

Mirrorings

Performers walk through the city in a long row, their outward appearance cannot be distinguished from other passers-by, but they are holding man- or woman-high mirrors in their hands. Suddenly a formation emerges. One guesses that the performers are prompted by a command, it is a choreography that has fallen out of time, a déjà vu. A female chimer leads the group, performers wrapped in flags frame the march, defining it in spatial terms, marking a beginning and an end. Svea Duwe's performance "Spiegelmarsch" (March of Mirrors) is reminiscent of a marching band, of parades, or the historical formations of military marches. The choreography developed by the artist gets to the heart of the unease and disturbance that accompany the marches and demonstrations of nationalistic movements which have flared up throughout Europe in the past years, relating them to older traditions of expressing political representation in European history. The sequence of melodies composed for the chime underscores the abstraction but also the disturbing appearance of various concrete – visual and performative – levels of experience in this march.

How do we experience the present-day demonstrations and marches of nationalistic movements, and what historical precursors and possible future images of the public and of democracy do they call to mind? The mirrors reflect the concrete urban space as a backdrop, the venue of the performance, and also the behavior of the onlookers as a narrative framework. Does it make a difference whether it is the city of Dresden or another city in Europe from which the movement arises? What is the role of the audience? Is it possible to remain passive? Or do the onlookers, even if they are only watching, become witnesses and thus an active part of the events all the same?

Based on an artistic-ethnological search for traces, Svea Duwe's performative work "Spiegelmarsch" examines the motives underlying the joint appearances of a larger number of people in public space as well as their choreographies. The fragments that Svea Duwe draws upon and reassembles in a mise-en-scène range from military parades of the 19th century to the demonstrations of the 20th century. What does it mean when people "group together"? What abstraction is necessary to create a unity?

Svea Duwe's meticulously composed choreography takes an exhibition of the props and a *Gesellschaftsabend* (Social Evening) at the Kunsthaus Dresden, during which initial performative elements were tested, as its starting point, followed by extensive rehearsals in the military history museum, Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr Dresden. "Spiegelmarsch" is a staging in which performers, props, choreography, costumes, and the musical composition interact with urban space in a unique manner, also in terms of its processuality which takes into account the different museum environments and the specific places in the city. The formations change – depending on the venue, they assume the character of a parade, a swarm, or an ostentatious formation of power.

With props that cite traditional signs of military power – flags, shields and the attendant interpretations of uniformity – Svea Duwe responds to the rise of a language propagating violence and the experience of an openly displayed endorsement of inhumanity and exclusion in Dresden. The transformation of a key message of the peaceful revolution of 1989, "We are the people", into a slogan of exclusion was what prompted the performance: Who is meant by "we"? And who does this new "we" exclude?

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