THUR 18 FEB – SUN 21 FEB 2016 8PM

ANOTHER OTHER

MEAT MARKET, 5 BLACKWOOD STREET, NORTH MELBOURNE

NATASHA ANDERSON • SABINA MASELLI
ANTHONY PATERAS • ERKKI VELTHEIM

BOOKINGS: CHAMBERMADEOPERA.COM
ANOTHER OTHER: BODIES OF MATERIAL

Bo Byun

A cadaver wrapped in black plastic tights in the corner like a snake with its head cut off. Ticking erratically, this animated corpse offers a counterpart to the digital clocks at opposite ends of the space. Facing each other, the clocks mark the time, which seems like a reminder. Another Other opens with a montage formed from the faces of the artists, layered and blended together in classic black and white, mirroring an iconic shot from the Ingmar Bergman film "Persona". The show is presented with a description as a critical interpretation of the film, which was written and directed by Ingmar Bergman and released in 1966.

The word persona comes from ancient Greek, meaning literally 'by-sound'. It refers to the masks worn by theatre so that they would not be recognised and could take on the characters at hand. The film, fittingly given its title, centres on the psychological relationship between two women, a mute actor and her nurse. Gradually there is a blurring of their identities, as there is with the voices of the artists behind Another Other – Natasha Anderson, Sabina Maselli, Anthony Pateras and Erkki Veltheim.

In Bergman’s essay “The SnakeSkin”, written the year before the film was released and now included as a prologue to the screenplay, he describes art as akin to a snake skin full of arts – the snake itself is long since dead, cut out from within, deprived of its poison; but the skin moves, filled with busy life.1 Knowing this, it seems that the body in the corner is that of art itself, at least as art in a sphere of importance to public life. Art as it existed when tied to the ritual of religion and the representation of the world, prior to the death of god and installation of capital in his place. Art before the culture of modernism. Art continues and is still worthwhile, the director argues, but “the artist is on an equal footing with every other creature who exists for his own sake... in selfish fellowship on the warm, dirty carpet of history”.2 Although structured according to the scenes of the film, and matching its duration exactly, Another Other takes little of the film’s content. Instead, it reinterprets that content with a work for video and sound, inserting both images and empty space into the gaps between the scenes.3 It questions the politics of art, gender and identity running through both it and its forebear. The question is the identities and the relevance of the artists to their fragments. The viewer is given questions about the natures of identity itself. Taking up an invitation included in the screenplay for readers and spectators to do as they wish with the material the film provides, they fill the roles of artists, cutting out the director’s work from within such that all that remains is its skin.

Another Other is a deeply collaborative work but nonetheless the artists assume particular roles. Maselli manipulates projections on multiple screens, including live processing of 16mm film, as well as controlling an array of video and sound around the main screen. Anderson and Pateras contribute sound. Veltheim plays violin with some processing using the pitch-tracking method.4 Although situated around the centre of the film, Anderson and Veltheim take centre stage. Early in the piece a brief respite comes in the form of a recital of the Chanconne from Bach’s Partita for Violin No. 2.5 This is accompanied by a montage of shots of the four artists reminiscent of those used in television soap operas. A piece widely considered one of the most beautiful and profound works in the genre, it is presented in an artistic context by the camera and Maselli’s performance. Gradually recognisable bodies emerge in the projections. A camera pans slowly across a woman’s legs stretched out on a textural backdrop. Layers of hands and faces follow. Bodies are presented as landscapes. Layered with other landscapes and visual effects, these bodies appear weathered, perhaps transformed.6 All of the artists’ bodies are featured in the video but that is not as individual as I might like to think. I am a player who wears a persona, or rather many personas that, like, Another Other, cannot be experienced completely. Michel Serres writes, playing with the nuances of French, “I am nobody in particular, it is not a singularity, it has no contours, it is the blankness of all colors and all nuances, an open and transient welcome of a multiplicity of thoughts... I am nobody”.7 The French for nobody is personne. I thus write with, is not myself – I am another, other, nobody. The film finishes with a flash of light followed by the unspooling of film and a young boy reaching out to the blurred image of a woman’s face, someone familiar but out of reach. The show, meanwhile, ends in darkness with Maselli turning off her projector and packing up the film. The clocks tick slowly up and down until they have reversed positions.

Notes

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