Μπρένταν Φερνάντες





ΤΗΣ ΜΑΡΙΛΕΝΑΣ ΑΣΤΡΑΠΕΛΛΟΥ

Ο ΧΟΡΟΣ «Φ αντάσου/ Χωρίς φόβο/ Ποιο είναι το αφόρο/ Ποιο είναι το αφόρο. Να μα προπροσή την οποία είναι δίσκολο να ακολουθήκεις αλλά σίγουρα σΕξεί κάθε προσπάθεια. Αυτό είναι όνα το προπροσή ποι να δικληθούν να αποκτήσου κόσι και άνες Βρεθούν να αποκτήσου κόσι και άνες Βρεθούν να αποκτήσου κόσι και άνες Βρεθούν να αποκτήσου κά και ανακλησισμένο να αποκαντισμένο και ανακλησισμένο να αποκαντισμένο και ανακλησισμένο



DANCE AS A WAY OF RESISTANCE

Written by Marilena Astrapelou (To Vima - 13/06/2021)

For Brendan – Translated by George Agapitidis (26/06/2021)

Imagine without fear what is tomorrow, that is a prompt that although is hard to follow is certainly worth trying. This is the question that visitors, of the renovated *Former Tobacco Factory – Library of parliament* at Lenorman street, will be asked to answer as part of the exhibition Portals, organized by Neon Organization (Responsible for the renovation of 6,500sq.m out of the 19,000 total of the buildings space) in cooperation with the Hellenic Parliament.

Firstly, because they owe it to themselves and secondly because this way, they can become part of the creation "A solo until we can dance again" of Brendan Fernandes, one of the 59 artists that take part in the exhibition and one of the fifteen that created a commissioned piece just for this exhibition. Fernandes calls all potential participants to write their messages/answers on the surface of the three elevated pedestals on the forecourt space of the building as a means of relaxation and release. "This way, a floor graffiti is created and a memento mori with the emotions of the world and possibly their traumatic experiences" Fernandes will comment for the Vima newspaper. Following, during the performance, the dancer will read the floor literally and metaphorically and will perform an improvisational piece with spontaneous dance movements. "It will be like a feast that allows everyone to say out loud what he/she/they feel at that given moment. The question that is being asked marks a promise for a new day and a new beginning and each performance will be a new possibility for a different future" the very special, internationally acclaimed and sought-after artist Fernandes will comment.

Multifaceted Practice

His artistic practice moves freely between artistic mediums like installations, sculptures, audio-visuals and of course dance is equally multifaceted with his origins and experiences. Born in Kenya from parents of Indian descent, he emigrated to Toronto Canada in 1989 due to political unrests, whilst now he lives in Chicago.

Dance has always been an integral part of his life, but his parents insisted he should "have another Ace up his sleeve" in order to ensure/solidify his professional career. An accident when he was 21 forced him to leave his dream of becoming a first ballet dance behind, and turned him to artistic creation and to studies related to that at Toronto, London and New York which gradually restored dance back in his life, as a choreographer from then on.

The Influence of the Pandemic

This art piece that will be presented in Athens is clearly influenced by the pandemic, since Fernandes work, although Hybrid, is largely based on dance and the coexistence of bodies on stage. "I was thinking how this pandemic has affected me, the second that touches me after the echo of the AIDS crisis, not because I lived the latter, but because as a person that self identifies as queer and gay, I always felt fear from early on in my life, since I had connected in my mind that sex could equal to death. That's the residue of that pandemic, the residue of the current one will appear in front of us at some point. Personally, the year that passed I felt that I was living a traumatic experience, besides dance is based on human coexistence. The positive side of this situation is that I came very close with group of friends in Chicago where my base is, with whom we became a family.

The idea that you can choose your family is very important to me. There was also this feeling of resistance to what was happening and was vanishing us. You know, as dancers, when we go on the floor of the stage, we test it to see how much it resists us and how it treats our bodies. I was thinking a lot about resistance through this prism, and that is why the platforms of my art piece at NEON include this feeling".

Experiences and wounds

Fernandes knows of resistance well. This past summer was very intense for his base city (Chicago), the protests and the uprisings of the Black Lives Matter movement was an everyday occurrence, including the position of people of color in the streets shouting names of people that have been murdered by the police. Experiences that in a way found their way into their work, like for example the infamous Orlando mass shooting at a gay club.

"I am Kenyan, I am Indian, I am Canadian, I am a dancer, I am a punk rocker. My body has lived through different experiences, wounds, has felt pleasure, pain, and these experiences are imprinted in my body and are part of my identity. This is also visible in the way that I make my performers move and dance. A ballet movement or a punch thrown up in the air are dynamic moves with a political character that allow the body to become a tool of expression and giftedness. I want to believe that I manage to make people think differently sometimes. That I create a dialog, that I rent my voice to people that do not have the opportunity to speak up.