Public Movement and the Ceremonial Crisis

The site-specific outdoor performances of Public Movement – established in 2006 by Omer Kriger and Dana Yahalomi – are defined by the group as actions of public choreography. Carried out in Israel and around Europe, these actions, consisting of open ceremonies and invisible interventions, offer a radical presentation of the ritualistic patterns embedded in national power structures.

In my paper I will examine the group’s creative interaction with the public sphere as a strategy of subversive cooperation. The rituals it practices, combining movement, music, sound, screened images and text, are a simulative aestheticization of collective codes of emergency and trauma which are turned into restored behavior. While the modeling of ceremonial patterns is done from an explicit position of integration and identification with a Jewish-Israeli collective memory, the performing group is also characterized as having a generalized (utopian or totalitarian) autonomous national identity, as unidentified white-uniformed agents mark the performance space with an unidentified tri-color flag, infiltrate the public space and add the dissonance of sudden violence into a highly regulative action.

Among the group’s unique actions (which nevertheless have performative precedents) I will focus mainly on two. Also Thus! (2007), a ceremony simulating a military parade which includes a collision between a moving car and performers, presented repeatedly as a movement phrase. This performance was also a part of the series of actions Performing Politics in Berlin and took place at the Olympic stadium in Berlin. Emergency (2008) was presented in the Israeli Fringe Theatre in Acre for a limited audience, despite the cancellation of that year’s festival following violent clashes between Jewish and Arab residents. Planned before the riots, the action simulates the site of a terrorist attack or other emergency states, complete with victim evacuation routines, television coverage and ambulances and fire trucks.

About the Author

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