny garments. Throughout the piece they will stray amongst the misty sonic forest Polansky will produce from the stage, meticulously executing a restrained and proudly performed, well-forged choreography, a systematic arrangement of actions, executed almost exclusively in unison, without breaking the lines. "Faintings", it seems, does lead to a temporal blackout, for as I have finished watching the performance, I felt as if awakening from a daydream, from a sweet-disturbing stroll through a thick brush of sublime thoughts and images.



"Faintings". A content struggle between the wild and the tamed | Photo by: Sara Siegel

The piece begins with a solo by Olinky, who walks to center stage and aspires to expand from the center outwards, extending her hands backward and her leg to the side, and only when finished examining the limbs' ability to stretch to their full extent, grabs her foot and drops forwards. The back of her hand clutched to her forehead, pushes her head back and forces the body to rearrange vertically above the tip of the toes. A simple gesture embodies a battle between two elements revealed in "Faintings": one hand is flapping wildly as if asking to detach itself from the body, whilst the other hand grips it at the wrist and denying it of its freedom, domesticating its rebellious nature and taming it back to the strict, undefiable, choreography.

Under the severe surface, flickers a flame constantly striving to break free, time and time again emerges a raging turbulent inner reality threatening to ascend, and if not for the tight choreography, it seems, it may flood to the point of fainting.

Fowles wrote "The Tree" in 1979 as an essay dealing with the relationship between man and nature, by differentiation between himself and his father. Whilst the father favors gardening and pruning fruit trees, in other words cultivated nature, Fowles prefers the wild, the forest hadn't been touched by a human hand. Traub's choreography, at least superficially, is the embodiment of trimming and fencing, demarcation and arrangement; There is nothing natural in Traub's movements, which is formed from simple gestures and steps, all measured, calculated, carried out with geometrical accuracy and well laid out in space - and still she corresponds with the wild woods, with the natural chaos; It surfaces in the voices of the straining dancers' exhalations, in their (artificial) hair following their head uncontrollably as it plunges forward, covering their whole back as they stand on the tip of their toes, or in the emotional baggage that comes with trembling knees, which doesn't nullify even in the face of the recognition of it being an artificial, orchestrated gesture, like the ones preceding it.

Most of the piece is performed with exceptional accuracy, as the three dancers move as one: laying on their stomachs, their faces invisible to the eye, disconnecting their chests and legs from the ground, arching backwards and tucking their faces in the back of their elbows, thus moan loudly; sit on their knees; swinging their arms as if trying to take off and soar and succeed for a moment, the three of them up in the air, and immediately back to their knees; standing up, their hands rotate, become blades of a human wind turbine generating energy in perfect sync; advancing while performing a wave motion, mechanically-sensually, in which their pelvis jerk forwards as their knees slam back, growling as they slowly raise their hands, circling the stage in a rhythmic motion, pulsing, without breaking the triangular structure in which they are arranged.



"Faintings". As if awakening from a daydream | Photo by: Sara Siegel

"Good philosophers prune the chaos of reality and train it into fixed shapes" Fowles writes in his book. Traub does something similar: The precisely crafted choreography is as if to cover mysterious wild nature. As explained by Idan Landau, the Hebrew translator of John Fowles' "The Tree", last year, "Fowles 'nature' is not only external reality, but a constant internal presence". This presence is what emerges, growls and grunts under Traub's choreography: At a certain point the three exhale together while moving forward on the floor, gasping loudly as they retreat and then producing a wild roar as they charge forwards. This wild, rough being, ever bubbling and on the verge of bursting out, behind the steady choreography is what gives it its power. This, to Fowles, is "the wild side", the inner emotion opposed to the mainstream pretense. Eventually, it is a private discourse between two supposedly conflicting elements, similar to the complexity portrayed by Zelda in her poem "Two Elements" in which the cypress tree remains restrained and silent in contrast to the raging fire who cannot understand that inside the tree's alleged stability, chaos gushes as well.

"Faintings" offers an instructive multi-sensual experience: of visuals, of music, of movement. The choreography, dense and delightfully simple, is treated with an in-depth interpretation and wonderful execution by the dancers; Their chantings curtained by Polansky's guitar; their movement wanders the thick green volume of the stage, and without noticing, the spectator is sucked into an elusive adventure in time, surprisingly ending with the sound of their choky wailings, testaments to the ongoing battle between the wild and the tamed, from which originates any work of art.

Fainting by Nina Traub, co-creator: Meshi Olinky. Costumes: Sia Preminger. Set design: Nina Traub, Dror Tshuva, Amit Drori. Light Design: Hanni Vardi and Yair Vardi. Original music: Zoe Polansky and Nina Traub. Hazira International Performance Art Arena, Jerusalem, 3.2.2022