

Smart moves

WORDS VARNYA BROMILOW

If you're into dance, it's a great time to be living in Perth. Over the last couple of years local audiences have been treated to a swag of new dance works from a bunch of talented young artists.

Aimee Smith figures prominently in this new pack of choreographers. After graduating from WAAPA in 2004, the 27-year-old has barely stopped for breath. She's created more than 10 works, both independently as well as for Buzz Dance Theatre and WAAPA. Smith has also danced in several acclaimed productions, including last year's awesome Hara-Kiri by French choreographer Didier Theron.

Distinguishing Smith from her cohorts is the overtly political nature of her creations. Smith's works critically examine the society in which we live and explore the ramifications of our information-obsessed age. Her newest work, *Breakings*, is a development of a short solo performed as part of STRUT dance's Prime Cut season in 2008.

"*Breakings* looks at the role of media in our lives," Smith explains. "Media has incredible power and control in shaping our understanding of the world — *Breakings* questions how we cope, how we maintain a sense of self, and how we can seek truth."

Breakings is set around a stack of flickering televisions. TV is a medium that especially interests Smith.

"I'm looking at virtual versus real worlds and what effect that has on us. Reality TV, crime shows — who knows how set up those shows are? So we don't really know what's real and what isn't."

But she's quick to point out that she's not completely down on our information culture.

"We're in a really interesting time right now where that power shift is changing quite a bit — especially with the internet," Smith says. "In the past with TV or newspapers you got fed whatever the powers that be wanted to tell you, now we have much more choice and freedom of information. So I'm really excited about that. The



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work is not saying all this information is bad, it's just saying it can be overwhelming."

Each night after the performance guests from media, cultural theory and performance fields will lead a discussion about issues raised in the show.

"My idea of success is if the audience goes away talking about the ideas contained in the work," Smith says. "That's why I've included these forums — I'm an artist because I want to use art to talk about issues that are important to contemporary society. That's what's driving me." **W**

THE PLUG Aimee Smith performs *Breakings* on April 8-10 (8pm) and April 11 (6pm) with free post-performance forums after each show at PICA Performance Space, Northbridge. Tickets from the venue.