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Review: Ich kann nicht anders

Beton Ltd. Bunker, Ljubljana. Nika Arhar

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Ich kann nicht anders. Photo: Toni Soprano

The Beton Ltd. collective changes the small sports hall of the Sports Club Tabor in Ljubljana into a shelter of the abandoned building (space design: sonda4 and Toni Soprano, sound design by Jure Vlahovič, music by Dead Tongues).

A provisionally arranged living space, filled with water bins, curtained windows, plastic washing buckets, provisional beds and furniture wrapped in a plastic foil gives an impression of an escape from the world that has been overflowed by war or some other kind of apocalyptic scenario.

During the performance, a thought comes to mind that this deviation from the expected scenes designed for such artistic context is not simply about a scenographic solution but also a meaningful move connected to the sheer driving force of the performance and their authors.

When asked how to respond to the problematic social phenomena or how to take part in a social action - as an individual or as an artist - which is the topic that has obsessed a great part of artistic field and is also a frequent trap many performances fail to avoid - it seems that the collective, by using such scenography and by claiming such "involved despondency" expresses doubt on socially critical art, a field where the shade of uncertainty is always present; the uncertainty about taking the

right to judge publicly, about its ironically superior position of socially critical art or about a self-righteous tone of its attempts to open a dialogue.

To what and how to respond regarding the immense quantity of stupidity and chaos as well as how to understand social responsibility and criticism, while being aware that becoming involved in an individual project, a one-day action or tweeting, while still having a safe and comfortably positioned existence can only sound as nothing but a pretense?



The trio or, as humorously put in the performance, the troika; Primož Bezjak, Branko Jordan, Katarina Stegnar - does not address this topic as an explicit question; its presence is felt in the background of the cacophony of contents of the matter of the performance. It is seen as a phenomenon of confusion of the individual, unable to organize the extent of the problematic social impulses into a coherent system and a consistent idea about the course of their action in it. This confusion is demonstrated in the performance as a fragmented puzzle.

The trio is first recognized as a group that is sending a message out into the world from their shelter in the secluded castle, perhaps as a group of activists, maybe as the scared survivors. However, before the spectator manages to understand what is happening, the performers turn into a group of friends and themselves - Bezjak, Jordan and Stegnar - who, while eating lunch, washing or socializing in the given provisional shelter -

discuss themselves and their lives, society, family, sexuality, being old, responsibility and loneliness, current world events, politicians, cultural and other personas as well as their colleagues from theatre, books, movies, etc.

In accordance with the used quotation "Words, words, words" by a German literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki, they bombard the audience with a multitude of personal as well as social references, some of them can be recognized but all of them definitely will not since they are hidden even in the tiniest pieces of statements.

What is recognized in all this as a main agenda is the fundamental powerlessness, as already suggested in the title of the performance - I can do no other - I can only offer words and myself, words coming from me (also as a cluster of references - voices that resonate within me) and that tell something about me and through that also about others and the world around us.

The world in the performance resonates as a reflection of strongly disintegrated reality that is missing the cohesive thread. However, the eternal lack of transparency may be accepted in the real life, but the performance lacks a clear intention, which was left unexpressed despite the strength of the expressive abilities of the performers. Nika Arhar

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