

Superamas

Belgium is burning, civil war rages between Flemings and Walloons and in a computer game King Albert II is shot down by a resurrected Colonel Gaddafi in the guise of the Great Liberator. In the Superamas production Theatre nothing is so crazy it can't be said, but in reality it's not so crazy after all.

Hip-swaying, veiled women remove their clothes prior to performing a sensuous belly dance. A group of westerners regard the spectacle in the same way that tourists watch an exotic treat. An Arab version of *le déjeuner sur l'herbe* let's say.

An off-stage art historian comments on how nineteenth century Western civilization was fascinated by the fabled, spice-laden lands of Araby. Perception is a matter of perspective, in the most literal sense.

In this three act production the Franco-Austrian collective Superamas, the house company at Vooruit, Ghent's leading arts centre, takes us on a tour of the schism between the Western and Arab worlds.

Superamas mixes past and present, fact and fiction, with live performances, manipulated news flashes, film clips, and game style 3D images. In the second act the Arab world is welcomed as the great liberator of the West. A NATO conference of the world's great leaders is organized. Ariel Sharon appears as President of the United States of Israel and Palestine (!), President Sarkozy says that NATO should not meddle in Belgium's internal civil strife.

Superamas takes us on a hilarious tour of an upside down Arab-Western reality. Funny, yes, but also alarming because of the way that we allow ourselves to be manipulated by images and news reports. Politics is theatre and we are the pawns.

In the third act, in which Colonel Gaddafi celebrates his victory as the Great Liberator of Belgium, the initially powerful message seems to get lost in a multiplicity of forms although the rollicking finale is certainly most entertaining.

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