

With pictures like a choreographic poem, Julie Nioche, a unique figure of the contemporary dance scene in France, gives answers with her artistic and social actions over the last fifteen years not only to the question of the 'fragile' of being, body and identity but also to its protection.

Text Iliana Fylla

# JULIE NIOCHE

## THE PROTECTION OF FRAGILITY

### **Voleuse (2012)**

Trapped bodies propeller, struggling to reach higher until they are found in a reverie of dancing stupor...

### **Central Park (2010)...**

exposed to the infinite and seamless wild urban nature...

### **Nos Solitudes (2010)...**

experimenting with the suspended, the experience of solitude, a leap into the void.

### **Matter (2008)**

Paper suits disappearing, bodies annihilating into the water...

### **H2O-NaCl-CaCO3 (2005) ...**

A transmutation, the experience of wandering within an installation of oscillating inflated sacs.

### **Les Sisyphe (2003) ...**

Physical exhaustion. Liberation but not collapse.

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#### **(2000/2002)...**

after a dramatic deconstruction of our image so far, then what?

*"The notion of fragility often comes to guide and define my projects. 'Fragility of the subject' is what I call our fortitude to demonstrate our adaptability, efforts, failures, or our attempts to attain our goals rather than the result of the attainment itself. In other words, the situation we are in when we are dominated by a feeling, when we hark our feelings and our senses.*

*What touches me concerning dance is what can be not at all or partially controlled, what slips of the control of the dancer but at the same time paradoxically enough it defines him profoundly. My work aims at placing the bodies in destabilizing environments and makes the dancers react with intuition, sensibility and creativity. Other times I think that reaction is not necessary, sometimes their placement and presence on stage is enough. This is also a fragile situation, as action could sometimes be considered as a state of inertia.*

*If, in the context of my artistic actions, I am aiming at stimulating the emotional participation of the viewer, sharing and evincing the vulnerable situation we are all experiencing, in my workshop my target is to utilize the perception of our senses and demonstrate all this fragility it conveys".*

After so many years of experience in the performance and choreography field and a series of valuable collaborations with accomplished artists, in 2007 she formed A.I.M.E. - Association d'Individus en Mouvements Engagés (Associations of Moving and Committed Individuals) in collaboration with: Isabelle Ginot, Gabrielle Mallet, Stéphanie Gressin Michel Repellin (each one specialized in specific programmes and roles) with a purpose to combine her artistic creation with the relay of body techniques far from artistic environments and the expansion of actions in the social field and the field of pedagogy. Her studies in osteopathy and psychology encouraged her from the beginning of her career not only to develop a necessity for an unbreakable combination between Dance and Society, as well as the socio-medical and the therapeutic field, while trying to make her presence obvious in all those sectors, but also to search the significance of such a process.

"I have always wanted to make dance more important within society than just being a means of mere fun. I always bear in mind how important was dance for me while developing my identity and I want to propose this alternative way of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world which surrounds us, to whoever might be interested. For me a political position should reflect upon the importance of body and senses for the formation of individuals and society".

The purpose of all those acts is obviously not therapy. The set of seminars and workshops with people having disabilities, psychological, mental invalidisms or body chronic diseases (eating disorders, mental infirmity, AIDS), propose an alternative approach to confront these problems, while they feed artistic research with social experience.

"I desire the creation of spatio-temporal contexts, wherein bodies senses and perception are set in motion and emotions like pleasure and desire for action are activated in the participant. Dance and body techniques (which

are widely applied by the dancers), represent a means of realization of our senses and feelings, which is something ideal that encourages a person to become autonomous, to respect himself and the others and stimulate his lust for knowledge".

As for the pedagogical part, where the notion of the problem and therapy don't outclass whatsoever, the actions of the team support openly the preservation of singularity against massification as well as the completion of every individual through conscience and self-knowledge. 'Precaution' and 'protection', against the imposed models of life and knowledge, seem to be coming up indirectly as principles which find response only through contexts of reaction and action.

"Indifference or even denial, that we often come across in some contexts make us think that we have to protect our bodies, feelings and senses. The question, however, is from what and from whom? It is still difficult to further analyze that but we could probably talk about their protection against the dominance of discursive knowledge and the power of those who possess it. As well as for our protection against the value system that defines our everyday life: performance, action power, buying power, realization of specific goals depending on our age, career development...

Protecting our space, wherein we have the possibility to put a parenthesis in all those pressures and relativize them, are considered to be parts of our actions. Reacting and resisting with mildness, proposing alternative ways or other evaluative criteria like feeling, slowness, pleasure of moving and mobilization, expression and autonomy become our priorities".

While searching for suitable words and images, Espace Protégé (2009) project responds with eloquence.

"We worked on tactility and touch in order to talk about protection. I wanted to create a human chain in which every participant would make a move-gesture of protection to someone else by making him a massage or by just touching him. A human chain around a protected space, a theatre for example, a kindergarten or another kind of space, which to the eyes of the participants would be important. We adjusted this idea in the context they have proposed to us and we worked with two high schools of Seine St-Denis. A.I.M.E. team contributed by instigating workshops of small groups, where the participants could have a better approach to the 'touch'. In parallel I asked the writer Valentine Goby to organize a writing workshop in order to enable the students name all those things they want to protect and keep in their lives. They read and recorded their texts which were later composed by Alexandre Meyer. This sequence of sounds was broadcasted by a totem of speakers placed in an open area, around of which the students were performing the choreography we made together. Simple moves, based on contact touch and feeling, a choreographic assembly in which the youngsters were asked to jointly protect their words".

Today Julie Nioche is collaborating with the academic professor and practitioner Feldenkrais Isabelle Ginot on a new project. Sensationnelle, which will be presented for the first time in Aix-en-Provence early in 2013, suggests in an extraordinary interactive way for three (two performers one viewer) a small war against the hegemony of speech and glance, the power of images and spectacles, as well as a reconsideration of dance, not exclusively as a product of the glance, but also as a product of our senses!

Photography "Matter of fact" de Julie Nioche / A.I.M.E. © Photo to Matthieu Bouvier - Le Manège de Reims, 2009

