

The Herald, Glasgow

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Via Negativa*****

Nine hours and nine separate performances, under the banner of This is Performance Art (Europe), and by all accounts, this foray into the creative realms of Via Negativa scarcely scratches the repertoire surface of this performing arts project based in Ljubljana.

It did, however, reveal the serious philosophical and aesthetic questions that are chewed over and (sometimes literally) spat out by the performers – often with a whimsical playfulness, but always with an underlying seriousness that finds them putting their own bodies, stamina, and egos on the line.

The work was divided into three chapters: thinking, presence and relation. The first, in the form of a symposium, ran a brilliantly clever and entertaining gauntlet between the academic dissection of “performance” and robust “live action” where lightness of touch, debunking humour and a relaxed attitude to nudity brought vivid artistic relevance to issues such as audience expectations, the role of art in a consumer society, the place of shame in the modern world and its stages.

These themes carried over into the subsequent works, mirroring core provocations from different angles. Invalid, a blisteringly powerful performance by Primož Bežjak, informed by his own medical history, saw him striving to dance despite limbs artificially truncated by bandages –a cogent image of individuals shackled by systemic restrictions.

Chapter Three, Money Blood and Love, included a recreation of Marina Abramovic’s Knife Game, played out by a Serb and a Croat, so that the spectre of an audience wanting blood twists in different ways depending on the political/geographical context. Pungent with confrontational insights and touched with humour, poetry and naked integrity, we need to see more of Via Negativa.