

PERFORMA MAGAZINE PERFORMA MAGAZINE



Performa Reports // Alexandra Bachzetsis

Escape Act

Pioneer Works
April 11–12, 2019

Greek-Swiss choreographer Alexandra Bachzetsis's work concerns the feedback loop between gendered images of desire and mass culture. In *Escape Act*, the formula is pushed to its limit. Here, Bachzetsis scavenges ideas from the Internet's bottomless pornographic trove. The result speaks to the way technology simultaneously flattens identities and heightens the possibilities for appropriation. "Drag," in this sense, is not always liberatory. Bachzetsis leans into the extremes, exposing hypersexualized stereotypes with a mixture of humor and despair.

To embody the Internet's kaleidoscopic menu of fetishes, Bachzetsis enlists eight performers of various ages, races, and genders. Throughout the work, gestures and clothing circulate separately from the bodies one might expect to inhabit them: a young, white woman vogues in a black mesh mask and stilettos; an older black man delivers the monologue of a young black female stripper. Nodding to post-Foucauldian ideas of control society, sports equipment and compression garments feature regularly—from waist trainers as part of an "Instagram baddie" uniform (complete with ombré wigs and butt-padded "mom" jeans) to post-surgical briefs.

Menu



Most of the script is composed of an exhaustive, alphabetical list of internet porn search terms, sung or spoken against a thumping soundtrack. Not surprisingly, the vocabulary is repetitive—“addicted to sex” in one scene; “how to have sex, how to have sex without a woman” in another. What first registers as shock value matures into a Brechtian sense of estrangement, if not disgust.

Bathed in red light, Bachzetsis and two male dancers deliver a languid final musical number based on searches beginning with the word “my”: “my big dick, my big clit, my hairy pussy, my friend’s dad.” They are backed by Lana Del Rey’s “Born to Die,” the title track of a record once called “the album equivalent of a faked orgasm”—a fitting soundtrack for Bachzetsis’s dystopic take on the neoliberal sexual marketplace.

Wendy Vogel