



The Absurd of Altruism, Resemblance of Participation

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Jesus Christ is seen as a paradigm of an unconditional activist love for »the neighbor as you love yourself«. At the beginning of the »First Altruistic Performance« the author Marko Bulc places himself in the position of the crucified Christ, reminding us of the gems of today's already hyper civilized ideas of altruism. In the continuation of the show we see that this idea is performed by Bulc by placing the small group of viewers in diverse fictitious situations, such as guiding, setting up and viewing an exhibition or a workshop on how to give the best assistance, how to help a deprived person.

During the succession and composition of eight fragments of diverse fictive situations, we understand the author's initial decision becomes crucial to understand the performance, which in itself becomes a breakthrough and carries the weight of the statement: my view of the question of altruism has already been formulated, as such I also present it in this performance, even if at the first glance it does not look like that.

Bulc, therefore, turns back to the question that he had posed to himself, emphasizing the absurdity. This is being done on the level of the whole piece, and it could be read through a split of miniature chairs where he shows their multifunctionality, connected to the intended functions of individual visitors that participate the show.

The reduced set design turns out to be performatively effective in the space of a black box with only white lights, so on the one hand, we perceive a mathematical precision, and on the other hand a necessary dose of humor.

Every chair has one leg that is slightly shortened, consequently the sitting is very unstable. This »deficiency« must therefore be somehow stabilized, while we cannot to use the supplied wedge that is purposely attached to the other leg of the chair with a chain that is too short. The concept and tangibility of the wobbly chairs points out that we are all on some shaky and volatile positions, in both real and symbolic sense, and the consolidation of the individual positions is possible only, if we really participate, as we can see by the end of the performance.

The important and unintrusive final gesture of the performance stems from a personal family story, from the self-examination of the the author, who rejects the absolutism of the altruism, in order to open up the space for affirmation of group and self-organization within the community. Instead of humanitarianism, that we might say is seen as a consolation for an individual ego, as a mask of systemic exploitation, he suggests micro-interventions that require introspection and are suseptible to »the other in the same position. We see and feel that these interventions affect (and connect), when we simultaneously stabilize the neighbor's chair and the one that we sit in.

The performer's seriousness, immediacy and authenticity of performance actually open the space to humor, which discreetly but consistently stretches over the performance, and lucidly ironizes some of the established behavioral forms of diverse empty rituals typical of today's time.

The behaviour of the all the time active viewers is firmly confined by the director, in fact, pre-passivized. You become the viewers who will participate, if you wish, and I will direct you in any case; it's just theatre. Thus, although they are investing something into the happening, viewers are excluded from it at the same time. Excluded, because all the work is obviously absurd, we all rotate in a circle, we trample around the space, we are once again involved in a boring workshop, and it is crucial that we can laugh about all this or ourselves in this situation. Interactivity and participativeness are here to laugh at them when we see their reverse. The author's playing with canonized participation is valuable when we think of one of the latest theatre fashion trends that command and also institutionalize the involvement of the audience.

The first altruistic performance reminds us of those rare modernistic fundamentals of the theatre, as well as performans, that confirm a truly analytic view on the question posed. Its fragmented form is a consequence of the eloquent simplicity of his approach and the humorous concept in which the place and the feeling of the audience are respected as a key junctures of entanglement and unraveling of meanings, set by the performer. His self-opening sincerity paves the way of the socializing effect of the performance.