

South African artists Sello Pesa and Vaughn Sadie's "Inhabitant" was performed in İstanbul's Dolapdere quarter as part of iDANS 05.



# ODD DOLAPDERE STREET PERFORMANCE WINS iDANS CRITICAL ENDEAVOR AWARD

RUMEYSA KIGER İSTANBUL

The Critical Endeavor performing arts writing and journalism workshop, part of this year's **iDANS** İstanbul International Contemporary Dance and Performance Festival, this week announced Sello Pesa and Vaughn Sadie's "Inhabitant" as its choice for the best performance of this year's festival.

The workshop's 13 participants attended all 18 performances of the festival, which has quickly become one of the world's most respected contemporary dance and performance events. They analyzed, reviewed and wrote about these performances throughout the duration of the program, in addition to discussing broader issues in contemporary dance history and the roles of critics, dramaturges and curators in the performing arts.

In their last session, participants cast votes to determine their favorite performance of the festival. Though "Inhabitant" took the award,

it had close competition from French artist Clément Layes' "Allege" and Lisbon-based dancer Marlene Monteiro Freitas' "Guintche."

The most recent work from South African choreographer and dancer Pesa and conceptual artist and light designer Sadie, "Inhabitant" was originally created in the context of a process of gentrification in an inner-city industrialized region in Johannesburg, but it lost none of its significance in being transferred onto the streets of the Dolapdere neighborhood, an area of İstanbul that is no stranger to the contestation of urban space.

At the festival's invitation, Pesa and Sadie came to İstanbul two weeks prior to the performance and visited various neighborhoods, including Tarlabası, Taksim, Ataşehir, Aksaray and Kasımpaşa, before deciding on Dolapdere as the best site for their work. Berlin-based artist Mirko Winkel, who had performed "Life and Strive" at last year's **iDANS** Festival, accompanied them during this research phase.

For two weeks they observed the area they

had chosen and developed relationships with various residents such as shop owners, collectors and flower sellers, in addition to locals afflicted with drug and alcohol addiction. They listened to the sound of the traffic and the call of the ezan in the area and observed its lighting during their rehearsals for this for their highly interesting -- and potentially dangerous -- performance.

The work itself was performed on the side -- and in the middle -- of a busy road, with the audience watching from the other side. One performer delivered a speech in the manner of a local municipal authority inaugurating an imaginary park in Dolapdere to his upper-class audience sitting separately from the real viewers, while three performers threw themselves in the midst of traffic in front of a shocked audience.

The event constituted "a moving example of how hospitality can be a political act through the means of performative framing," workshop participant Neşe Ceren Tosun wrote in her review of the work, adding: "The space, during

the performance, becomes the site of a confused and shared guilt of spectatorship while at the same time involving everyone in the act of care for each other: the drivers who might get distracted, the performers rolling in the middle of the street, the kids who might take the performers as examples for courageous yet fatale acts all become concerns one feels the need 'to do something about.' One does not know what to watch, how/when/or whether to intervene."

Another participant, Ceren Can Aydın, wrote: "Inhabitant' pushes the limits of performing space and realizes contemporary performance art's claim to transform it. The performers position themselves, the audience and the residents of Dolapdere as their equals. With its detailed composition, it enabled all of these different groups to encounter each other and posed the important question of "Who are the real residents of a city?"

To read all critics' comments, see [www.idans-blog.org](http://www.idans-blog.org)