

Delo, Ljubljana

22-09-2009

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Archiving sin

With the founding of the international project *Via Negativa*, its initiator Bojan Jablanovec, besides a far-reaching and astutely conceptualized theatrical reworking of the seven deadly sins, announced the ideational germ of the event *Via Nova*, intended as a concluding event and a reflective overview of the projects creative process spanning a number of years. In 2002, *Via Negativa* made its first appearance on the Slovenian theatre scene with the performance *Starting Point: Anger*, thereby announcing the emergence of a new creative system. The specificity of the creative process unfolding in line with the principle of laboratory experiments opened up new expressive possibilities for the actor, while the performances gave rise to increasingly intense communication with the audience. The status of the performers and the audience was thus not merely enhanced in terms of content and its integrative function, but, in the wake of concrete interactions, it also gained in political, methodological and experiential edge. All of the performances were approached by way of a collage structure, made up in turn of shorter, independent pieces enacted by individual performers. With a strong personal signature and fierce unpredictability, the performers blur the lines between the private and acting persona, thereby testing the suggestiveness of the spectator's perception as well as the arbitrary line between fictional and real moments in the theatre.

Jablanovec has staged the *Via Nova* event, together with its performers (Grega Zorc, Katarina Stegnar, Marko Mandić, Barbara Kukovec, Kristian Al Droubi, Boris Kadin, Mateja Pucko, Jaka Lah, Uroš Kaurin, Katja Legin, Nataša Živković) in the meaningful ambience of a museum (The City Museum of Ljubljana), thus from the very inception evoking a certain dialectics between the real historical documentation and the highly sensitive transience of theatre. The staging of the event itself was conceptualized as an 'enacted polyphony' in its own right, allowing the spectator a wholly personal take on the performance.

The two-hour format of the event, which followed the already established structural pattern of *Via Negativa's* previous performances, once again activated the selection of twenty-one short episodes which emerged out of the performances of the entire repertoire of the seven deadly sins: *Starting Point: Anger*, *More*, *Incasso*, *Would Would Not*, *Viva Verdi*, *Not Like Me*, *Four Deaths* and *Out*. Spread over three museum locations, the shortness of the performances

momentarily gave them a fictitious stability pertaining to art exhibits and their nurture of historical memory.

By holding onto their notorious stance, not only was there scope for unencumbered carrying out of 'excesses' but there was also no question of any adjustment to the tastes of the (new) environment. This only strengthened the desire for an optimal process of archiving. Both the selection of performances and the new space helped shape the composition of enactments into an autonomous event which rent asunder its own history, extracting its essence and through the form of a theatre exhibition or rather exhibiting theatre revitalized it.

Via Nova has reanimated the past, enhanced our desire for repetition, and given rise to an opportunity of what is missed. By transforming the remains of theatre into museum artifacts, the finished theatrical event held 'for an hour' the privileged role of writing history; for a moment it became a relevant historical document, and, following its own anthropological approach, narrated the story of the Via Negativa project, a project which had already passed as the Via Nova will pass. It has to pass, for only in passing it will be truly remembered.