

COCOs

Departure-points

COCOs is a project gathering Sandra Iché, Jefta van Dinther, Jan Ritsema, Mette Ingvarlsen and Bojana Cveji_ as collaborating co-authors and performers. While some of them share a history of projects (Ingvarlsen with Ritsema and Cveji_ in Pipelines, a construction and knowh2ow; van Dinther with Ingvarlsen in to come and Why We Love Action; Iché on her solo with Ritsema and Cveji_), this performance brings these five together for the first time. The departure they take is, in fact, intentionally different from the experience of working together they have. All they loved to hate is now made into a starting decision:

COCOs will make a performance using two already existing works simultaneously

COCOs won't proceed textually, i.e. writing text first, in order to perform it on stage

COCOs will explore theatricality to the utmost of its expressions

COCOs makes its content emerge out of the experience of consistently parallel media, rather than subscribe to a politically, socially or scientifically important topic

COCOs won't disperse in an eclectic myriad of references

COCOs will positively engage with one storyline, dialogue, the genre of melodrama

Aims of project

Even if it might sound like a cheesy contract with themselves, COCOs seriously wants to invest in theatricality, the notion of which they understand as an illusion-making machine, effectful spectacle, organically broken and still artificial whole of sounds, images, movements, and bodies, and above all, an individuating journey for the spectators. The departure of this project is to explore the theatricality arising from combining and relocating expressions from theater, radio, cinema and choreography. The aim of it is to choreograph movement between a mute theater-play for the eyes, a radio-play for the ears, and a composition of gestures, faces, relations and presence of bodies on stage. The spectator is the destination of this choreography: (s)he is implicated by the movement since it is (s)he who collects the performance traveling through his/her senses. It is through affect –a sense of variation in intensity, an increasing and diminishing capacity to perceive, which comes from the gaps between what is heard, seen, kinaesthetically felt, understood and thought– that the spectator will be individuated.



Materials

Two works give the framework of composition:

Rebecca, as in the movie of Alfred Hitchcock (1940), but also the novel by Daphne du Maurier (1938), and the radio-play by Orson Welles

Wilhelm Meisters leerjaren (1985), performance on the text of J. W. von Goethe that Jan Ritsema directed for and with the Dutch theater group Mug met 't gouden tand

Why these works in particular? Rebecca is a masterpiece of the cinema genre melodrama, offering psychoanalytic insights into plot, characters, acting, music etc. COCOs is especially interested in the ghost of Rebecca, a woman who is virtually present only as a shadow, a petit objet a, that regulates desire in the love story of Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine. WML is an performance unusually visionary for being made in 1985, for its style, for dissociating movement of artificial figures

from a highly didactic play. The two sources are somewhat complementary, but also incompatible – they demand a thorough transformation into a third entity.

These works won't be treated as references to recognize, but as pools of diverse materials, e.g. WML will lend COCOs only its "choreography" (constellations of actors on stage) as a ground, Rebecca will be plugged in for the narrative, dialogues, acting, and sound.

Technical set-up

The performance will run in two separate sense channels.

Visual: theater play and choreography without text realized through the live presence of bodies on stage

Auditive: radioplay with voices and sounds transmitted through the earphones given to each spectator before the show

The sound and the image are clearly separated and dissociated from each other, yet they will combine and reverse their roles according to an overall dramaturgy.

This set-up will be flexible from the point of view of the spectator. Not only will the visual (the stage action) and the auditive (radioplay in the earphones) exchange and complement their functions in producing image and sound, but also each spectator will be able to create his/her own performance. By operating their listening device, spectators will edit their own performance or movie, with or without sound, sitting in theatre in front of the stage or leaving it to sit in the foyer. In that way, the performance will occur in more than one space: on stage, in the ears and imagination of the spectator, off-stage in the foyer where the radio-play enters another sensorium.

Procedures

The whole work of COCOs will consist in transposing, translating, juxta- and superimposing, voiding and modulating parameters and materials from the two sources.

COCOs will thus apply the principle of double-screening:

the theatre performance will run similarly to the double-screening* of two films at the same time.

*The experiments with double-screening (which Ingvarsten conducted within her research "The Making Of The Making Of") have shown that exposing oneself simultaneously to two correlated but distinct sources of sense stimulation intensifies perception. Spectators have reported a peculiar experience in which what they sense is the sensation of having a sensation. The stimuli are overwhelming to the extent that each spectator at each moment navigates differently their perceptions. In a certain way, double-screening enables an unmediated choreography of senses.

COCOs will explore various ways of constructing relations between: movements, relations and presence of bodies and characters on stage, sounds and the imaginary of sounds (images, spaces, sense of proximity and depth, thickness, texture) on and off stage, the power of light to manipulate the volume of visual intensity, to make scenes appear/disappear, move or subsist costumes, historical because they effectively erase the everyday pedestrian common look of performers=doers and produce an idealistic fiction, and costumes, big, for they can facilitate a sliding movement in choreography



One of the principles related to double-screening applies to narration. COCOs would like the spectators to participate in one storyline but which unfolds and folds in, in temporally diverging, non-coinciding actions and events. The choreography in this theatre performance is similar to the work of a DJ/VJ today, who often creates not a song, but a mood resulting from juggling with two or more songs that activate many singular movements and expressions in the dancing crowd. The choreography of COCOs is supposed to drive spectators in a dynamic unity of multiphasing, different temporal phases overlapping or cutting in each other, and in that way modulate their sensations.

In practical terms – to give an example of a moment in this performance – a mute, but not pantomimic scene with a few characters takes place on stage; a dialogue is running in the earphones; some spectators are listening and trying to attribute words to the bodies on stage; some others have put their earphones down as they heard sound coming from a local source on stage; another group just left the theatre and is listening to the same sound of the radio-play in the foyer; the light fades out, but the movement on stage continues; a narrator's voice; his narration stops when it reaches an imaginary image; the light comes up to illuminate a mute scene of bodies overdressed in theatrical costumes; the sudden change from vocality to muteness creates a haptic sensation, as if the spectator would touch the image to verify its presence; something in between a court dance and mute bodily dialogue begins etc;

Outcomes

Taking an experimental, rather than a critical departure, COCOs would like to address spectators as creative users. To do this, COCOs theatricalizes the extensions of creativity in contemporary society. It relocates radio and cinema, as well as the Ipod culture, into theater. The spectator is not only intelligent, but a highly sensible (sensitive) recorder/transmitter/modulator of the experiences that (s)he composes daily in his/her sensorium. COCOs would like to expand this mode of being into theater, claiming its contemporaneity as a place for enhancing the aesthetic, i.e. perceptual and cognitive capacity. The collective experience of theater does not occur during the spatio-temporal event of the performance – since each spectator makes his/her own choreography or dramaturgy – but it is postponed to the aftermath, if spectators choose to share and talk about their singular experiences.