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Moving Dialogue: PART III – Notes on Moving Dialogue at the Judson Church

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When the audience entered the space at the Judson Church, **Mihaela Dancs** was already working on her solo *Lulu's Room*. Her presence in the space was not clear, though. I constantly questioned myself whether she was warming up or performing, and the situation triggered an interesting investigation about what it means to perform. What is it to begin a performance, after all? When does it start? What kind of quality is needed for one to assume it is already happening?

Following a plan in which every movement performed was questioned and disrupted, Dancs improvised a score creating an intriguing tension between the hesitation of her discontinued movements and the clarity of her subsequent choices. The uncertainty in her actions prompted a state of alertness while her decisions were influenced both by the perception of her surroundings and the subtle visual inputs received from the space she inhabited as well as from the audience. The space was circumscribed by the frontal use. After concluding her movement score, Dancs stopped at the center of the performative space and started to speak an automatic text with discontinued sentences, questions and greetings. In a repetitive, monotonous broken cadence, the performer kept speaking for minutes. The displacement of her words and the fragments of lucidity in it were simultaneously fragile and potent. *Lulu's Room* premiered at the [National Dance Center Bucharest/CNDB](#), in Romania in 2009 and it was the only finished work among the four performances of the evening. It was surprising that even dealing with such diverse aesthetics, all of the other works presented in the Moving Dialogue evening were strongly related to the representation of cultural stereotypes or modes of relating or reacting to the representational.

In the 9-minute video study *Reflection, tech rehearsal #1*, by **Jillian Peña**, the choreographer presented herself directing a chorus of doubles in leotards. Using fusion and other manipulation editing techniques in a style that reminded me of the avant-garde experimentations by Nam June Paik and Charlie Atlas in the 1970's, Peña's work rested in between criticism, irony and self-representation. **Paul Dunca** performed the extravagant *I.(immortality) C.(ollapse)* which consisted of a cynical illustration of the myth of vampires popularized by Bram Stoker at the end of the 19th century in his novel *Dracula*. Playing with the performative depiction of Romania's most world-known folklore, Dunca's actions were punctuated with costumes, props and text. Even though the content of his work was fragile in many extents, Dunca demonstrated to be a performer with a strong capacity to stick to the farcical with admirable commitment.

In the untitled choreographic solo piece by **Maggie Bennett** the tension between balletic movements, mimic of an audio narrative and the exposed corporality composed a multifaceted work. The initial feeling that the performer instilled too much trust on a beautiful and romantic composition was highlighted by an ingenuous movement translation of the audio recorded narrative by Judith Anderson in a 1950's production of *Medea*. The construction was subverted by the last part of the choreography in which following a blackout, Bennett appeared seated on the floor without the lower part of her outfit, exposing her vagina in a continuous spreading legs movement, while seating and rolling on the floor within the radius of her performative space.

Even though the sexuality of the performer was explicit, her movement went far beyond sexual connotations. The sweating and the strength of Bennett's physicality conflicted and challenged the vulnerability of being naked. The work was sensual yet poignant and her presence indubious, creating both an abstract and a material platform to recollect different hues of female power.

Marked by the intense presence of the performers, the evening at the Judson Church was full of relevant beginnings to Bucharest and New York dance artists.

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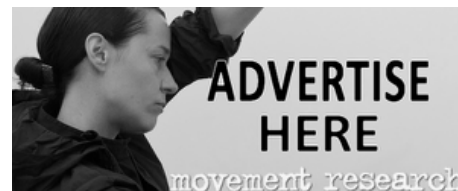
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