

# The New York Times

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Dance Review | Maria Hassabi  
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## Shedding a Carpet Skin, With Plenty of Perspiration

By GIA KOURLAS

In “Solo,” the choreographer Maria Hassabi picks up where “Gloria,” her duet from 2007, left off. Along with the faint hum of traffic and footsteps, there is a similar, Minimalist aesthetic of a sleek, athletic body at work. As Ms. Hassabi, coolly sensual, shifts from one position to the next, she continues to forge a choreographic path in which desire is honed and carefully siphoned off until all that remains are stark edges.

The work, presented at Performance Space 122 on Tuesday night, is conceived as a diptych of two separate solos; the first, commissioned by the French Institute’s festival Crossing the Line, will be followed by “SoloShow,” which is part of Performa ’09, in November. Both deal with representations of the body as they appear in popular culture and fine art. “Solo,” set to a sound-score by James Lo, is introspective and personal; its counterpart, according to press material, promises to be a more flamboyant look at attitude within the female form.

As a tool, Ms. Hassabi’s body is astounding. She begins “Solo” with her lower half buried under a red Persian carpet. The floor of the theater is antique white, matching her slim, slightly shimmering pants and tank top, both casually elegant designs by ThreeAsFour. As Ms. Hassabi eases herself out, the carpet, at first a binding material, becomes the stage itself.

Balancing on one knee with the other bent at a sharp angle behind her, she wrenches into sculptural, twisting positions as if she were trying, with all her might, to wring herself out. Ms. Hassabi uses the unwieldy carpet as a partner and a design element; with careful folding, it also becomes a platform on which she balances, her hands planted powerfully on her hips as if she had, as the cliché goes, shed her skin.

The difficulty is not masked; Ms. Hassabi’s thighs and arms shake as streams of sweat gather under her dark eyes like tears. There is something soulful and sad about her unguarded approach to the contorting positions, which are held too long for comfort and become more repetitive and disembodied with time. Yet while “Solo” is more labyrinthine than “Gloria,” it’s also hard to see, for Ms. Hassabi, what will come next. Her movement experiments certainly belong in a piece; so far, they aren’t the piece itself.

“Solo” runs through Sunday at Performance Space 122, 150 First Avenue, at Ninth Street, East Village; (212) 352-3101, [ps122.org](http://ps122.org).