



A Night of Dance in the Fourth Dimension

***Observation Room* by Galit Criden**

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Post Jerusalem's YMCA Performances

A performance art piece was showcased at Jerusalem's YMCA venue –Galit Criden's *Observation Room*. The piece was created with its own unique affinity for the space, however – the negotiating between the private/individual and the public/general was not only influenced by the piece itself but also from the mood and atmosphere of the location, and the complementary relationship that had formed between itself and the performance piece.

Jerusalem's YMCA Building was originally built in the 1930s as a centre aiming to foster camaraderie and friendship between the three major religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – through a range of joint sporting and cultural activities. The organisation championed the motto of Mind, Spirit and Body combined. Every time I find myself exploring the building, I am left utterly spellbound. I can see time itself through it and can easily imagine I was living in a different era. It is an exotic encounter between colonialist enchantment, elegance, and a scent of bohemian-intellectualism, and the building's day-to-day functions, amongst other things as a community sports centre for local residents.

Performance Art is a medium that offers one an immediate experience that takes place right here, right now; a tangible event (however abstract the concept), where the audience is organised around a common denominator. And whilst its aim is to connect with the audience, by no means is this connection without its terms and conditions.

Observation Room commences in the auditorium right by the gym. Any line between the performers and audience is blurred; and this act of blurring, it emerges in the course of one's experience and interaction with the piece, is in fact a fundamentally key theme of the work. Officially, the piece's runtime is three hours, with the audience being able to come and go as they please at any point. That said, contrary to *Cardiophone* where the same ritual is played out with a fixed beginning, middle and ending, *Observation Room* invites members of the audience to both enter and remain in it. The duration of one's stay, and the choice whether to embrace a passive spectator role or to actively engage and interact – is entirely up to us.