

**REUT SHEMESH**  
**2015-2025**

*Uniforms, Youth,  
Motherhood,  
Shadows,  
Masculinity,  
Celebration,  
Dance, Symmetry  
and Portraits*



# *Grief or Revenge*

*Dear reader,*

**My name is Reut Shemesh, I am an Israeli based in Germany, Cologne. I am writing you this letter at the time of war between Palestine and Israel. Since then, a lot of pain, loss, and suffering accumulated in the world. Creating art feels meaningless and yet urgent since then.**

**I pray for suffering to end, for the pain to ease, for people to return home, for parents to raise their children safely, and for children to be. I want art to offer us still a place to celebrate differences, complexities, ambiguities, and failure. A place to grieve together.**

**I hope that the dance studio will remain a safe place for dialogue and transformation and that the dance floor will continue to offer imperfection and hence perfection.**

**I hope you and your loved ones are safe.**

**In case you would like to talk, I am very open to doing so.**

**Yours, Reut**



*I want to make art about  
what ever the fuck I want  
to make art about*

*Sometimes  
I want to be  
something else,  
sometimes  
I want to be  
YOU*

My work is centered on themes of gender, and portraits, under the umbrella term “Women in Uniforms”. In 2016, I developed *LEVIAH*, a piece that delves into the experiences of Israeli female soldiers in male-dominated military institutions. *ATARA* (2019), inspired by the lives of Jewish Orthodox women. In 2021, I created *COBRA BLONDE*, which examines gender roles and female representation during traditional carnival festivities.

During the working process, I am usually using methods and tools such as reenactment and deconstruction (more about it can be found in the book “Symmetry, Alibis and Intuition”, published in 2023).

More recently, I expanded my exploration of uniformity with *ESTHER* (2024). This piece focuses on self-discovery and group affiliation among young people, examining how clothing reflects socio-economic backgrounds.

*„At a very early stage of life, we ossify and reduce ourselves into being just one – one body, one or two languages, one gender. Each of us has our ‘official story’, one story out of many possible ones, a story that sometimes becomes our prison...To create is to open up the possibility of touching human infinity.“ – David Grossman*

## ASPIRATION

I celebrate identities, by constructing and deconstructing them to reveal their inherent paradoxes. In some ways, identity is a story we taught ourselves. By reenacting and embodying the visuality of a specific dress code and body language or a dance style, I comment and flirt with prejudices and clichés. However, eventually, I'm interested in the person who stands in front of me authentic and bare of all decorations as much as possible (if such can even exist). This paradox serves as a frequent tool in my works.

Many themes and starting points in my work are rooted in my biography. For example, *ATARA* (2019), inspired by the lives of Jewish Orthodox women, explores differing perspectives on gender roles and family structures, drawing from my family background. *GOLA* (2017-2022), inspired by my experiences as a teenager participating in national ceremonies in Israel, also reflects my personal history.

However, I am equally fascinated by the experiences of the diverse artists I am working with. I am doing my best to create the right choreographic "containers" for the talented artists I collaborate with, shaping dance moves that reflect and empower their personalities while aligning with my aesthetic language.

In *ULTRA*, for instance, I explore masculinity in young boys seeking to heal and celebrate the young masculine energy within me that transcends a specific body as I am a 41-year-old woman.

Ultimately, we can find all these identity traces within ourselves, reenact them, dance them, embody them, celebrate them, and, in doing so, heal them—and ourselves.

Beyond my staged work, I am also interested in other art forms such as photography, poetry, and experimental films. In my work, I combine these different fields, intertwining them with and within my staged creations.



Photo: Jonas Zeidler



## TOURING WORKS

*works works*  
*works works*  
*works works*  
*works works*  
*works works*  
*works works*  
*works works*  
*works works*  
*works*





LEVIAH



Photo: Sasa Huzjak

# LEVIAH

*My very tight  
uniform has  
become a  
symbol; a  
symbol of lost  
dreams and  
sexual  
confusion.*

*LEVIAH* is a collection of memories from my service in the Israeli military. It brings to light a phenomenon that is rarely spoken about; the emotional trauma that some female soldiers in junior positions endure. In the male-dominated, hierarchical structure of national military service, many women lose control and develop eating disorders. They are forced to adopt a tough exterior and are subject to sexual harassment. *LEVIAH* presents vulnerability versus control, as well as the shift from human to machine, within a charged social and military environment.

Premiere: 2015 TanzFaktur Cologne (DE)  
Winner of the 2016 Cologne Dance and Theatre Prize

Funded by the Cultural Office of the City of Cologne, the Kunststiftung NRW, the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Kunsthochschule für Medien /KHM (Academy of Media Arts) Cologne



ATARA



Photo: Öncü Gültekin



Photo: Öncü Gültekin



# ATARA

*For You Who  
Has Not Yet  
Found the One*

In *ATARA*, choreographer Reut Shemesh directs her gaze onto the worldview shared by women who live according to the rules set forth by Jewish orthodoxy and those who take a secular approach. Together, they ask what femininity, female sexuality, and their places in society could be. How do they find their destiny, or how do they fail in doing so?

Through reenactments of events from her surroundings – Reut Shemesh grew up in a family both secular as well as orthodox – and through photography, text, and movement, an oscillating dialogue between different outlooks arises. In this way, clichés, prejudice, and one's lifestyle come into question in equal measure.

Premiere: 2019, K3-Tanzplan Hamburg at Kampnagel (DE)

ATARA is a production of Reut Shemesh, K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg in cooperation with tanzhaus nrw, Düsseldorf

Financed by the Cultural Office of the City of Cologne, Hamburgische Kulturstiftung, Kunststiftung NRW, Stiftung Zurückgeben, KunstSalon Stiftung / Step Up & RheinEnergie Stiftung.

Supported by the TanzFaktur Cologne, iDAS NRW, Machol Shalem Jerusalem

# COBRA BLONDE



Photo: Ronni Shendar

# COBRA BLONDE

*The Woman  
My Mother  
Wants Me  
to Be Like*

*COBRA BLONDE* crosses the boundary between two worlds of expression that rarely touch: traditional German carnival 'Garde' dancing and contemporary art, manifesting gender roles and female representation during traditional carnival festivities. Between the prevalent approach in contemporary dance to emphasize the individuality and the power of community from which the 'Garde' dance draws, an unusual aesthetic emerges, as well as a social forcefield.

The process started in 2018 as a research project under the working title *WITNESS*, by an invitation of the tanzhaus nrw Düsseldorf.

The short film *COBRA*, by Reut Shemesh & Ronni Shendar, which is based on the performance of *COBRA BLONDE*, premiered on March 2nd, 2022 at the New York Buenos Aires Dance Film Fest and was subsequently shown in several exhibitions and film festivals.

Premiere (Stream) 2021, tanzhaus nrw, Düsseldorf, DE  
Performance nominated for the Tanztheaterpreis Köln / Cologne Dance Theatre Prize 2021

COBRA BLONDE is a production by Reut Shemesh, co-produced by tanzhaus nrw, in cooperation with the "Tanzgarde der Karnevalsfreunde der katholischen Jugend Düsseldorf e.V." Supported by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and, the Cultural Office of the City Cologne, Kunststiftung NRW, Fonds Darstellende Künste, KunstSalon Stiftung / Step Up. Further support by iDAS NRW and the TanzFaktur Cologne



# GOLA 4TH MOVEMENT



Photo: Almut Elhardt



# GOLA 4TH MOVEMENT

## *A Ceremony on Behalf of a Missing Affinity*

*GOLA 4th Movement* is Reut Shemesh's fourth and latest reworking of the piece *GOLA*, created in 2017. The piece is part of the *GOLA* series, which are inspired by the form and dogma of national ceremonies that the choreographer participated in as a young adult, growing up in Israel. During these days of commemoration, children, young adults, and soldiers take part in events that could be described as public theatre. Caught between nostalgia and critical distance, the piece places these ceremonial acts in line with the need for affiliation and the potential of its satisfaction.

Premiere: 2022, HELLERAU, Dresden

GOLA 2017 is a production of the Reut Shemesh Company in co-production with the ASPHALT Festival Düsseldorf. Funded by the City of Cologne, the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Kunststiftung NRW, and the RheinEnergieStiftung Kultur. Supported by TanzFaktur Cologne, Ehrenfeld Studios Cologne and iDAS NRW. The adaptation GOLA 4th Movement 2022 was funded by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. The production was supported by tanzhaus nrw, TanzFaktur Cologne and iDAS NRW.

ULTRA



# ULTRA

## *I Want to Be a Father Like My Father*

In *ULTRA*, a co-creation with the Belgian production house fABULEUS, ten youngsters let their explosive and vulnerable energy flow freely. Moving along a thin line between festivity and rebellion, *ULTRA* questions the role of typical masculine behavior and group dynamics. For this piece, Reut Shemesh drew inspiration from an encounter with German 'Ultra' football fans. Blending teenage joy and aggression, the piece unveils the vulnerability beneath their loud expressions as the youngsters grapple with shifting expectations and gender norms.

Premiere: 2023, STUK, Leuven, Belgium

ULTRA is a co-creation by fABULEUS & The Reut Shemesh Company, coproduced by tanzhaus nrw.  
Funded by the Alliance of the International Production Houses ("Bündnis internationaler Produktionshäuser"), Perpodium & STUK with the support of the City of Leuven, the Flemish Administration, the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Kunststiftung NRW.



ESTHER



Photo: Jonas Zeidler



# ESTHER

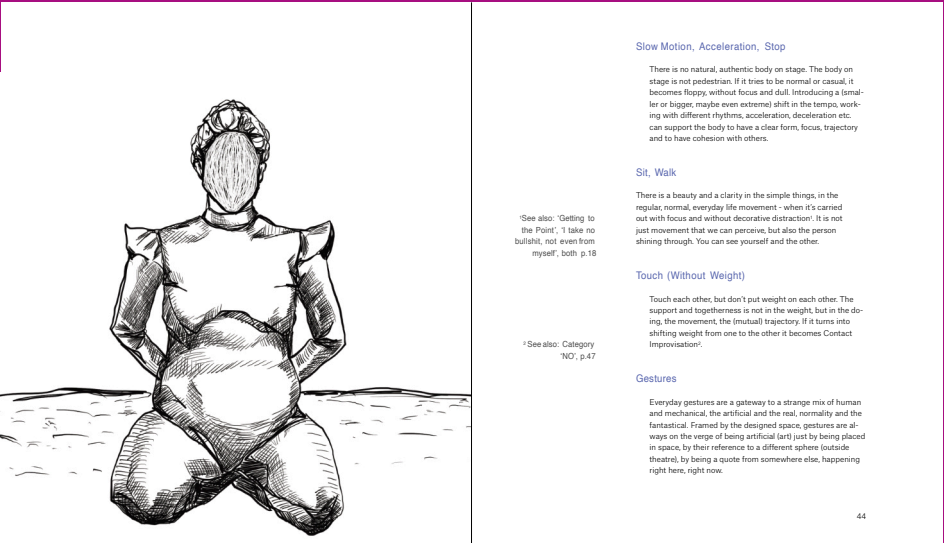
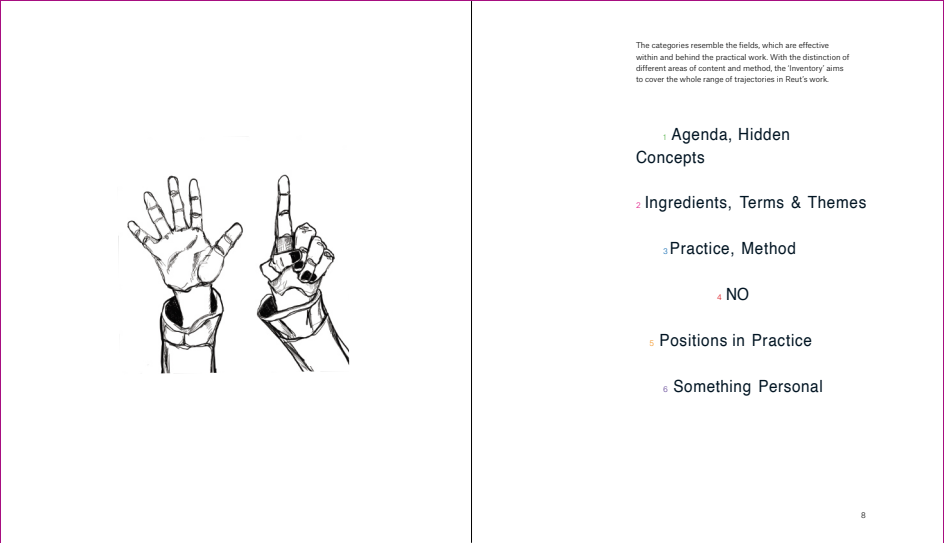
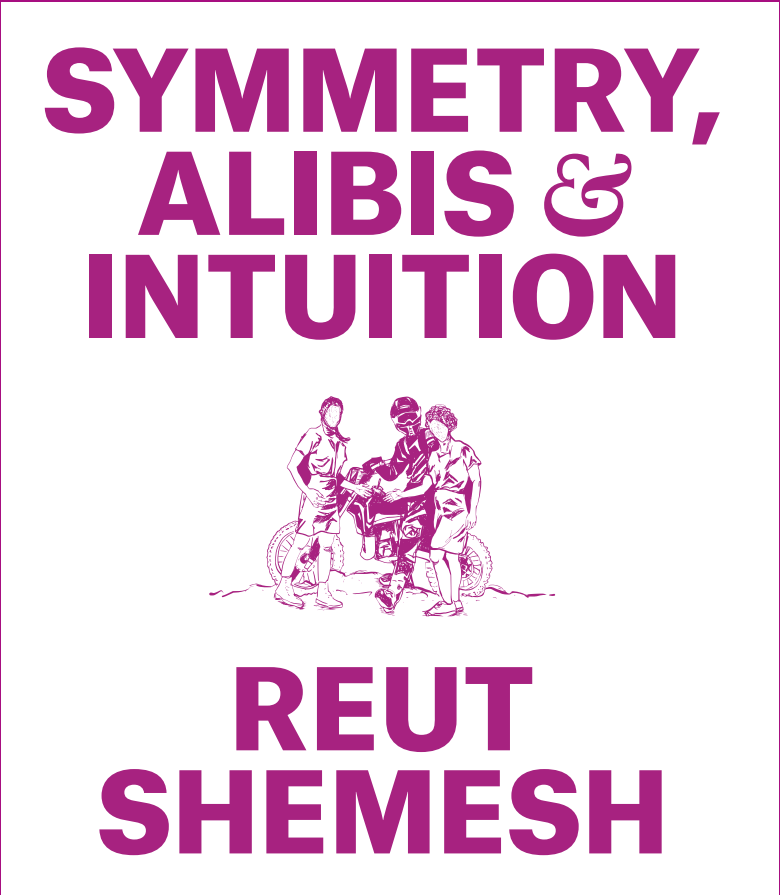
## *A Dance Piece About Youth & Uniforms*

*ESTHER* features five adult professional dancers who revisit their youth and blend it with today's younger generation. The piece captures fragments of identities found in cultural manifestations such as urban dance, folk dance, and pop culture music videos. Reflecting on their upbringing, the dancers share memories from their youth, exploring the nuanced relationship between uniforms, symbols, as well as social class and shed light on the delicate balance between conformity and individuality.

Premiere, 4.5.2024, fabrik Potsdam (DE)

ESTHER is a joint production by Fabrik Moves Potsdam and Reut Shemesh, in co-production with K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg, Fokus Tanz | Tanz und Schule e.V. München and HELLERAU - Europäisches Zentrum der Künste Dresden as part of the cooperation explore dance - network dance for young audience. Funded by the Jupiter - Performing Arts for Young Audiences program of the German Federal Cultural Foundation. Funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. The Explore dance network is supported by the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne.

# SYMMETRY, ALIBIS & INTUITION: AN INVENTORY OF CHOREOGRAPHIC CHOICES



# *An Inventory of Choreographic Choices*

**With *Symmetry, Alibis & Intuition – An Inventory of Choreographic Choices*, Reut Shemesh and dramaturg Matthias Quabbe present a book about Reut's choreographic handwriting combined with vivid illustrations by Mona Kakanj. A wide variety of working methods, thought processes, and procedures are presented in thematic order, creating a "toolbox" that can inspire and frame choreographic work.**

**Published in 2023, 67 pages, in English language.**



upcoming  
upcoming  
upcoming  
upcoming  
upcoming  
upcoming  
upcoming



ELECTRA



Photo: Almut Elhardt



# ELECTRA

## *Army of mothers*

Based on an in-depth exploration of motherhood, In *ELECTRA*, Shemesh intends to explore the emotions of anger and exhaustion inherent in motherhood, as well as the complexities of mother-daughter relationships and the archetype of the 'dragon mother'—fierce, enraged, and weary. Through both a social and personal lens, Shemesh examines the tension between private experiences and the stereotypes and clichés that often define motherhood. Moreover, she is interested in collaborating with individuals of all genders, expanding her focus to explore the concept of motherhood beyond conventional gender norms.

Premiere scheduled for Nov 20. – 23 2025 (TBC) at tanzhaus nrw,  
Düsseldorf

*happy artists  
make sad pieces*

# BIO

Reut Shemesh, born and raised in Israel, works in contemporary dance, experimental film, and photography. Her work often explores the theme of uniforms across various social groups. She holds a B.A. from the ArtEZ Institute of the Arts in Arnhem (NL) and a postgraduate degree from the Academy of Media Arts (KHM) in Cologne (DE).

Her creations have been showcased at Kampnagel Hamburg, HELLERAU Dresden, Art Cologne, Tanzhaus Zürich, Suzanne Dellal Center Tel Aviv, the Jewish Museum in Berlin, Theatre Lab NYC, STUK Theater Leuven, and Korzo Theater in The Hague. Her works have been presented at international festivals and have received numerous awards. In 2016, she won the Cologne Dance and Theater Prize for her work LEVIAH and was named “One to Watch 2019” (“Hoffnungsträgerin 2019”) by Germany’s largest dance magazine, “tanz”.

In April 2019, she created ATARA during a residency at K3|Tanzplan Hamburg, which was later invited to the Tanzplattform Deutschland 2020. From 2020 to 2022, Shemesh was a “Factory Artist” at tanzhaus nrw Düsseldorf. In October 2021, HELLERAU Dresden presented a collection of her pieces and video work under the title “Portrait: the Choreographer Reut Shemesh.”

Her research project WITNESS opened the Impulse Theater Festival 2019. She has also created commissioned works for Theater Oberhausen (“Bad Mothers”, 2022).



Photo: Vera Drebusch



# BIO

Currently, she is touring various European cities with *ULTRA*, a co-creation with the Belgian production house *fABULEUS*, exploring masculinity in young people. In May 2024, she premiered the production *ESTHER* - a piece about Youth & Uniforms - as part of the explore dance - Network Tanz für junges Publikum (Dance for young audiences) at Fabrik Potsdam. Her commissioned work *ANACONDA* for the dance ensemble at the Gießen City Theatre will premiere in April 2025.

Shemesh has been working as a guest teacher at various academic institutions, including the HSD Düsseldorf (University of Applied Sciences), the ZZT Köln (Centre for Contemporary Dance), and the University of Cologne. She is a recipient of top dance funding from the Ministry of Culture and Science of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia for 2024-2026 and received four-year funding from the City of Cologne for 2021-2024. Reut Shemesh lives in Cologne.

As a woman, artist, mother, and migrant, Shemesh often infuses her personal experiences into her work.

[www.reutshemesh.com](http://www.reutshemesh.com)



Photo: Vera Drebusch

*Dear audience,  
I've been reflecting on our  
relationship lately, about my desire  
to please you and my fear of failing  
in doing so.*

*While hoping to impress those who  
have seen it all. I ask you, please be  
gentle with me.*

# CONTACT

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## *Supported by*

Ministry of Culture and Science  
of the State of  
North Rhine-Westphalia



Meet us here:

*2024*

**30.08.2024 14:15 & 16:15 ULTRA (Excerpts),  
tanzmesse nrw, Open Studio, tanzhaus nrw, DE**

**21.09.2024 ULTRA, fabrik Potsdam, DE**

**30.09.2024 ULTRA (School Performance), CC De  
Werft, Geel, BE**

**08.10.2024 ULTRA (SP), CC Het Gasthuis, Aarschot,  
BE**

**11.10.2024 ULTRA, Ringlokschuppen Ruhr, Mülheim  
an der Ruhr, DE**

**15.10.2024 ULTRA (SP), Bronks, Brüssel/Brussels/  
Bruxelles, BE**

**24.10.2024 ULTRA, Sint-Niklaas, CC Sint-Niklaas, BE**

**05.11.2024 ULTRA (SP), CC Mechelen, Mechelen, BE**

**07.11.2024 ULTRA, AGB Cultuurcentrum Diest, BE**

**09.11 - 07.12.2024 (in Blocks) Seminar: Dance in  
Pop Culture and Social Media, University Cologne, DE**

**15.11.2024 ULTRA, Kasseler Tanzfestival für junges  
Publikum, Kassel, DE**

**25.11.2024 ULTRA (SP), STUK, Leuven, BE**

**26.+27.11.2024 ULTRA, STUK, Leuven, BE**

*2025*

**14.+15.02.2025 ULTRA, Campo, Gent, BE**

**12.04.2025 \*Premiere\* ANACONDA, Gießen City  
Theatre, DE**

**24.04.2025, ANACONDA, Gießen City Theatre, DE**

**02.05.2025, ANACONDA, Gießen City Theatre, DE**

**31.05.2025, ANACONDA, Gießen City Theatre, DE**

**15.06.2025, ANACONDA, Gießen City Theatre, DE**

