



WITNESS
Reut Shemesh

At first,

I thought you've figured it all out.



Just
like
a
true
woman

The woman my mother wants
me to be.



So I wanted to be



Like you

And I found
you in me.



And then it was quiet.

I went inside you.





It was mostly

very

silent.



A close-up, high-angle portrait of a woman with short, blonde, feathered hair. She has dark, expressive eyes looking slightly to the right of the camera. Her lips are painted a vibrant red. The background is a solid, deep red color. The lighting is soft and directional, highlighting the texture of her hair and the contours of her face.

Behind it all,
I could see that
you and I are both haunted.

Haunted by something big.

After a while you happened to be
more complex than I.

So, I started to shake.



May I ask you something?

If a thunderstorm was coming; a big storm from
behind the mountains;

with whom would you hide?



With the one who is tender
or, the one who is evil?

ABOUT

WITNESS is a result of a dialog with the aesthetic of Gardetanz, through the study of Gardetanz movement repertoire and the custom of its practice. It is a melange of Gardetanz and contemporary art, motivated by the desire to develop a common movement language.

The project is manifested across several mediums: photography, text, interviews, and a performance.

The celebration of Carnival is a custom taking place every winter in the region of North Rhein-Westphalia (as well as several other cities in Germany and around the world). The Catholic origin of this tradition focuses on individual liberation, festivity, and togetherness. Many of the carnival traditions and costumes were created as a platform for satire, initially mocking military institutions in the 1800s. Today's Tanzgarde troupes draw inspiration from twentieth-century cabarets.

The dance group 'Tanzgarde der Karnevalsfreunde der katholischen Jugend' is part of the association Kakaju, that was founded in 1952. Based in Düsseldorf, the group consists of about forty female dancers between the ages of 15 to 45. Some of the dancers have been members of the group for over thirty years. The group performs in venues and events, mostly related to the Carnival tradition.

During the process of this project, I found myself fluctuating from the encounter with the group members. Their strong desire to dance and perform; the submission into established gender formation; the representation of the dolly corporate identity which I found seductive, and the fine symmetric aesthetics of the choreography fascinated me.

I felt some of the women have found something I am still searching for: a type of stability and comfort in respect to their female identity, combined with the joy of togetherness. I became uncertain about my role. The contrast between a 'ready-made' and a 'handmade' personality reflected a conflict within me, as did the contradiction of my background and physical appearance.

The Tanzgarde's pleasure, uniformity, culture, dance, sexuality, and entertainment form an impressive, powerful collective entity on stage. It is an aesthetic that I would like to include in my own artistic research.

This book responds to the open-ended question about the creation of the self. It looks at the tension between formality and the abnormal, and the attempt to perform an authentic personality, if such can even exist.



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