

MEETING POINT 70 – a motion report

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Forum Freies Theater

Meeting Point 70 – A Motion Report

by Katja F.M. Wolf + co.

director and choreographer Katja F.M. Wolf

Poor old Kurt. Day in, day out he watches and listens. All he sees and hears is intensely banal, but he has to assess and evaluate it. And all this in a secretive whisper. Kurt is a little woollen sock puppet and one could almost pity him, were it not that he is an informer for the national security service of the former East Germany, the Stasi, engaged in "operative action". Comedy or clowning about? No: a wise distancing. In her new video and dance performance Meeting Point 70, Katja F.M. Wolf confronts her East German past. The choreographer and dancer was born in 1970; in the same year her family got into the Stasi's sights and was under observation in an operation codenamed "Meeting Point 70" until they moved to West Germany nine years later. Thirty-five years later Katja F.M. Wolf sifts through the surviving documents and transforms them into art, dealing with her family history in a process that is not without its risks.

What makes this project so exciting is the ambivalence of the gaze directed onto a childhood affected by Stasi investigating. Kurt's secret operations (played by puppeteer Evelyn Arndt) resemble a children's game which however is transmitted via (surveillance) camera onto the screen above the white playing ground. A curiosity-driven Katja F.M. Wolf gives an accurate and distanced report of a visit to what was once her home. Conducting a painstaking field research, she seeks to bring together the information assembled through surveillance with the remembered feel of her childhood. Specific forms of movement recur as leitmotifs in the choreography: the dancers running in a circle can be interpreted as persecution, as a children's game or as an attempt to escape; the dancers suddenly freezing, posed as a group, each trying to catch hold of another and yet caught forever in an image of untouchability, suggests a collective dissolved in transparent proximity. Some moments however lack depth, as when the dancers pose for a group portrait with national anthem or film each other with a portable hand camera.

Katja F.M. Wolf's gaze is a backward gaze. And so in the end the group choreography recedes for her solo. Yet the knowledge of the past cannot be dismissed; a historical rest remains that has inscribed itself into the body. Again and again Katja F.M. Wolf twists and turns, bends her hands onto her back, examines her skin, tries to grasp something that eludes her grasp; as if the intrusive gaze had left a thin, intensely irritating film on her body.

Hans-Christoph Zimmermann

