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# SCULPTURE IN THEATRE

– The roles motionless sculptures “play” in theatre.



TURUN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU  
TURKU UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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This work is speaking about the use of non animated puppets, sculptures, figures and mannequins in theatre.

I was exploring the work of my preferable sculptors and performing art makers. All of them are exploring the subjects of memory and death and their relation towards presence. They often use anthropomorphic figures, human sculptures.

Mainly I was interested in thinking and analyzing what are the themes of the theatre pieces where we use non animated figures. What are the characters they are embodying. Can they represent anybody, or the range is limited and why. What are the relations between alive and dead body on the stage and outside of it.

Collecting thoughts of the sculptors helped me to understand the nuances in the relation between sculpture and space, about importance of stillness, about importance of being yourself and speaking about what you know and what you are , importance of inspiration that comes from the things you experience.

### KEYWORDS:

Sculpture, motionless figure, mannequin, totem, visual theatre, dance, memory, alive, dead, oppositions.

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## OPINNÄYTETYÖN NIMI

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## INTRODUCTION

As a contemporary puppet theatre maker I am interested in exploring my profession deepening in its specifics. Today in puppet theatre almost always we are facing as the spectators the combination of two opposite natures of stage characters: one performed by actor (manipulator, performer, presenter, stage-operator, shower, narrator) and second performed by puppet, material or an object. The meeting, co-existing and relation of these two natures are very interesting to me. I would like to explore the extremes of these two poles, two oppositions, when alive nature is alive and dead nature of a “puppet” is obviously dead (without trying to imitate its liveliness). I am especially interested in researching of pseudo puppet – non-animated “puppet”, when we don't try to create an illusion that it is alive character with its own will and soul. What stories can be retold when we openly forget the convention of puppet theatre that everything must become alive, and we present dead one through dead nature and alive one through alive one, emphasizing their true conditions. What stories can be created due to strong conventions and our imagination facing dead figure or object, breaking the evident reality about those true conditions of the material.

Use of mannequins, statues, sculptures, totemic objects in the performing arts are going side by side with the theme and questions about death and beyond world, rituals connected to it. I will be deepening into these subjects in the continuation of my work, presenting my impressions and some reflections on western artists, theatre makers and fine artists who were or are exploring the use of unanimated figures in their works. In addition I will be using examples from traditions in the performing arts and rituals related to unanimated figures in Asia, Africa and Central America.

The range is very wide and the subject is very rich and vast. In chosen subject among others I am especially interested in exploring the following topics:

- Why motionless body can be considered as alive;
- When and why motionless figure (sculpture / not manipulated puppet /object) brings emotion to the viewer / observer;

- What can animate immovable body (importance of the active stage design and actors around motionless figure);
- Use of sculptures and totemic objects in Western and other regional rituals;
- Whom do sculptures represent in theatre and what stories they tell;
- Relation toward death connected with statues in the performing arts;
- Analyzing traps, difficulties of a young artist dealing with these questions practically.

The answers to those questions I will be discovering through the analysis of the works of modern sculptors, theatre makers and choreographers. I was also studying texts written by these artists, interviews with them, their articles. There are hundreds of the artists who fit to the subject of my thesis. Being inspired by dozens of them, I will limit my research on the works of following artist:

Tadeusz Kantor: Poland, Krakow (1915 - 1990)

Gisele Vienne: France, Paris (born 1976)

Akram Khan: UK, London (born 1974)

Louise Bourgeois: France, Paris (1910 - 2010)

Antony Gormley: UK, London (born 1950)

Magdalena Abakanowicz: Poland, Warsaw (born 1930)

# 1 SCULPTURE AND DEATH



14089—Natives Praying to Wooden Devils, Chosen (Korea)

Natives Praying to Wooden Devils,

Chosen (Korea)



Since the origins of the human kind human being has been trying to understand what is the purpose of his life, what are his origins, how the powers are distributed in the universe, what is the level of his importance. He is trying to interpret his appearance and place it in the world. The image of the human has been copied, created, recreated, constructed and reconstructed according to the knowledge and believes of each society and of each époque. Through the process of creation and recreation, the human being marks /points his distance to the nature and it's highest representative (sometimes called God) and confronts it. Nature is changing according to how it is being perceived by man and what commitments were taken towards the mythology and art.

The humans are searching for the ways to show the essence of life and their perception of it. They give a particular importance to their own images and their interactions with the beings they glorify. In the ancient / primitive cultures the understanding of death as the ultimate result was absent and the communication with "life after death" was completed through the communication with sculptures and objects. The consciousness of later "artist" is dealing with materialization of the feeling of the finitude/ limits of the human existence and the wish for transcendence.

That is why we can see images where man is presenting himself realistically that is\_as he is, in all his fragility of the human condition. Often the individual recognizes himself in the idealized and /or transformed images. He is seeing himself in the various roles, forms and shapes, like an individual or in his connection to a specific family or specific society, tribe.

In fact, the image of a man (dead or alive) is rather interpreted according to the specifics of each culture and the way it maintains visually. The representation is evoked by collective memory and performed during special events. And that representations make the memory alive, so that they become cultural monuments. The material monuments / figures / statues are easier to understand, they are easy to be believed in, they can become whatever to protect him and there is the bridge between him and unknown.

Those mediums made the idea of death and beyond world more clear, easy and more intelligible. The memory became stronger, the communication became possible.

The question of death and life becomes actual and even pressing when dangers come, when big events are overwhelming lives of big amount of people. Death becomes very present and very near each of us. As today so thousands years ago people started to invent bridges to deal with death in order to convey information from past to future and to deal with the reality of human psychology. Art reflects immediately to what is happening in the society. The first part of the twentieth century with World Wars has left painful marks in lives of people. Artist couldn't avoid reflecting such radical changes in history, society and personal lives.

The bright and true voice of that époque, fine artist and theatre maker Tadeusz Kantor connected into one entity the two worlds: memory and presence.

TADEUSZ KANTOR (1915 – 1990):

„Dead needs to be near alive to emphasize it“



"I Shall Never RetuRn" 1989

Stage director, creator of happenings, painter, scenery designer, writer, art theoretician, actor in his own productions, lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Kantor was inspired by Constructivism, Dada, Informel art, and Surrealism. He was educated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. It is Kantor's theatrical work from the 1970's and 1980's, known as his "Theatre of Death" phase, that has gathered the most international attention and which continues to define his legacy. Tadeusz Kantor

was working with arte-facts, ready-made objects, among the others he is famous for using on stage life-size puppets, mannequins and dummies.

The mannequins in his productions “The Water Han” (1969) and in the “Shoemakers” (1972) both shows were based on texts by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885 – 1839) known in theatre Witkacy had a very specific role. Kantor himself comments on this matter:

“They are a sort of immaterial prolongation, something like complementarily organ of the actor, who is its “owner”. When I was using them in big amount in the play “ Balladyna” of Slowacky they became the doubles of alive characters. It is like they were given superior conciseness after living their own life. There the mannequins are visibly marked in the scene of the death.

The mannequins are like the manifestation of trivial reality; It is like transcendent process, the empty object, the lure;, the message of the death, the model for the actor.” (Le Théâtre De La Mort Textes Réunis Et Présentés Par Denis Bablet)

Tadeusz Kantor was inspired and influenced by two revolutionary masters of the world theatre who keep inspiring all the puppeteers of the world up to the current moment: Edward Gordon Craig (1872 –1966), an English modernist theatre practitioner, who worked as an actor, director, writer and scenic designer, and Heinrich von Kleist (1777 – 1811), a German poet, dramatist, novelist and short story writer. Kantor attentively studied works and texts of both artists. But in his theatre philosophy he was totally independent and radically different from concepts of both his predecessors.

He didn’t think that mannequins (or figures made out of wax) can be the substitution for alive actors like Kleist or Craig were wishing. It would be too simple and naïve for the artist who experienced Second World War. “I think that my aim shall rather be to catch some far-off glimpse of that spirit which we call Death – to recall beautiful things from the imaginary world; they say they are cold, these dead things, I do not know – they often seem warmer and more living than that which parades as life.” E. G. Craig “Über-Marionette”

In order to give shape, on stage, to the “mysterious, joyous, and superbly complete life which is called Death”, Craig proposes to replace the flesh-and-blood actor with an artificial double, the Über-marionette, so that the art of the theatre may begin to recover the original splendor it lost on the day when living actresses endeavored to imitate the animated figures of temples.

Nearly seventy years later, in his own manifesto The Theatre of Death, Tadeusz Kantor, trying to overturn Craig’s myth of the birth of the actor, transforms the actor into a being which is “inhabited by death”: “And the craft and the art of this ACTOR [...]

revealed that realm of DEATH and its tragic and full-of-DREAD beauty.” The mannequin in whose company he makes the living actor enters the stage aims, first of all, at reminding us that drama has its source in the territories of this death.

“I am forcing myself to determine the motives and the destination of this unusual entity in my thoughts and in my ideas. Its appearance goes together with this conviction which is stronger and stronger in me that life can't be expressed in art just by its total absence and appeal to death as there is no messages possible. In my theatre the mannequin has to become the model which embodies and transmits deep feeling of death and the condition of the dead ones- the model for alive actor”. – Kantor<sup>1</sup> / Etudes de Denis BableetBrunellaEruli /Edition Paris 1999 /Les Vois De La Creation Theatrale.

Kantor: „Yes, we understand everything in comparison, and things are emphasizing each other as well as overwhelming each other“. This statement is so simple, seems so basic, that almost cannot be properly appreciated -of course things are depending on each other and influencing each other. But Kantor means tat things are becoming themselves only next to their oppositions. I am touched by art of Tadeuzs Kantor, it is beautiful with what simplicity and straightness he created life on the stage. As old actors are simply dragging mannequins-children themselves in another reality in the “Dead Class”. This image evokes very clear ideas and immediately opens the point of the whole play.

What happens in us when we see dead figure looking like alive one in theatre?

There is a moment when we believe that the mannequins of Tadeusz Kantor are alive, they are among alive ones and visually there are no differences between them .We believe and some moments later we understand that they are just the dolls, simple dolls made out of papier-mâché, but... we still believe in them , it was enough this half of second of trust in the beginning and they dragged us with them and we deepen somehow in their reality now. We thought it was flesh but it is glue and paper, but we don't care anymore, recognition stayed, for us they are alive. Later we start to build stories for ourselves. After the understanding that they are not real, still in the head of the spectator stays the knowledge that they are dead, not soulless but dead, because there was this moment of trust that they are alive. The dead one from now on means someone who was alive at some point and still posses the soul of his own alive past. And every „someone“ has, had a story, every „somebody“ has something to tell. I say they are somebody not were, because no matter body is dead or alive you are somebody because of the memory you carry inside. You are remembered today.

Those are present with whom we are sharing today. Current moment is the only one that is actual for us, so it becomes very important the ones with whom we experience it. So it is important to give to the viewer belief that figures whose story we will follow are not soulless, even though they may be or may look as if they are dead, it does not matter any more. The word “death” stays always together with the word “life”, that’s what matters, that’s what interests us.

It seems very logical when we represent dead body with dead material. But can somebody concrete and be made out of papier-mâché. It doesn’t confront - we don’t pretend to prove that somebody made out of glue and paper is alive. And maybe we believe that this papier-mâché figure was also real in the past and now it is dead. And we want to know WHY IT IS DEAD, HOW DID IT DIE? This question becomes essential, the question that connects life and death is always touching for us, it is so unavoidable for human that it does not take any extra efforts from the audience to follow this level of information, we connect to it immediately. The urgency to find out the life story of this character grows, the value of this figure grows, because now we are attached to it, we at once believed it was alive. This moment when it was alive is emphasized now, because it will never come back, we see, we know it is dead and all actions are done for the last time.

Mannequin- this papier -mache figure ,as i was calling it before, can as well represent metaphorically dead one. For example it can represent child that you were l the distant past, the child doesn’t exist anymore, that is in a way dead. Puppets and mannequins are very clear visualized solution to speak about and to show these characters- in the way the dead ones. The dead figures on the stage are materializing something that is visible only in the memory with inner vision. In theatre we can give flesh to those characters, to give them voice and chance to speak, to meet them, to have a dialogue with them even though from further perspective. As Tadeusz Kantor once mentioned: „ The stage is the cemetery where we roam about in search for the past life...”

„ In this string of notions we still have to define the wrecks. I am fascinated with works of art made of wrecks. A wreck is that which is left as a result of destruction, more useless than anything and possessing a tragic past. Only memory recreates its function. In „ Dead Class“ the school desk is such a wreck, helpless, dead, unable to satisfy their mad desire of turning back time. That are always in the classroom, but this time they were in a black void, in front of which whole audience stopped. A thin string served mockingly as the barrier. But there must have been another more powerful and frightful barrier. Is that hopeless black void, the desks were

glaring objects. They accommodated all human states and emotions: suffering, fear, and love, and disciplined the living organism. They were like placenta that nourished something new and unexpected, which of sometime tried to venture outside the desks into the black void. And every time returned back to the desks as though they were the home- placenta. Death.... death is the end of that first innocent peek through the window that inspires fear and pre motion of what is outside, and the absence of the children. The feeling that they already lived their lives, and, though their death, the classroom has filled with memories which than begin to live and take on a mysterious spiritual power.

Death is the final act, the knowledge and experience of this end. After death we can do nothing because we are no more. This intriguing notion of the end will remain unimaginable. Death is the ultimate disaster of the organism that possesses the greatest gift of all- consciousness. That's the way i see my show. Something is discontinued and i am faced with so called eternity, which, to me means nothingness.

Two years before she died, Maria Jarema (1908-1958), polish painter and sculptor, had said to me " I've got to hurry", truth is that her last two years were the most creative. And than she was painting without breaks, life shrinks and we have to do a great deal during this last short stage. We have to make fiction, drama and the world of the dead starts a new life. Make the characters, their roles are part of real life following a kind of mystic ritual in which the dead man finds the victim. (...) I try to define the motives and destiny of that unusual creation that has appeared in my thoughts and ideas. Its appearance coincides with my ever stronger conviction that in art, life can only be expressed through its absence, thought reference to death, appearances, emptiness and absence of messages. In my theatre, a dummy permeated with a strong sense of death becomes the model for the actor." -Tadeusz Kantor "The Theatre of Death (1975)"



"Dead Class" 1975



### 1.1.1 SCULPTURE

Here in this chapter I would like to present some sculptors, their thoughts, motors to create, sources of inspiration, their observations in a relation to my topic. While thinking why and how sculpture in theatre interests me I have discovered those artists and was inspired by their minds and creation. In my opinion their motionless works are very theatrical, I find many stories and emotions in them.

ANTONY GORMLEY (born 1950, London, England, UK)

In a career spanning nearly 40 years, Antony Gormley has made sculpture that explores the relation of the human body to space at large, explicitly in large-scale installations. By using his own experience as a test ground, Gormley's work transforms a site of subjective experience into one of collective projection.

I would like to point out some examples from the „theatre“ of everyday life and the strength of its motionless through the work of this legendary artist.



“ Another place” at the Crosby Beach, Liverpool.

Human size iron doubles are standing straight sometimes with their hands lifted sides on the level of the shoulders. Sometimes they are alone, sometimes in a group, they are all equal, all are the same just environment they are placed is different. Iron human figures on the edges of the skyscrapers in New York, in the middle of the field or in the beach facing the sea are representing artist's concept of motionless body in motion. Sometimes we see whole figures on the sand, sometimes just heads in the waves of the sea, depending of the time of the day. It is absolutely fascinating how the space and places give meaning to them , they become someone because the space gives them roles, puts them into stories. That effect works visa a verse. These figures are charging and activating space in their turn as well. The space also becomes particular. It is astonishing how these figures make us realize and notice where we are and what is this surrounding. Just by their presence they evoke liveliness into the scenery and into themselves. Here are some links where Gormley's site specific works can be seen in all of their artistic power:

<http://www.behance.net/gallery/Another-Place/5119747>

<http://www.behance.net/gallery/Samaritans/1056365>

<http://www.antonygormley.com/news/studio-item/id/171/page/135#p1>

"Things already exist. Sculpture already exists. The job is to transform what exists in the other world by uniting it with the world of sensation, imagination and death. Action can be confused with life. Much of human life is hidden. Sculpture , in stillness, can transmit what may not be seen; My work is to make bodies into vessels that both contain and occupy space. Space exists outside the door and inside the head. My work is to make human space in space." Antony Gormley (Phaidon Press, London, England, 1995)

Sculpture and its stillness both put the point on a particular moment, mark it, make it special among the others. Sculpture together with space both are creating the context for the emotional moments, for the story. This context is telling us about the possible actions this still character could create. All work is happening in our head and imagination taking sources from our particular memory.

Here are some notes of Antony Gormley on memory:

“All we do is from memory it is huge storage of our fears, thoughts, feelings, perception. Memory holds everything we experienced ourselves or learned from others. From some store I can weave into the past endless new likeness of things either experienced by me or believed on the strength of things experienced and from this again I can picture actions and events from the future and upon them all I can mediate as if they were present.”

MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ (born 1930 in Warsaw, Poland)

I would like to point out another artist who is strongly inspiring my imagination and its relation to death. I believe in sincerity with what she is sharing her world. Again and again her works are evoking stories in me. The work of Magdalena Abakanowicz possesses a remarkably powerful emotional intensity and mystery. We experience her art in our minds, hearts and guts. It is made out of the ordinary struggles of daily life, which is expressed in these tense forms. Her art is at once intimately personal, as it derives its inspiration from the artist's own thought and experiences.

“Sculptures/figures speak not only about economic fright and physical poverty but also more importantly about the poverty of mind in the breaking down of man's spirit and the fear and anxiety that have become all- pervasive.”-Magdalena Abakanowicz

Magdalena Abakanowicz works mainly with human body. It is essential core of her work and it is expressed in her art in its numerous manifestations. Two ways to treat them either exposing its inside or representing its exterior. Often those human figures organizing the crowd. They are many and seems that they are the same, but examining them nearer we see complicated texture that is covering them, traces on the body are individual. Names of her works “Abakans”, the series of headless “ Seated Figures” and torsos called “Backs”, “Embriology”, “ Dancing Figures”, “Heads”, “Crowds”, “ Animals”. In her work organic meets non-organic, this is why the works are so contradictable. All these figures are motionless, stoned without any chance to stand

up and go, and in the same moment their skin is made out of material that seems was once alive. We almost think that it is real humans who became the mummies.



"Backs" (1967-80)

<http://www.abakanowicz.art.pl/seated/-seated.php>

### LOUISE BOURGEOIS (1911- 2010 in Paris, France)

Though her works are abstract, they are suggestive of the human figure and express themes of betrayal, anxiety, and loneliness. Her work was wholly autobiographical. Before presenting few descriptions of Louise Bourgeois' artworks, I would like to quote some thoughts of the artist that inspired me in my professional experience.

"The people I like most are interested in portraiture, the symbolic and recognizable unique essence of a person. I on the other hand am interested in the portraiture of a relationship, how a relationship can be twisted, the effect people have on each other

"A lot of people are so obsessed by the past, they die of it. This is the attitude of the poet who never finds the lost heaven, and it is really the situation of an artist who works for the reason that nobody can quite grasp. Except that they might want to reconstruct some things from the past. It is the past for certain people has such a hold and such a beauty. You cannot arrest the present. Every day you just have to abandon the past. And accept it. And if you can't accept it

than you have to recreate it. Which is exactly what I have been doing. I am not a surrealist I am an existentialist.”

**“I need memories they are my documents..... if you are going to them – you are wasting your time. Nostalgia is not productive. If they come to you- they are the seeds for sculpture.” - Louise Bourgeois. "Three Horizontals" , Ophrys 2011**



Numerous cells, spaces, interiors -an installation “Cells” of the artist. All these spaces, rooms are breathing with the personality of an author containing her fears and pains. Different parts of the body carved from marble are exposed situated in the interiors. Sometimes it is two small hands holding each other posed in the corner of the old table, they are full of expression we are seeing by imagining the face and the closed eyes and cracked figure which these hands belong to. The table is surrounded by the chairs which are holding big glass spheres. It seems that those abstract forms are also characters who are staring at the “hands’ character”. Immediately we are building the story. Stage design is so active that it animates our mind without moving the objects.

There is enormous ear which is occupying another room , it is laying in bed and listening...the walls of the room are made of the doors, shut doors and the ear is still listening.

In the third room we find the bed again and body made of marble is screaming out of pain, we don't see the head, it is drowned in the surface of the bed, which is embroidered with words :” I love you”. All those objects, sculptures are motionless but the position they are posed, the context that envelopes them makes bright stories, that moves us, making theatre narrative in our heads, giving us space and time to feel and to imagine.

She is not interested in body itself, she is interested in its mechanic: how legs are moving , how head moves on the neck, how shoulders are raising, how the hips are balancing and how they are letting feet to go in front, how the not attached hip is balancing on the body. How each articulation is the sign of the way to move of the person, of the people together or one against each other, their attitude to each other.



"Cells" 1986

Another example comes from the book by Kenneth Gross „ The Dream Of The Moving Statues“. The beginning of the film of Charlie Chaplin „City Lights“ is analyzed by the American scholar.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5uS7ZHCD2Q> (first minutes of the film 0:00-04:10)

“The scene is a public square, where a group of important citizens has assembled for the unveiling of the statue „Peace and Prosperity“. After the great ceremony, the canvas is pulled back, and the Tramp is found sleeping in the lap of the central female figure of the group. Crowed is shocked by the Tramps literalism. A Tramp in the hands of „prosperity“. About what kind of prosperity we are talking, there is alive evidence that not all is so happy. Tramp becomes the stain, the wound. Tramp certainly tries to escape and he also discovers the statue itself becoming „animated“ in a different way. Empty symbol of charity, the statue becomes a thing that trips and entraps the Tramp as he tries to make his escape from the public eyes. The sword of one figure comically catches his pants, impales him, he slides off the lap of the „mother“ leaving him suspended helplessly in midair. The statue, than, becomes an enemy, and the Tramp one of „ those whom the statue torture and keep down“ .

His final ironic mastery of the monumental sign comes when he can make one of the stone figures speak silently for him.. He is in such a position towards the finger that we have an impression that figure says something to him. It is only the Tramp’s signifying stillness and motion that invests the figures with what expressive life they have beyond little public allegory, whether it is life of a comforter or an attacker.” - Kenneth Gross



### 2.1.2. SCULPTURE IN ACTION

As I mentioned before the alliance of the dead and alive body on stage is very common today. Here I would like to share one example that strongly inspired me. It is the dance performance made by today very active and successful artists – AKRAM KHAN and SIDI LARBI. The performance that I want to speak about is called „Zero Degrees“ made in 2005.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1g5fLqsSQWU>

Two alive man performers are dancing, often moving simultaneously. Later two figures of the dummies are coming to our view. Figures are white, neutral (work of the sculptor Antony Gormley). Bodies of the dummies are treated as they would be dead people or even corpses, we ignore their neutral/ not realistic appearance. We accept the convention that they are real because of the attitude towards them...After a while one of the alive man starts to assimilate with one of the dummies stronger and stronger. There are not anymore two dead bodies – there are three of them and all of them are alive. Even though they are not equal. (One of the alive man executes all the behavioral movements and gestures of the dead dummies/ figures and himself in flesh and blood is treated by the second alive man as the dead one. On the one hand this alive- dead one is equal with two dead figures, but we are interested in him much more than in dummies.

He is dead but we feel special connection he has, special relation towards alive- alive one. We can read that he is still so present and so „ alive“ in the life of the alive- alive man.

Two dummies are playing very important role here, by their dead nature they strongly emphasize life, they give great importance to the third „dead“ one, making him very present here and now with his spirit and at the same moment helping us to understand that he is dead in his body.

In my opinion this piece of theatre is wonderful example of the use of no animated figures, which are characters but mainly they are the tools to enrich the characters of alive personages to make the content deeper and to fulfill the story with metaphors. It is very clear and strong when in front of you there are two figures who behave and move in the same way, just one is human being and another is a dummy. Human being becomes special, becomes more alive than he is just because we compare life of his body with the artificial thought alive one. We start to ask questions, why role is the same and nature is different of the two figures.



"Zero Degrees" 2005

GISELE VIENNE (born 1961)

The following text is my translation of the French article written by Gisele Vienne on the subject that interests me, that is on the use of mannequins and dummies in theatre performances. ( the article was published from the magazine issued by institute international de la marionette "Alternatives Theatrale 80 OBJET- DANSE")

"Erotism, death and mechanical :about the experience of work around subjects as body and artificial body.

The work we want to share about is in the first place the meeting of two artistic disciplines, the dance and the puppetry art, each of them is dealing with body, but through different mediums- alive body and object. The approach of these two mediums ,mutually influenced by each other, body and artificial body , inspired us to go from doll to body and from puppetry art to dance.

The question which provoked the confrontation between those two mediums seems to us fundamental on what is concerning the reflection on image, opinion, actual perception that we have of the body, the way we transform it in order to idealize it, dehumanize it or diminish it till the object level. The approach of the body toward the object is mainly modified by the urban perception of the body. The objects and machines are becoming alive, when the body at the same moment has a tendency to dehumanize itself ( becomes dead). And if in art the body went from the state of mechanical body to free(liberalized) body, it is currently experiencing an extension beyond the field of living and proceeds to a mixture of real and unreal.

First of all it is the passion towards dolls, masks and other anthropomorphic objects which leads us from philosophy and plastic arts towards puppetry art. We wanted, before all other questions, to examine the significance that artificial body could have on the stage. If this questioning is not the exclusivity of the puppets, the treatment of this subject, in any case ,seems to us raised from the base of the art of puppetry.

It can be seen however that it is treated with much more consisted way in other artistic fields like literature and fine art and is evoked(opened) in many theoretical works which quote artistic works, and almost never quote puppetry works. The questions related to object are often considered as the second rate after the interest in virtues technique of object manipulation. Contrary, the field of actual choreography already went through that step and seems to question its own material as the priority, the body, consequently creating work through the medium technique.

We work anyway as the puppeteers and plastic artists, integrating our work into the field of choreography. We are developing this hybrid work since 1999 without troubling ourselves about primary way "artistic genre". In the base of our interrogation is the relation between the body out of flesh and anthropomorphic objects, and it advanced well our reflection on artificial body , which leads our work, where pieces of literature, philosophy, fine art and others are leaving their marks. We evoke questions that we posed to ourselves while making our three creations and after we are trying to analyze and theorize the way we have done it.

#### SPLENDID Towards dancing theatre

The experience related with staging of the text by Jean Genet lets us to develop physical relation between human and mannequin. We would like to work on interpretation of the mastery technique of the body, which would develop the signs/gesture vocabulary mixing fluent movements and movements which are reminding the artificial. This is how we connected our first work with the dancer, and our collaboration hasn't been broken since than.

The dancer always seeks to avoid his centre of gravitation, which couldn't happen that's what touches us the most. Contrary, the puppet, in order to be closer to the human gesticulation, seeks to construct its own gravity centre. There is the confrontation of one who searches for the imaginary balance and the other one who plays by losing it.

The plays of Jean Genet invite us to find new forms of theatre or metaphors more than reality let us to express the feeling underlined in his texts. The dancing body doesn't express any interiority, it is him, all on surface which is interiority. And it is the same for the puppet. Both of them, free from psychology are turning around the figure who is the image of interiority and invites the visual development of this theatre. From this moment puppets and dancers, more exist through their gestures than through words, creating the metaphor of the thought.

From life to death

During last hours that were left for them to live, the gangsters of the play are going through very different states/conditions. They found themselves in entire freedom which was created by closeness of the death. This slow approach toward the end made them crazy, the trouble appeared from interference between alive one and inert one.

The appearance of the mannequins gives the possibility of the confusion in certain moment between human and puppet-mannequin. It was left to discover the common gestures, stylized and far from naturalism, that dancer and puppet can unite in the common unreal/ ghost state. Their movements vary/oscillate between immobility which came from his anxiety and mobility which is provoked by the moment of craziness and playfulness: oscillation between clean / proper movements of mannequin and those specific ones of the dancer.

The contrast which defines the characters of the gangsters comes from the distinction between what they are and what they seem to be, between their appearance and their movement. Little by little they betrayed given image of the gangsters and let themselves cowardly flowing into game and femininity. This change from alive to dead is not only the passage from actor to puppet but also passage from one state to another. Splendid reminds us the feeling Jean Genet has to theatre: "If we contradict life and stage, we have an inclining that stage is the place near death where all the freedoms are possible. ( Jean Genet, letters to Roger Blin)

Showroom dummies 2001

"The Loves" by (Leopold von Sacher- Masoch) is our source. Women are trembling only because of the confusion with cold statues in the moon light, or because of the paintings in the shadow.(...) the masochistic scenes need to freeze like sculptures or paintings, to double themselves in sculptures or paintings, to redouble in the mirror and reflection."

Gilles Deleuze, " presentation of Sacher-Masoch", in Leopold von Sacher- Masoch, La Venus a la Fourrure.



"Showroom dummies" 2001

Inert ion or disorder , disturbance of the mechanical.

In this new work we were interested in the border between animated and non animated, as relation between alive and its representation in the imaginary erotic field. The creation of the artificial body poses the question about imaginative and real, and so about the perception we have in our body.

In the SHOWDUMMIES, we were interested in very human appearance of the mannequins from the showcase, in their character as humanized object, and reference they maintain in gestures and presentation of the body, which oscillate from humanized to dehumanized, followed by electronic music. This relation is sensible which links our choreography work and electronic music.

The echoes between music, choreography and plastic representation can result similar sensibility, where emotions born from the effective punctual reference , minimal or explosive , in the dehumanized , artificial and mechanic context, in other words touching.

In this work we examine the disorder which can create the inertia of being, till we disturb the social mechanism and generate the upheaval in the environment. Relying on the characters as Yvone from Witold Gombrowicz (Yvone , the princess of Bourgogne) and Wanda from Leopold Von Sacher- Masoch (La Venus a la Fourrure) We approach the themes which are related to these characters, repulsion and erotism in connection with appearance and immobility, though there is slipping in of the submission for the passive resistance. We play with women- dolls and with the dolls like with the objects for torture sometimes, or like untouchable by others icons. We also work on the movements driven by the dynamic, which comes from disorder which raises erotism and repulsion towards inertia. The mannequin is destined to be the representation of the good man who resident the imperfect copy raised by his own troubles.



The distance is short from the illusion till confusion when it comes to representation of humans, comes the doubt about the soul of the object. Mannequin and human reflect each other, like inside oscillation of human being between to be yourself and the appearance. With the help of choreography the stylized body can go further from usual body and approach more to imaginary body, represented by artificial body. The choreography mixes the bodies of the dancers and of those artificial ones – mannequins into common language.”

## SMASH THEATRE

I would like to present the way the French theatre company Smash Theatre used the dummies in their two performances. The first piece is based on Franz Kafka’s “The Penal Colony”. The story is about one crazy and cruel officer who tries to prove to the whole world that his torture and killing machine is the genius invention. He believes that the use of it must never stop. He demonstrates to the traveler uniqueness and need of that machine on the poor soldier. The soldier was not fed for couple of days and is already half dead because of the fear. Soldier is the human size puppet, quite realistically made mannequin. Puppet is almost unanimated (I mean there is no puppeteer behind it) , but he is treated by actors like alive person, very weak but alive. He is fed, he is transported from one place to another, and actors are talking to him. The strong impression that he is alive and connection is raising in audience though the puppet is unanimated, doesn’t have its “independent” will. In my opinion the choice to use puppet in this case is very right because of physical condition of the stage character.

Second performance of the same company is about the war in Bosnia. Everything is happening on the four square meters piece of black earth. Two actresses retell their story and the story of the very land they are standing on. During the performance the piece of earth is charging with more and more stories. In the very end it becomes the cemetery. Actresses revealing human heads (human size, realistic heads), that are carefully put in front of us, forming the cemetery. They don’t talk, they don’t move. But

they finish to “retell” the story just by their presence. And their silent monologue is touching us till the deepness of our being.



“Une terre étroite” 2012

#### PERSONAL EXPERIENCE (staging puppet theatre performance)

There was an old dream of mine to make puppet theatre performance with non-animated puppets, almost sculptures. There was a favorite text of the moment „Hunger Artist“ by Franz Kafka. I decided to connect those two „ideas“ in one show. While creating the performance the notion of impossibility of connecting these two things came to me. Why:

While adapting the short story of Kafka I decided that the main character must be Hunger Artist and he will be represented by the puppet. By this time I haven't yet

deepen enough into my subject and did not quite realize what roles are playing sculptures in theatre: who are they there, whom they represent, how they „ talk“/ express.

I justified my choice of passive puppet/ sculpture by physical condition of the main character. He is trying to achieve hunger record, he is very weak, almost motionless and he is constantly in passive condition of being, along the whole show he has been waiting. But theatre- is active. Things have to happen in front of the audience not just be present in its final condition, and even passive behavior has to be strong and in active state. Specially main character has to be a core, a center of this activeness, its motor. I was planning and imagining that attitude of actors towards the main character performed by puppet could tell us about him, his feelings and his drama by creating situations around him to make him „active“, expressing strong feelings without physically moving. After having tried several scenes, I came to the conclusion that this very main character has to have its own will, has to act „himself“, that it is not enough-behavior of actors to make him alive (I believe that in some cases it is possible, I think I was not ready at that moment for this challenge of big work with actors, and right adaptation of the story). In our case main character had to be alive, it is his story happening here and now, that's why he can't remain motionless figure. Even though he is very weak man, who hasn't eat ten months he stays alive: breathes, acts/looks, reacts...

Non animated puppets can't be the participants of this action here and now on the rights of the alive characters. They are embodying memories: figures of somebody alive in the past, figures of somebody imaginary, and figures of fiction doubles. If we give these figures such a role they can be the inhabitants of today on the stage, they can be the subjects of the stories, even main characters, around whom is turning all the actions and happening all drama. In case of our choice main character was still alive personage, so I had to imitate his liveliness, to give him will and in the puppetry language it means to give him movement.

### **3.Roles of the motionless figures in theatre.**

There is a strong convention in puppet theatre that everything can become alive. Even object, even statue, which doesn't move. The question is just in what context it is used, does it transmit the idea we wanted to bring and is there sense, is it believable. I would like to concentrate just on anthropomorphic statues/ figures, to examine situations, places , worlds were their existence as „somebody „ would be possible and motivated.

If from the very beginning to agree that the figure is just the semblance of someone, without pretension and convention, without self evident thinking that figure / puppet is alive than it becomes clear that this kind of characters who is represented by statue can't be inhabitant of here and now.

With the help of different means we can put life into it. But this life is from another world- world of memory, imagination, delirium, etc. The dead material who resembles a real person, could work stronger by just being what it is – being not alive, figure who reminds alive one in the past , it is in someway truthful. It gets more connection with life, with us. And if we want to put life into that dead one it gets another quality/ meaning of this „life“. It is alive in non-physical way ... we are just expressing visualizing it materially. We are not simply talking about the person- we are showing the figure who functions like a model of the character. Figures like that could serve being doubles of the real character, could be heteronyms, living in person's mind, could be doubles from different periods of his time (childhood, oldness); figures could be people from our memory who doesn't exist in the reality of the context, figures could be imaginary people. As these characters made out of motionless statues don't pretend to become alive characters of here and now we could retell their stories without animating them literally, not giving a will to them, but simply acting towards them, around them. It is enough for them to be present. We can feel for these figures, see real characters in them when in their emotionally charged stillness we can guess and recognize real condition of alive person- examples: tired body , apathetic body, weak body... also real condition of alive body in the past like dead body ... , the memory of the body...

## SOURCE MATERIAL

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