

The Dance Review Portal – Current Critiques of Berlin Dance Events



“Living Room”, Public in Private/Clémentine M. Songe (aka Clément Layes) ©Dieter Hartwig

To the Rhythm of Eternal Return

The “Living Room” project by Public in Private/Clémentine M. Songe (aka Clément Layes) will be shown from 25 to 28 November 2021 at the Sophiensæle. The cooperation between Songe/Layes and artist Jasna L. Vinovrški, architect Morana Mažuran, light designer Ruth Waldeyer, and visual artist Jonas Maria Droste resulted in an acrobatic performance that blurs the boundaries between bodies, objects, animation, and movement.

The stage is a rectangular, white platform displaying the interior of a middle-class living room. It is furnished with a blue sofa, a small table, a stool, two plants, a pillow, a pair of slippers, and a lamp. After a sound elicits an associative image of rain and water, a performer (Clémentine M. Songe/Clément Layes) enters the stage. He takes off his shoes and shakes out sand. Then he makes himself comfortable. He sits on the sofa, opens a white laptop, and appears to type. Moments before, he placed his jacket, which will later fly through the air, on a rope. After unsuccessfully attempting to immerse himself in a book, he tosses the book aside. A book simultaneously falls on him from above. This process will repeat itself as soon as he puts the books aside. He pours water into a glass, but regardless of how much liquid he pours, the glass never fills up. This strange occurrence, which reminds us of magic tricks and the circus, evokes laughter from the audience.

Layes tries to read once again, but is distracted by a light bulb that, like his jacket, floats through the room. It slowly becomes clear it is not just the jacket and light bulb, which are moving, but also the stool, the bucket, the plants, the table, the ladder. The entire stage area is animated by remote control, objects rotate on turntables, and ultimately the principle of restlessness and permanent movement define the rhythm and dramaturgy (Jonas Rutgeerts) of the performance. And thus a crucial contrast emerges. On the one hand, the futile attempt of the performer to minimize movements so he can focus on reading; on the other hand, a telekinetic choreography of objects with their aimless and absurd restlessness.



Picture: "Living Room", Public in Private/Clémentine M. Songe (aka Clément Layes) ©Dieter Hartwig

As the performance continues, two additional objects are activated, which are not on the platform but are instead located in front of and behind this stage. An equally amusing and absurd scenographic process is the sweeping up of confetti being dispersed by a fan. Although he does all he can to create order, calm, and silence, the performer seems to constantly fail. Instead, he is moved along by the chaotic independent existence of these objects, thereby creating the impression that the body is not choreographing the objects, but rather their kinetics are choreographing and subjecting him to a rhythm he has no control over. For the viewers, the performance transpires in the form of a dynamic tableau vivant, which draws a voyeuristic gaze. According to the press release, "Living Room" investigates the following: "What would happen if the furniture inhabiting our living room were to grow weary of its static role and tasks and decide to escape? To move, to jump, to transform, to dismantle itself or merge with other appliances?"

The permanent failed attempt to navigate the living room and find solid ground in one's own private sphere, because the floor is spinning and heaving, structures the performance into a poetic-lucid reflection of the non-stop circulation of images, goods, and sensory stimuli. The impossibility of establishing a safe space results in scenographic situations, which, though funny, nevertheless reveal a restless and hectic present through their uncanniness. There is a concurrent suggestion of disorientation in one's own home, which is becoming increasingly cluttered with cheap furnishings. Thus, "Living Room" conveys the impression of a completely commodified world. Human beings appear like marionettes in this constellation. A mechanical puppet ruled by invisible forces and caught in non-stop circling, devoid of purpose and meaning.

English translation by Melissa Maldonado

The performance "[Living Room](#)" by Public in Private/Clémentine M. Songe (aka [Clément Layes](#)) is still be shown today, Sunday 28 November 2021 at 4 p.m. at the Festsaal of the Sophiensæle, tickets under [sophiensaele.de](#). From 9 December 2021 to 20 January 2022, *LIVING ROOM* can also be seen as a spatial installation in the exhibition space of the Berlin architecture firm O&O Baukunst: [O&O Depot](#), Leibnizstraße 60, 10629 Berlin.

Tags: [Clément Layes \(EN\)](#), [Clémentine M. Songe \(EN\)](#), [Jasna L. Vinovrški \(EN\)](#), [Jonas Maria Droste \(EN\)](#), [Jonas Rutgeerts \(EN\)](#), [Morana Mažuran \(EN\)](#), [Public in Private \(EN\)](#), [Ruth Waldeyer \(EN\)](#), [Sophiensaele \(EN\)](#)