

# PUTZFRAU

2002



« Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss auf Lampe eingestellt »

PUTZFRAU (=Cleaning lady), is a playful, absurd but rigorous performance piece which speaks of perfection, of beauty and well-being. It was first presented during the *High Calibre* festival organised by Harm Lux in Berlin in September 2002. Then, a Dada adaptation of the performance was shown during the *Digital Art Weeks* organized by the ETHZ and Art Clay at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich in July 2007.

Seven lamps (12 cm in diameter) are placed directly on my bare skin. These lamps light up and turn off as I press on them. Bands of white Velcro hold the lamps in place, hence the entire outfit is quite fragile. Each lamp corresponds to a melodic phrase in French or German. I start to sing the phrase as I press on a lamp which lights up, and cut off in mid-sentence as I press the lamp again to switch it off. By interrupting the phrase I give it a different meaning than if I had sung it in its entirety by playing with the sounds of the words, onomatopoeias or interjections. Standing on a white platform which I use as a stage, I gesture, I turn or dance according to a pre-determined sequence for seven lamps which I wrote.



*The lamps on my body light up according to the pre-defined sequence that I sing*

By being almost naked in front of the audience, I expose and challenge myself while seeking reassurance on the reliability of the system which I have put in place. However it does happen that a specific lamp might play up and only turn on after two or three attempts, or that I start my song on the wrong tone which further keeps me from reaching my goal.

The lamps are the reflections of my physical pains. I would like to control and to befriend them, but still they sometimes elude me and demand that I adapt to them instead. Similarly to the Chinese medical concept of sensitive points on the body, I put myself through a kind of bodily cleanse, a ritual of self-acceptance, a spiritual rejuvenation.

As I reveal the phrase that is associated with each lamp, the audience discovers a personal and fragmented composition which integrates a quote from Marlene Dietrich, allusions to the cliché of cleanliness in Switzerland: «*Sauber, ist alles Sauber*» (=Clean, is everything clean), and to Berlin: «*Berlin, t'es-tu lavé les mains?*» (=Berlin, did you wash your hands ?)