

Heart and intellect hand in hand

A supreme show of technique and creative enthusiasm, in which heart and intellect go hand in hand, Karoline Skuseth writes about *Reconstructions* by NONcompany at BIT Teatergarasjen.

Review - *By Karoline Skuseth*

Reconstructions is performed on an unsteady foundation. A massive enclosure filled with small chrome marbles: a special order from a ball bearing factory in Germany. This is a work of art in itself, fascinatingly detailed and attractively tactile, it reminds one of both zen mosaics and those pictures made of needles one can buy in novelty shops, that one can place one's hand on and create an imprint. However, the neat impression is soon shattered, and one after another, the characters are presented to us and we gain their acquaintance. Throughout the two-hour long performance, relations crisscross each other, and one is subtly made aware of connections on different levels. Director Lise Risom Olsen, who forms an essential part of the core members in this project-based company, has claimed that cinematic techniques have been a great inspiration in the development of the script. These are surprisingly elegantly executed, and work incredibly well – on stage, too.

Charm

The characters we encounter are brimming with charm, and are able to win over the audience from the very beginning. One ought perhaps not call them characters, as they quickly stop being just that. Their acting is unlike anything I've previously seen; the way the actors relate to their lines and their body language is so playful that I quickly lose hold of the theatre context and drift into the world that is being created on stage. We encounter an excessively helpful nurse who cannot perform first aid without wearing a uniform, has weight issues and constantly exclaims, "It's you and me, Florence". Another character works in an art gallery and hears the voices of Cleopatra and the Marlboro Man in his head. The latter is also one of the most endearing characters I have seen on stage; dressed in a checkered shirt, with a scarf around his neck and the obligatory Stetson hat, he delivers subdued one-liners in a Chuck Norris manner, such as: "Never trust a woman that doesn't trust you".

On the subject of love

Cleopatra also provides sound advice on the subject of love. These dreamy sequences – performed in a subdued, cool light compared to the lighter everyday scenes – appear to take place in a parallel universe; by The River Styx or at an Ibsenesque crossroad. The pinnacle of these scenes is when Cleopatra is carried forward like a figurehead and conveys her message about the courting of women in a voice amplified by loudspeakers, almost like the Oracle of Delphi. Here, sound designer Håvard Pedersen contributes to the creation of a perfectly magical moment with his ambient music that also provides a backdrop throughout the play. *Reconstructions* is continually shaped by conscious dramaturgic and scenographic choices. This is particularly prominent in the use of stage props; Zippo-lighters in particular are used at regular intervals, and are exploited for all they're worth as symbols and sources of light. Scenographer Lena Lundsten Buchacz has a steady hand in choosing costumes, which are mainly in black, white and red. Here, colors are decidedly symbolic, in that characters of a dubious moral fiber are dressed in black – among them the character

of a frustrated, intoxicated artist with a critical personality disorder. Suitable and thoroughly planned solutions, such as the way costume changes are made by having boxes between the seven actors' chairs at the rear stage wall, makes the flow of the performance unbreakable.

Resonates

Although the performance circles around themes of everyday life, work and the hunt for love, deeper themes resonate within and make it continually surprising. Terrorism, revolution and the meaning of art are alluded to - not to forget life and death as well as most other issues human beings ponder. That the characters are closely linked to the (BIT Teatergarasjen) audience is a fascinating move; critics, artists, actors and culturally minded people in general are mocked. This is cleverly executed in a vernissage scene where the guests are reduced to large eyes that exclaim "Mmmm...", "Oh!", "No, no, no...", and in a scene featuring a famous artist who wants to blow up the entire cultural elite based on a somewhat demented feminist theory stating that only men blow up things when they're angry, while women have to clean up the mess. It's easy to recognize the attitudes and gestures of the multifaceted characters, and one often realizes that one is laughing at oneself. Sound and scenography underlines the mood throughout, as the situations come to a head towards the unavoidable climax: the floor with chrome marbles appear as both gravel and broken glass, and sound helps create the different scenes, be it a park or an art gallery. Combined with a masterly script that could outshine many an established movie millionaire, *Reconstructions* is a supreme show of technique and creative enthusiasm, in which heart and intellect go hand in hand.

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Reconstructions NONcompany

script and direction : Lise Risom Olsen | scenography: Lena Lundsten Buchacz |
lighting design: Hans Skogen | sound design og music: Håvard Pedersen | producer:
Tone Myklatun | actors: Veslemøy Mørkrid, Cathrine Frost Andersen, Charlotte Grundt,
Espen Alknes, David Skaufjord, Jo Adrian Haavind og Pål Gjertsen Steinsvik |
production: NONcompany | CO-production: BIT Teatergarasjen and Black Box Theatre.

***Reconstructions* was performed in Bergen from February 18th – 21st, and will be staged at Black Box Theatre in Oslo in October.**