



TBA OUTLOOK/LOOK OUT: Maria Hassabi

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*In the lead-up to the 2010 **Time-Based Art Festival**, Artistic Director Cathy Edwards will be posting about some of the artists, projects, and ideas that inspire her in this year's program. Week two highlights the grace and intensity of dancer and choreographer Maria Hassabi, who will perform **SoloShow** at TBA:10.*



Maria Hassabi, SoloShow. Photo: Jason Schmidt.

Maria Hassabi's *SoloShow* is at once dizzyingly abstract and solidly material in nature. The sculptural quality of her body and the platform on which she appears--which seems almost bronze in its burnished heaviness and severity--speaks of the manifestly physical, of weight and shape and muscle and object. Simultaneously, an energy shimmers around her as she creates an aura of intense concentration, illuminating a complete struggle of the mind to master the body. As Hassabi investigates movement and mental states, she pays marked attention to her presence and the activation of space. In turn, I see the body struggle fiercely to manifest the images of women in our culture, as well as the ghosts of cultures past. External plasticity and the weight of the object are contrasted with internal will, vulnerability, fragility, and effort. These are the tensions of Soloshow.

Originally from Cypress, Hassabi is a choreographer, director, and performer who has created many evening-length pieces and collaborated with artists from multiple disciplines, especially design and visual art. Her work has been seen in New York City at Performance Space 122, The Kitchen, and Dance Theater Workshop, in Texas at Ballroom Marfa, and at international festivals throughout Europe.

I have watched Hassabi make performances for years and I am always enthralled. As the viewer, I wonder, I question, I resist, and, ultimately, I succumb. She exerts control over the total experience--the performance space is often very ascetic and tightly focused--and yet I find numerous ways to sit with the work, to enter its nuanced and deep world, and to make it truly my own. She is resolute in her intention, virtuosic in her physical control, but not afraid to slow down, to restrict her palette of movement, and to leave aside easy choices. Hers is a dance that lives between object and movement, a dance that conjures a frame and dares you to resist.

I am delighted that PICA has co-commissioned SoloShow along with the Performa Festival and Crossing the Line/French Institute Alliance Francaise, and in partnership with the National Performance Network. It is very exciting to bring Maria's work to Portland, and I look forward to sharing this experience with you at Imago Theatre come TBA-time!

For more information and tickets to SoloShow, visit PICA.ORG.