

**Without Makeup
At Her Majesty's Pleasure!
Conceived and directed by Jure Novak.
Glej Theatre**

By Nika Leskovšek

The Documentary Appeal of Art

How to read and what after all is the advertised event entitled *At Her Majesty's Pleasure!*, which was recently performed at Glej Theatre? First of all, it is already telling by itself at the level of the gesture, the performative statement as such – and, above all, it also functions as such: it is about artists who were exposed in the sphere of public interest by way of negative publicity, including the prosaic, extra-artistic, partial context of artworks and their legal restrictions. The documentary presentation of the legal support of the public accusations against artists in the (contextually) critical performance stages the image of the laic conception of the function of art in a democratic society with capitalistic mentality and the artistic confrontation with it. With the legal intervention into the field of artistic activity itself (or the privacy of its representatives) and even its negation, we enter the field of biopolitics traversing an artist's particular identity. This relatively traumatic experience already exposes the current (artistic) dispositif of the performance and its unique and recognized co-creators. The performative demonstration is composed from the subjective presentations of the truth – in the Slovenian, art terrain – of each of the incriminated artists.

Matjaž Pikalo summarizes his Kafkaesque process in a singer-songwriter way with tireless and taunting children's songs. Taking her own case as an example, Breda Smolnikar (with a grotesque medievalist undertone at a screening of a demonstrative book burning) presents the (literary) development of court practice and the joint artistic product by using the creative procedure named censorship; Goran Vojnović and his non-existent character defend themselves in a video transmission (with bad reception). These (court) defences are connected by the king (Rok Kunaver), the prosecutor (Maruša Kink) and the jester/representative of the artists (Vasilij Polič – with the unmissable context of his position of a judge in private life); a unique mixture of absolutism and the rule of law endeavours to create as harmless, user-friendly (not artist friendly) performance as possible with a boringly predictable framework with the (costume) air of the past.

During all this, they constantly repeat that any similarity to reality is purely coincidental, they protect themselves from possible lawsuits, self-censor themselves (the duo Eclipse did not appear) and, after an awkward attempt at abusing the audience, they humbly apologize. In the meanwhile, the "versatile artist" and always telling Janez Janša, subjects himself to a public lynching (a torrent of raw eggs and granite cubes).

The function of the performance as a whole thus problematises the place and the context of artistic statements, but above all the way art should tackle social criticism if it wants to continue to be curt and convincing and potentially remain without irreparable damage. What (besides the obvious) the monotonous logic of the performance suggests can be seen at the very end,

which sticks out completely from the continuity of its form and content even though, on the whole, it does not manage to dramaturgically lead to the grand finale, but it provides a radical enough answer by itself: Ivo Tabar – after the remark of the artists that they distance themselves from his gesture – performs his bloody body art performance.

The effectiveness of personal and artistic gestures of the witnesses carries its mark even during the collective (disillusive) bow with the jester hats. What this document (artistic performance) says about the national cultural image is another question.

The Meaning of a Name and (Re)Naming

By Uroš Smasek

The staging in the main festival Linhart hall of Cankarjev dom (CD) in Ljubljana included a distinctively cinemascopic screen for an exceptionally elongated projection of the film material, while, in the at first dimmed stage foreground, there was a place for a “mystery commentator” (or, according to the credits, performer and documentarian Dražen Dragojevič), in addition to the place on the left balcony for a one-off theatre acting “intervention”.

Projected onto the cinemascopic screen was an often almost a kind of a collage of film shots, sometimes sliding back and forth also one over the other and including scenes that come across either as completely documentary and finished or ad hoc as an imaginative merely provisional enactment of a certain, unfinished scene. The unique performance examined in quite diverse ways (for example, cinematically in the documentary statements of various interviewees) the question of naming and the name and the meaning of all this for the bearer of the name in a wide range of situations (life, art, etc.) One can thus sense that the starting point of the discussed topic was the renaming of three artists, who were at the time already individually known names, into Janez Janša.