

The lecture acquires a subtle stamp of a performance as the lecturer hands out to the audience the photographs she has found around the theme. Little by little, the whole audience gets the role of the researcher as they lightly touch the treasures of the archives, black-and-white pictures that open up the stormy history of The Green Table.

Jukka O. Miettinen, Helsingin Sanomat (FI)

The thought that sticks to mind from presentation is precisely the history of dance and its invisibility. Dance creations are born in a certain time and place and they reflect their own birth moments in a variety of ways. Dance is also a way of seeing reality.

Liisa Vihmanen, Liikekieli (FI)

Olga de Soto shows that archives can be performed and therefore have life. (...) She also revives the atmosphere of the past and associated events. The way she works, step by step, can be compared to the research process of a historian or even an archaeologist, if we accept Michel Foucault's definition, according to which the archaeologist does not attempt to recreate the intentions of those had ideas about the world, their thoughts and values, but rather aims for a systematic description of their discussions. Thus, Olga de Soto, talking about her research work and gradually producing successive "material

proof", has given birth to a discussion process regarding the legendary Green Table.

Anna Królica, Memory in Dance, Metamorphosis of the Locations, memory and transformation (BE, FR, PL)

If re-enacting a work of choreography is accepted and understood because the transmission of gesture forms a part of the memory of dance – more visual than written – the question is asked in other terms for a performance which makes re-enactment one of its central issues and concerns. Because video, photography, and objects, these "dead things" that museums keep as traces of actions that may or may not be renewed, are part of the memory of performance.

Valérie da Costa, Mouvement #69 (FR)

Constructed on the basis of images, of texts and of filmed interviews, this introductory conference was thought of by Olga de Soto as a performance in itself, founded on a dramaturgy regulated by a dual relation with time: from the present towards the past, and towards the future. (...) Olga de Soto is an important choreographer, demanding, profoundly concerned with dance, art, politics and life, about with she asks essential questions. A choreographer who looks to the past so she may face the future.

Denis Laurent, L'Art Mème (BE)

Olga de Soto is a Spanish choreographer, dancer and dance researcher based in Brussels. She graduated from CNDC / Centre National de Danse Contemporaine d'Angers, after having studied classical ballet, contemporary dance, and music theory in her native country. As a dancer, she has worked with choreographers such as Michèle Anne de Mey, Pierre Droulers, Felix Ruckert, Meg Stuart, Boris Charmatz and Jérôme Bel, being his choreographic assistant for five years in *The Show Must Go On*.

Olga began creating her own choreographic work in 1992, exploring different formats in numerous pieces, some of them created in dialogue with works by contemporary music composers such as Saariaho, Sciarrino, Scodanibbio, Jarrell, Rzewski, Pousseur.

Since the end of the 1990s, her works deal specifically with the role of memory in live art, questioning its value and lasting quality along two lines of research. The first centers on the study of physical memory through a pluralistic approach to dance and the body, in works such as *anarborescences* (Théâtre de la Cité internationale, Paris, 1999), *Éclats mats* (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2001), and *INCORPORER ce qui reste ici-à dans mon cœur* (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2004-2009). The second axis explores works from the history of dance from the perspective of the perceptual memories of both spectators and dancers. The resulting projects, such as *histoire(s)* (Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels, 2004), *An Introduction* (Tanz Im August, Berlin, 2010), or *Débords / Reflections on The Green Table* (Festival d'Automne, Paris, 2012), deal with documentation, testimony, archives, oral sources, narrative, and storytelling. Her recent work mixes the languages of choreography with those of documentary, performance, visual arts, and installation, playing with the porousness of those disciplines.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, she has been dedicated to creative projects intimately bound to long processes of research, founded on an important work of documentation, in which she works with atypical temporalities entirely detached from conventional production logic.

Olga's works have been presented in about twenty countries and she is regularly invited to teach at universities, speak at conferences and lead workshops in Europe, South America and most recently the USA.

In 2013, de Soto was awarded the Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers - SACD Prize (Belgium), in the category of Performing Arts, for her artistic trajectory as well as her creative research on dance history, especially her work on Kurt Jooss' *The Green Table*.

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Following the traces of *The Green Table*

An Introduction

Olga de Soto



Following the traces of The Green Table

An Introduction

a documentary performance by Olga de Soto

After having been immersed, in her performance *histoire(s)*, in the memories of spectators who had attended the première of *The Young Man and Death* in June 25th 1946 at Théâtre des Champs Élysées in Paris, Olga de Soto pursues her project of creation which two principal vectors are the History of dance and perception. She focuses her vision on Kurt Jooss's legendary work *The Green Table*, première in Paris in 1932, a few months before Hitler came to power. This ballet, composed in eight tableaux for sixteen dancers and inspired by a *danse macabre* of the Middle Ages, is considered one of the most politically engaged works in the history of 20th century dance. The piece is emblematic for the themes it evokes (the rise of fascism and war), its bearing testimony to the troubled period that preceded the Second World War and - in sum - its "visionary" spirit that addressed the sombre reality of a historical moment.

During her research, some questions have emerged: What traces remain in the memory of the people who created a show a long time ago or in the memory of those who, through their work, enable it to survive today? What does transmission involve? What does it mean to be a dancer? What are the place and role of dancers in the History of Dance? How does a dance piece evolve within its own history? And within History? What is the impact of a politically engaged work in the memory of an audience?

An Introduction is the first module issued from this research. A moment of openness and immediacy with the audience, intended to make sharing the process of creation as important as the outcome of the work. The choreographer here reveals the before and after of the show, that is to say the process of inquiry and the impression it has made. She investigates the history of *The Green Table* and puts on display what normally remains hidden. Her work in this documentary performance is undertaken in this spirit of sharing, tracing the process of a complex work packed with uncertainties and developments, avenues opened and explored in a documentary endeavour that is also an investigation. The choreographer thus raises questions about documentation, while nevertheless interacting with the documents discovered, bringing a new dimension to this material that belongs to the collective memory.



CONCEPT, DOCUMENTATION, TEXT, PRESENTATION, CAMERA AND SOUND Olga de Soto | WITH WITNESS STATEMENTS BY (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE) Micheline Hesse, Brigitte Evellin, Suzanne Batbedat, Françoise Olivaux, Frederic Stern, Françoise Dupuy and Michelle Nadal | VIDEO DIRECTION Olga de Soto | VIDEO EDITING Julien Contreau and Olga de Soto

EXCERPTS OF "The Green Table", BBC 1967, BBC Motion Gallery | VOICE OFF Kurt Jooss (excerpt from the interview Berghson-Jooss, California, 1974, courtesy of Tanzarchiv Köln) | SOFTWARE Pierre Gufflet | TECHNICAL DIRECTION Christophe Gualde | LIGHTING Thomas Walgrave | LIGHT TECHNICIAN Geni Diez | SOUND AND VIDEO TECHNICIANS Julien Lamaze or Eric Desjeux | RESEARCH ASSISTANT AT TANZARCHIV KÖLN Katja Herlemann | PICTURES BY Kurt Hegel, Marian Reisman, Fritz Henle and unknown photographs. Three pictures of "The Green Table" d'Albert Renger-Patzsch/Albert Renger-Patzsch Archiv – Ann und Juergen Wilde / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn / SABAM, Belgium 2010.

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Length 1h10

Letter from Paul Hermant to Olga de Soto

Dear Olga de Soto, what news from the front? What news from dance? And what news from memory? And then, what news from the gaze? I ask you that because we are starting to understand what you are engaging with in your work (engaging, I said 'engaging', I said it on purpose). We are starting in fact to understand that it isn't enough for you to watch something or even to create something but that, like Blaise Pascal, you cannot understand the whole if you don't know the parts and that you can't know the parts if you don't know the whole...

This *Green Table*, for example, you literally wanted to put it on the table. Like a centrepiece you would have to cut out, a body you would auscultate, as if you had undertaken to see how things become what they are. It is not enough for you to know that this work by Kurt Jooss is doubtless central to the origin of political dance – you would say socio-political – it is not so much this History which seems to matter to you, but all the others: those which lead to it and those which flow from it. At the heart of your work, we find the word "process" which is to say progression. And it's very useful because we seriously lack people who are interested in pivotal moments. At what precise moment things change, how a movement, a change, an upheaval, a disaster takes shape and how it gains strength...

Here, a friend said to me: "The fall of the Wall, 1989, the Oslo Accords, 1991, the end of apartheid 1991. We thought the old business was done with. Can you explain to me why the Gulf War 1990, Yugoslavia 1992, Rwanda 1994?" Where were we looking, indeed, dear Olga de Soto, that we didn't see? What is the exact moment that the ratchet effect engages? And how, after, we try to deal with this, with what we have and what we lack.

For example, this *Green Table* created in 1932 in a sort of anticipation which serves as a warning and where we see all sorts of ridiculous diplomats exclaiming that, yes, war is pretty, this *Green Table* wasn't rejected outright at the time by the Nazis for whom no doubt the expressionism recalled something of the German spirit... But the choreographer, he chose nevertheless to expatriate himself with his troupe and with those homosexuals and that Jewish musician which they asked him to rid his show of. His art wasn't seen as degenerate, but his partners, dancers and musicians were. And that was enough for exile. Because, even if you can't burn a ballet in the public square the way you can books, at a certain moment you understand precisely that the process is underway... From which we understand as well that your research and your work don't have so much to do with the past as the present...

When he was asked why he wrote this ballet, Kurt Jooss answered: "It had to be done because it had to happen".

Chronique by Paul Hermant, Musiq3, RTBF / Belgian National Radio (BE)

World history and the history of an artwork are interwoven in the testimony and the processes of transmission Olga de Soto painstakingly documents while maintaining a certain suspense and twists worthy of an adventure novel. In the guise of a conference, the performer intelligently constructs her position as author – deictics and direct appeals to the audience highlight their involvement – and manages her staging.

Smaranda Olcèse, Toute la Culture (FR)

Pippo Delbono about *An Introduction*: *I saw this work in Spain and I was very impressed by this performance that tells us the story of another show, designed to hit the heart of Hitler's dictatorship. I remember an immense emotion when I saw Pina dancing, as a young woman. And I understood the reasons behind that career within a theater with a high political content.*

Laura Valente, La Repubblica (IT)

— CHRONOLOGY —

An Introduction was premiered at Festival Tanz Im August, Berlin (DE), in 2010.

Since its creation in Berlin, the work has been presented in Germany, Belgium, France, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Poland, Brazil, Finland, Sweden, Czech Republic, Italy, Mexico and Chile, in venues such as Centre Pompidou - Paris (FR), Festival Springdance - Utrecht (NL), Tanzquartier - Vienna (AT), Mercat de les Flors - Barcelona (ES), Culturgest - Lisbon (PT), Festival Tanzwerkstatt Europa - Munich (DE), MARCO — Museo de Arte Contemporáneo - Vigo (ES), SESC Bom Retiro - São Paulo (BR), KIASMA — Museum of Contemporary Art - Helsinki (FI), Dansenshus - Stockholm (SE), Festival Escenas do Cambio - Santiago (ES), Festival Tanec Praha - Prague (CZ), Festival Astiteatro - Asti (IT), Festival Transversales - San Luis Potosí & Mexico DF (MX), NAVE — Santiago de Chile (CL), Teatros del Canal — Madrid (ES)...

An Introduction has been translated in Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish.



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