

Portland Tribune

Theatre Review: Time-Based Art Festival

Weekend!Arts: Cultural sendup is name of these games

BY JOSEPH GALLIVAN

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Three acts to watch at this year's Time-Based Art Festival are all pushing the boundaries of writing and performing for theater.

"We love theater, but we also hate it a bit," says Liesbeth Gritter, of the Dutch performance group Kassys, which blends video and performance. Kassys' 2003 work "Kommer" (which is Dutch for sorrow or grief) takes dialogue from the soap opera "As the World Turns" and uses it to highlight that emotion.

Rest assured, there will be laughs.

"Kommer" begins onstage where actors express themselves in public, then video takes over, with the camera following each person home with his or her private thoughts.

"When I go to funerals I find myself speaking clichés," says Gritter, 38. A former fine art student, she says the work is informed by the paintings of Edvard Munch, "not 'The Scream,' but his other works, and the way he places his figures in a space," as well as Edward Hopper.

She says: "When people are sad often they let go of their mask. Sad people are often very beautiful because they don't act anymore, they're just coping with their problems."

"Kommer," 8:30 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, Sept. 10-11, Portland State University, Lincoln Performance Hall, 1620 S.W. Park Ave, \$25

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With her deadpan titles and tragicomic focus, Young Jean Lee guarantees an evening of masochistic, nervous laughter and PC squirming.

"Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven" she calls "a Korean-American identity play with a flowery-sounding title." It's about a potty-mouthed Korean-American named Becky Yamamoto. Disarming candor is part of her attack, and Asian stereotypes abound. There is shouting, there are ninjas.

Once Lee comes up with a concept she gets on with the casting, writing and directing all at the same time. She rewrites dialogue as she hears it performed so that it remains lifelike.

"I stole my method from Richard Foreman (founder of the Ontological-Hysteric Theater) and the Wooster Group," says Lee, 33, who grew up near Pullman, Wash., and moved to New York in 2002.

Influences include Flannery O'Connor and the plays of poet John Ashbery. Lee only started making theater five years ago. Before that she spent 10 years as a student, until the wheels came off her Shakespeare dissertation.

She claims no creative kinship with him, although she does have some of his chutzpah. "Shakespeare would take a well-made play (such as the anonymous hit 'King Lear') and completely ruin it, tear it apart," she says. "His 'King Lear' is a total complicated sprawling mess, which is part of what makes it great.

"A show has to be compelling theatricallv. I have a very short attention span. and it's hard to watch



COURTESY OF TIME-BASED ART FESTIVAL
Andrew Dickson is back with more real-life advice, this time with a PowerPoint presentation called "Sell Out."