

Delo

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Everything we've lost while we've gone on living

Anton Podbevšek Theatre & Bunker Institute

What has by now become a distinctive creative posture of the Beton Ltd. collective – namely, its ability to provide the immediately responsive and comprehensively communicational comments on the time and the world we live in – once again becomes embodied in the project *Everything we've lost while we've gone on living*, where the image of the current present time is placed right next to the past. It is, of course, not only sweet nostalgia that becomes evoked as the history is thus brought back to life, but also the individual anguish, emanating from the polar opposite between what was before and what is today.

Primož Bezjak, Branko Jordan and Katarina Stegnar (in cooperation with the dramaturge Andreja Kopač) mark out three temporal episodes: the first one corresponds with their birth year (1977), the second one with the graduation dance and the last one represents the absolute here and now. To summarize: we're traveling through a decreasing curve that leads from paradise to a disaster. The collective posits the era of the good old times of the former Yugoslavia as ground zero and as the comparative point of historical reference; more specifically by invoking the 5th anniversary of the Penthouse hotel on the island Krk, which – as the hotel founder, the notorious Bob Guccione had aspired – was supposed to introduce the western trends of entertainment to the Balkans amongst many other things, while allowing the “uncategorized” to encounter the western thought.

This visual cocktail – brimming with hit tunes and catchy rhythms from back then (music by Janez Weiss and Jure Vlahovič), mirror balls, neon glow, champagne in abundance, eventfulness of debauchery and entertaining hysteria – is devised as a gala evening of some sort (set designed by son:DA, costumes by Mateja Benedetti). It is interactive in its nature and full of nostalgic zeal as all the three actors navigate between various identities in rapid alternation of the coordinates of this “paradise on Earth”; a paradise orchestrated in its revival and yet nevertheless real at one point in time. While such reconstruction of plastic self-indulgence and “careless” socialism may completely take over some people in reminding them of a memory related to their intimate experience, it may on the other hand also offer a certain (partly documentary) insight to others with regard to a fragment of time that they've never lived in. The atmosphere of idealism and endless optimism inhabits the action on stage while nevertheless leaving a pinch of bitterness behind – especially when the reality of the current social situation kicks in. The act of graduation dance as a turning point for each individual, who all of a sudden finds himself pushed into the

harsh reality of survival struggle while still on the peak of enthusiasm, seems like a point of humorous reconstruction of the event. It is somewhat of an autobiographic chapter, where all the three protagonists were still under the sway of sheer optimism, the initial euphoria of an independent state, the awakened desire for the unknown and, last but not least, hope for a decent pension and for growing old in a manner of social security. That was in 1995. And then, almost a 20-year break. Cut, this is where the fairytale ends. In the third act the Winners, the losers and those who give a damn, the performers of 2013 throw off their masks and stand before us as themselves, bereft of creative restlessness and of clever jokes. They're nervous and helpless, but still carrying that revolutionary spark, intentionally ignoring the dull questions, related to economic instability and political crisis. In this epilogue the performers don't respond in a lounge or politicking style, but inhabit the voice of an endangered species of contemplative, creative and profound individuals; actors who think in a far too lucid manner and have for this reason an issue with the system, with professional limits of conventionality and, finally, also with the profitable "market".

Zala Dobovšek