

Dance/Theater

In an ordinary part of the known world, individuals live. The air is thick, there's a heavy wind. It's cold as a witch's tit. Between prefab homes, an icy road winds away, bumping up against a sky filled with clouds. It's nowhere, the horizon's not even guaranteed. The future neither. And yet, beauty isn't absent from this landscape. It is there all the same, inexplicably latent. Individuals, did we say? Yes, a tall, gangly man who allows himself to be loved more than he loves; a plump woman, prolific, at times an opera singer, watching the others; a second woman, excessively skinny, probably a contortionist in another life, flat like life should never grow within her belly; that leaves a third woman, who passes the time doing her hair, this one, we guess, is in love without much hope. One should think that if happiness came to this place, no one would know how to find the words to call it by name.

And yet, poetry is not absent from this nearly closed universe. Snow falls. Two Asian men disembark, perched one on top of the other like two cats, two whirlwinds, two small, radiant suns. With the arrival of the two of them, new things may happen. The occurrence of an event, a birth, a sensitive displacement in the thickness of reality. Things may be possible. "To live," Kafka writes, "means to be in the midst of life." Neither at the beginning, nor the end, but within, where you have to "be average," unless you choose not to live. Nothing clarifies this statement better than the most recent creation by Peeping Tom. We are mainly familiar with the family trilogy by this Belgian company (2002-2007) – *Le Jardin* (The Garden), *Le Salon* (The Living Room), *Le Sous-sol* (The Basement) – which surprised us with its vigorous foray into the bric-a-brac of families and the seismic stagger of its performers. But with *32, Rue Vandenbranden*, Peeping Tom revisits its expertise, wringing or exhausting, to the point of breaking, like a glass thrown against a mirror, the naturalism that was their trademark. Almost before our very eyes, the performers break the mold: getting rid of the style they have relied upon to illustrate or describe raw neuroses in order to create a burlesque that's sometimes lighter than a soap bubble. We are watching a transformation. Should it surprise us that these themes are also present within the performance: gestation, pregnancy, motherhood, birth? Joy isn't so far away that it's unattainable. Or that you can't wait for it.

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