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Bachzetsis, Alexandra, *BLUFF*, 2009, Konzept und Choreographie: Alexandra Bachzetsis // Performance: Saga Sigurdardottir, Island, Franziska Aigner, Austria, Gilles Polet, Belgium // GRAPHIC DESIGN and collaboration concept Julia Born // Musik: Richard Dorfmeister // Licht: Tina Bleuler and Patrick Rimann // Kostüm: Patrizia Jäger

#### Documentation level

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#### Name

**Bachzetsis, Alexandra**

#### Dates of birth and death

\* 14.12.1974 Zürich

#### Municipality of origin (CH)

Grabs (SG)

#### Nationality

CH

#### Brief biography

Performancekünstlerin. Video und Installation. Kollaborative Projekte

#### Fields of activity

Performance, Installation, Videokunst

#### Lexicon article

Alexandra Bachzetsis is a choreographer and visual artist, based in Athens (GR) and Zurich (CH). She studied and graduated at the Liceo Artistico in Zurich (CH), the Scuola Dimitri in Verscio (CH), the Performance Education Program at the Stuk arts centre in Leuven (BE), and then continued to post-graduate level at Das Arts, the Advanced Research in Theatre and Dance Studies centre in Amsterdam (NL). During these years of training, Bachzetsis began to work as a dancer in the contemporary dance and performance context, collaborating with Sasha Waltz & Guests (Berlin) and Les Ballets C de la B (Gent), among others.

Collaboration, transference and a plurality of voices and bodies have informed Bachzetsis' work ever since and is

often thematized as a method of developing new work in her practice. Since Bachzetsis started working independently in 2001, she has created over 23 pieces, often working collaboratively. They have been shown in theaters, festivals and public space venues worldwide. In addition to this, her work has been exhibited in a variety of contemporary art spaces and museums, including Kunsthalle Basel (Basel, 2008), the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam, 2013 and 2015), Tate Modern (London, 2014) and the Jumex Museum (Mexico City, 2014), as well as a number of international biennials, such as the 5<sup>th</sup> *Berlin Biennial* (Berlin, 2008), *13* (Kassel, 2012), (Geneva, 2014) and *documenta 14* (Athens/Kassel, 2017). Bachzetsis was nominated for the DESTA Prize (2011) and is a laureate of the Migros Kulturprozent Jubilee Award (2007), the Swiss Art Award (2011 and 2016) and Swiss Performance Prize (2012).

Much of Bachzetsis's work involves choreographies of the body; the artist's own body, but also in relation to other bodies on stage. An important line of inquiry in her practice is the way that popular culture provides source material for gesture, expression, identification, and fantasy as we continually create and re-create our bodies and the way we identify. Within this, she scrutinizes the mutual influence between the use of gesture and movement in the so-called popular or commercial genres on the one hand (online media, video-clip and television as a resource) and in the 'arts' on the other hand (ballet, modern and contemporary dance and performance). For Bachzetsis, the artificial and often precarious relationship between such genres produce a critical inquiry into the human body and activate its potential for ambivalence and transformation, however conceptual or actual. For example, in her work *Gold* (2004) the over-sexualized lyrics of popular songs by female rappers are seductively performed by the artist as she passes on sheets of paper with the explicit texts on them, generating a continuous and rather paradoxical state of empowerment and objectification of the female body.

In addition, this distinction between popular and artistic genres interrogate the spaces in which her choreographic practice is situated: from the exhibition gallery and the theater, to the dance floor or the online context. Ultimately, both the way these spaces presuppose different modes of staging and the ways in which we all perform and stage our bodies and ourselves – through stereotypes and archetypes, through choice and cliché, through labor and spectacle – are questions that continue to shape the work of Bachzetsis. These questions come to life in *The Stages of Staging* (2013), presented as either a theater or durational performance. A gym with all its typical attributes becomes the stage on which a large ensemble of dancers generates affect through the use of theatrical elements, video recording and simultaneous

projection of that image, and movement based on references from the popular imaginary (pop and disco songs, vogue dancing, etc.). The stage as such is not bound to a theatrical «dispositif», or its implementation in a visual art context, to name two conventional ‘stages’, but as something that is enacted and performed through the body, creating a continuous ‘staging’ of oneself.

The ways in which the body performs or is expected to perform is further extrapolated in Bachzetsis’ work *From A to B via C* (2014), developed as both a theatrical performance and a video installation for exhibition display. The relationship between language and the body on the one hand, and how knowledge is transposed from one body to the other, are central questions in the piece. Throughout the performance, three dancers – including the artist herself – use each other as instructional mirrors in their attempts to compose scenes of true virtuosity, based on a variety of source material in popular and artistic genres: from the rigorous training of the ballet classroom, iconic images from art history that produce bodily affect to the myriad online dance tutorials one finds on YouTube. What these types of instructions all have in common, is that they strive for that moment of performative virtuosity, achieved through the full embodiment of language. Bachzetsis interrogates what it means to be virtuosic in these different contexts of choreographic instruction, from low-brow to high-brow, and how the body becomes a site of projection for knowledge transference and self-realization. The 2-channel video installation displays one of the central scenes of the performance – in which the three bodies move indistinctly from and towards each other, blurring the boundaries between them – and juxtaposes it with a written and spoken scientific account of the limbless, continuous movement of octopod animals. The words that are uttered and projected on the one screen act as both an instruction to the bodies on the opposing screen, and as observation of how language is dissonant with the body that moves, utters and performs itself.

Hendrik Folkerts, 2016  
Translation: Timothy Grundy

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### Website

<http://www.alexandrabachzetsis.com>

### Direct link

<http://www.sikart.ch/kuenstlerinnen.aspx?>

[id=12470640&lng=en](http://www.sikart.ch/kuenstlerinnen.aspx?id=12470640&lng=en)

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