

The New York Times

DANCE REVIEW

Maria Hassabi's 'Still Smoking' as a Confluence of Style and Emotion

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Published: April 15, 2006

To judge from her "Still Smoking," an hour long dance piece at the Kitchen, Maria Hassabi is lost in a world of detached sensuality, the kind of vacant anomie that prevails in late-night clubs frequented by denizens of the fashion industry.



From left: Jessie Gold, Maria Hassabi and Caitlin Cook in "Still Smoking," the final part of Ms. Hassabi's trilogy of dance, at the Kitchen in Chelsea.

Of course, the two previous works in what she sees as a trilogy, which appeared in 2003 and late 2004, might have conveyed a slightly different message. But the creatively weird costuming and the movement style mixing aerobics, cheerleading, stripping, semaphoric signaling and catwalk strutting seem to have remained the same.

"Still Smoking" — the title's meaning is elusive — is set on the Kitchen's bare black stage with a cluster of diverse chandeliers. Everyone is dressed in what might be called tatty black, vaguely groovy costumes, the hipness of which is deliberately undercut by the dancers' seeming indifference to almost everything around them.

The four women and two men dance alone most of the time, sometimes singing and sometimes trotting up the center aisle.

By the end, the chandeliers have been lowered toward the floor, delineating passages through which the dancers, now isolated again, promenade. They all slump to the back wall, indifferently grinding their hips, before they writhe forward and then wander away in different directions.

The music, credited primarily to Ben Brunner for "sound mix/engineer and design," is an evocative blend of what might be called electronic art techno. The other four dancers, all willing and involved, are David Adamo, Jessie Gold, Ori Flomin and Hristoula Harakas. The costumes are by ThreeAsFour.

Do I know what it all means? I do not. But as an insight into a particular kind of modern-day New York demimonde, representatives of which were amply evident in the Thursday audience, the evening had its louche charms.

Maria Hassabi's "Still Smoking" continues through tonight at 8 at the Kitchen, 512 West 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 255-5793 or thekitchen.org.