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WHAT TO AFFIRM? WHAT TO PERFORM?

Newsletter # 02, June 2008
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Introduction

The two-year project *What to affirm? What to perform?* is based on the ongoing collaboration between the CDU Centre for Drama Art Zagreb, CNDB Centrul Național al Dansului Bucharest, Maska Ljubljana and Tanzquartier Wien and is realised in cooperation with the Allianz Kulturstiftung.

While the activities of the partners in Bucharest, Ljubljana and Zagreb focus on documenting the unwritten history of dance in Eastern Europe, the Tanzquartier Wien in a complementary way sets up a research framework for an inter- and transmedia definition of dance, taking its starting point in the history of the Western avant-garde and asking about the “inadvertently” ignored in traditional historiography.

The project seeks in general to promote the understanding of structural difference and differentness of individual developments and avant-gardes as well as a cartography of particularities of heterogeneous aesthetics and of different articulations of the body.

What to affirm? What to perform? negotiates the question of affirmation as a performative method and political stance. To choose the aesthetics of subversive affirmation – in times of neoliberal relativism – means to take a political position, affirmative and performative at the same time.

The project comprises various formats of art and theory, among them archive work and the reconstruction of art projects, linking up to one’s own submerged tradition as well as to more recent projects.

The results of the first working phase are being presented to the public in Bucharest, Ljubljana, Zagreb and Vienna from spring 2008 on and will form the basis for the second project year in 2009. Planned, for example, are the creation of a *Dictionary of Choreography*, re-enactments of performances by Tomislav Gotovac, the Group of Six Artists, Stere Popescu, Adina Cezar, Gabriel Negri, Mare Bulc and the symposium *Parallel Slalom*. The Tanzquartier Wien is organising *Instruktionen verraten* (Giving (up) instructions) a 14-day curating in spring 2009 based on the research project “*Versehen*” – *A historioclastic avant-garde investigation in the room of manoeuvre of dance and choreography* from March 2008.

What to affirm? What to perform? is a cooperation between the [Allianz Kulturstiftung](#), [CDU Centre for Drama Art Zagreb](#), [CNDB Centrul Național al Dansului Bucharest](#), [Maska Ljubljana](#) and the [Tanzquartier Wien](#).



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Events in June 2008 / Outlook 2008

01 CNDB Centrul Național Al Dansului București www.cndb.ro

26-06-2008, 20:00

National Dance Centre Bucharest (Round Hall), B-dul Nicolae Balcescu no. 2, Bucharest

Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa pupilčki (Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Little Pupilos)

Performance reconstruction by **Janez Janša**

The performance *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilos* directed by Janez Janša, created and performed by Aleksandra Balmazović, Gregor Cvetko, Dražen Dragojevič, Lado Jakša, Alja Kapun, Boštjan Narat, Matjaž Pikalo, Dejan Srhoj, Ajda Toman, Irena Tomažin and Grega Zorc, is a reconstruction of the avant-garde theatre production staged by the Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre in 1969.

The presentation is followed by an open discussion with the artists.

Janez Janša is the director of Maska, Ljubljana.

In 1969 *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Little Pupilos* caused a scandal due to its alleged immorality. It was the first Slovenian theatre production that used a multidisciplinary approach and combined various artistic and social practices, it provided a unique commentary on the society of the time.

The performance uses visual and conceptual excerpts from the original show, such as conversation dialogues of the old cast layered with present responses or remakes of the genuine cues. Re-enacting becomes a style exercise for the performers and an alluring remixed perceptual show for the audience, which faces the performers' balance between deliberated unskillfulness and improvised acting and extreme rhetoric gestures, crowded, chaotic language and rigorous symmetry of the mise-en-scène. There are passages of comparison in which with a contemporary dance routine the performers remake the past movement phrases. This unravels another structural field of the show: the continuous shuffling of different historical and contemporary conceptual and aesthetic elements.

The main plan of this performance can be described as a permanent mirroring of the present and the past, or like a versatile/switching way of watching history through binoculars, also looking through the wrong way so that it minimises the object. It is like watching both the fragment and the whole but constantly relating the fragment to the rest/whole in order not to lose coherence and also to reconstruct the big picture, which is nothing other than the syncopated past made up of phantom-like events and unspoken things. It's a game in which the right puzzle pieces are discovered through repeating the same gestures or flashbacks.

One can see that in this performance the analysis of the past begins with dance's contemporary legitimacy methods leading to the most critical and essential moments of the past and reflecting upon the way they still influence the re-contextualisation and re-theming dance chapters. It's a return to the past by rethinking the position of *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Little Pupilos* towards its resistance to all forms of authority, but not in the direct expression of political protest. The performance distances itself, mocks and subverts authorities, from the external (state, nation, party, church, market) to the internal (theatre and aesthetic).

For a conscience that refuses the dissolution into idealism and aspires to permanently articulate its certitudes, it is clear that the reconstructional approach makes sense by bringing direct or indirect explanations of and from the past to today's dance scene.

Giving to the whole performance a sort of delirious "matrioska" structure, all the reconstructional theatre methods in *Pupiliya*, *Papa Pupilo* and *the Little Pupilos* are indeed useful in the framework of *What to affirm? What to perform?* by mapping and understanding the past attempt, because they contain a generative core present at every stage of this research and offer the general patterns of the past and the present by drawing up a "blueprint" and recreating the internal germinal structure of contemporary dance.

17-07 to 20-07-2008

Performance Art Festival Osijek

Technology performance, democracy performance, performance management – all of these performances are directly linked to the efficiency criteria imposed by the highest stage of capitalism.

But, as Jon McKenzie pointed out in his book “Perform Or Else”, from 2001 some forms of cultural performance are among the rare points of resistance thanks to its volatility and its paradoxical refractory character. Moments of transgression, of subversive singularities rather than massive oppositional cultural practices, are at the same time chains of transitional moments with their intrinsic potential to transform both the space and time, to shift the coordinate system in which the artwork is produced. In other words, the specific quality of transition comes out of an intensive approach to the problematisation of the “transitional moment” (here and now), not the transitional period (understood as a massive time metaphor in which one acts now and then) that demands reconnection of our optic and sonic links to the world we live in through a different approach to the production of time. In the process of transition, of becoming the same, just more redistributed and actualised, one is always late, especially in comparison with the engaging speed of capital.

This festival invites performance artists whose work is emerging in this paradox, in tensions between volatility and reconstruction, identity and instability, memories and documents, attempts and failures.

19-07-2008, 20:00

Performance Art Festival Osijek, Barutana, Tvrđavica 192, 31000 Osijek

SS-XXX | Die Frau Helga – The Borghild Project Reconstruction

Performance by **Janez Janša**

In 1941 the Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler ordered the development of the world’s first inflatable sex doll, intended to serve the sexual needs of the German fighting man. The officer directly responsible for the sex doll project was SS-commander Heinrich Himmler. The plan was never put into action because the factory that was supposed to manufacture the sex dolls was in the city of Dresden, which was bombed by the Allies. And so Hitler never got to become the “father of the inflatable doll”.

The text is based on “The Borghild Project – A Discreet Matter of the III Reich” by Norbert Lenz.

SS-XXX is part of the platform RE:akt! (www.reakt.org) supported by ECF – European Cultural Foundation, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Municipality of Ljubljana.

Janez Janša is conceptual artist, performer, producer and since 2002 the artistic director of Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Arts, Ljubljana.

29-09 to 14-10-2008

Barutana 2008 Festival

t.b.c.

Barutana 2008 Festival, Barutana, Tvrđavica 192, 31000 Osijek

Cinematic Modes of Choreography

Lecture/screenings by **Tanja Vrvilo**

The author will present her research on choreographic thinking in the field of cinema, based on Croatian narrative and non-narrative film. Her starting points are the fundamental historical and theoretical determinants of film in terms of technology and recording – film as a reflection of scientific and philosophical spirit of the times, in which film and philosophy seek to reflect upon movement together. She has studied the continuity of movement describing the figure (rather than the figure in a given moment) from its prehistory, from chronophotography to the aesthetics of attraction: film choreography between composition, mise-en-scène, deframing, and montage in a broader sense: choreography for the camera and choreography of the camera. It is a non-cineatic and pro-cineatic reality: bodies in a (cineatic) landscape, corporal figurations in narrative and non-narrative film: body as a form, figure, or object (body in the literal sense). It is dance film or film dancing in various types of experimental or avant-garde film: art film, abstract film, trans film, structural or conceptual film.

Tanja Vrvilo presents two fundamental but opposed modes of corporality in experimental film: the choreography of the everyday and ceremonial (festive) body (Deleuze) in the experimental films by Vlado Kristl and Ivan Martinac.

Tanja Vrvilo is a Croatian film curator.

October 2008

Research Residence

at the Lazareti Art Workshop (AWL) in Dubrovnik

The residence programme, coordinated by the Zagreb-based dramaturge Ivana Ivković, aims at building an archive of projects and performances characterised by specific emancipatory approaches to dance and (social) choreography. This archive will be produced in collaboration with the AWL which is already building its own documentation centre for the visual arts.

December 2008

Parallel Slalom

Symposium at AWL in Dubrovnik

The involvement of Eastern European visual and performance artists in dance and language, produces a problematisation of formative categories of choreography and performance as metaphors in favour of thinking about dance as a cultural and not merely as an aesthetic category. The idea of the symposium is to re-inscribe the concepts of "lightness" (Nietzsche, Badiou), "Gelassenheit" (Heidegger), "weak thought" (Vattimo), "whatever"/quodlibet (Agamben), but also concepts such as "laziness" (Malevich, Stilinović), "unprofessionalism", etc. into a new prescriptive and productive framework.

December 2008

Interdisciplinary Dramaturgy Training – Reconstruction Performance Programme

Research by **Janez Janša** and **Goran Sergej Pristaš**

The project focuses on the development and discussion of dramaturgical methods of reconstruction and takes the liberation of Zagreb in early May 1945 as its starting point. German and Ustasha troops are retreating from the city. Several filmmakers, mostly pioneers of Croatian film, participate in the action of saving the cine equipment and material, which the occupation forces intend to take with them. Some of the equipment was transported from the former state production building into private homes, but it was impossible to hide everything. So the cameramen grabbed the cameras and went out into the streets, filming the retreat of German and Ustasha convoy from Zagreb. In order to avoid suspicion, they camouflaged some of the cameras behind the windowpanes or behaved as if they were fleeing themselves. Sometimes they even asked the retreating soldiers to help them transport the equipment to a film location. The whole action is coordinated by film director Branko Marjanović, who is based in the city centre and plans the locations. On May 8, the partisan forces enter the city, but the filming goes on. Mistrustful partisans occasionally stop civilians carrying cameras, but the cameramen give them the pre-arranged password: "Florijan knows everything!" Even though Florijan does not exist and the cameramen have invented the password, a name behind the action helps calm the situation. The cameramen are left alone. In this way, a historical document is created that is known in present-day literature as the "Liberation of Zagreb."

The interest of this artistic plan will remain in the field of reconstruction, primarily because re-enactment includes restarting the mechanism of the aesthetic ideology of action. Reconstruction presupposes a new approach to construction, in which a place for the voice of those who speak non-constitutively, at the brink of muteness, at the brink of becoming literature is to be found.

Janez Janša is a conceptual artist, performer, producer and since 2002 the artistic director of Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Arts, Ljubljana.

Goran Sergej Pristaš is a dramaturge and assistant professor at the Academy of Dramatic Arts (ADU) in Zagreb.

Throughout the year:

Frakcija performing arts journal will publish a series of EDA (East Dance Academy) concept descriptions as material for the *Parallel Slalom* symposia. The central question for EDA is whether there is a history (or another history) of contemporary dance in (Eastern) Europe. The concept was developed by Janez Janša (SLO), Bojana Kunst (SLO), Aldo Milohnić (SLO) and Goran Sergej Pristaš (CRO) as a platform for knowledge transfer in contemporary dance. EDA started 2006 at Tanzquartier Wien as part of the programme series *Education Acts: Kunst Macht Bildung*. Amongst the contributors are Ana Vujanović, Miško Šuvaković, Ana Peraica, Srećko Horvat and others.

November 2008

Maska, performing arts journal, No. 117-118

Alongside to *Maska 002 – East Dance Academy*, a special section of *Maska, performing arts journal* will be dedicated to the reflection of historisation, archiving, reconstructing and re-enacting of artistic and historical events.

23-11 to 25-11-2008

Cankarjev Dom, Štíhova in Kosovelova dvorana, 1000 Ljubljana

Maska 002 – East Dance Academy

An event on archiving, performing and displaying the history of contemporary art

The three-day meeting is a working space in which the participants display historical examples of performances and actions in their local context, which might be possible examples of how to think about dance in a broader cultural perspective. Ljubljana is considered an interesting place for this event because important work has been already done there in the field of visual art (we would emphasise exhibitions such as *Body and the East* and *Seven Sins*, and the recent publication *East Art Map*).

The event will comprise reconstructed performances, screenings of dance and performances of the 1960s and 70s, demonstrations, live archiving, debates and lectures as well as exhibitions. Part of the event will be dedicated to re-enacting historical events, with the live archiving of the occupation of the University of Ljubljana in 1969 as well as presentation of the *Re:akt!* platform by Janez Janša.

The aim of EDA is to detect and find the places, areas and events where dance has been breaking through. Dance could not find its own institutional status until the communist regime had started to decline in the 1980s, but it was constantly present and emerging in those fields that were the so-called fields of experiment – visual arts, experimental music and theatre, performance art, etc. The project affirms interdisciplinarity, crossing boundaries between disciplines and strong social contextualisation of artistic production. In this sense the project brings together an audience from different fields and different perspectives.

Maska 002 – East Dance Academy takes place in collaboration with Cankarjev Dom, Ljubljana, and Aksioma, the Institute for Contemporary Arts, Ljubljana. Supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic Slovenia.

The detailed programme will be available by the end of June at www.maska.si.

Timetable

26-06-2008	20:00	<i>Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa pupilčki</i> Reconstruction of the performance by the Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre from 1969 by <i>Janez Janša</i>	CNDB
19-07-2008	20:00	<i>SS-XXX Die Frau Helga – The Borghild Project Reconstruction</i> Performance by <i>Janez Janša</i> at the Performance Art Festival Osijek	CDU
09-2008		<i>Cinematic Modes of Choreography</i> Lecture/Screenings by <i>Tanja Vrvilo</i> at the Barutana 2008 Festival in Osijek from 29-09 to 24-1-2008	CDU
10.2008		<i>Research Residence</i> Coordinated by the Zagreb-based dramaturge <i>Ivana Ivković</i> at the Lazareti Art Workshop (AWL) in Dubrovnik	CDU
11-2008		<i>Maska, performing arts journal, no. 117 -118</i> Publication on historiography of contemporary performing arts	MASKA
23-11 to 25-11-2008		<i>Maska 002 – East Dance Academy</i> Event on archiving, performing and displaying the history of contemporary art	MASKA
12.2008		<i>Parallel Slalom</i> Symposium at AWL in Dubrovnik	CDU
12.2008		<i>Interdisciplinary Dramaturgy Training – Reconstruction Performance Programme</i> Research by <i>Janez Janša</i> and <i>Goran Sergej Pristaš</i>	CDU

Subject to change