

Weaver of Past Potentials

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The first iteration of Weaver of Past Potentials was prepared as a commission for the EKO Triennial 2021, which was held in the spaces of a former textile factory (MTT) in Maribor, Slovenia. Using the backdrop of the textile factory with its historical, yet not so distant memory of thriving place of export and production in former Yugoslavia, the film refers to the nation's very complex contemporary relationship with its socialist past. The factory, for many, remains representative of a golden era having provided supporting social care, health care, education, cultural programmes, were among only some of the facilities available onsite to employees.

Weaver of Past Potentials is a story of political and social amnesia interacting with illusory readings. As we hear a voice interrogate the multi-layered opacities of memory, whilst showing only a curtained space, we are confronted with an overwhelming absence.

Script

The audience trickles into the dark space, lit ever so slightly by the blinking whites of the eyes of actors, standing with their backs pressed against the walls on both sides of the nearly perfectly square stage. Once the audience is seated, the actors position themselves in a row between the audience and the lifted stage, blocking their view. The actors – or, as we shall refer to them, Witnesses – begin to whisper loudly enough to be heard. They are repeating a sentence:

A silence so immemorial, it shatters the glass roof of the theatre of memory.

A silence so immemorial it shatters the glass roof, of the theatre of memory.

Each time it is repeated, a different delivery is attempted.

A silence... so immemorial it shatters the glass roof of the theatre of memory; a future industrial landscape.

The Witnesses break their straight line of defence, opening like a Curtain. The Witnesses, now mimicking the role of the Curtain.

The Curtain begins to draw open. The Witnesses are now the Curtain, wearing a heavy fabric. As they extend their arms, the fabric falls to the ground, draping into the shape of a curtain, their shoulders forming the round drapes. The Curtain behaving as a border, an armour, a wall between the audience and the Witnesses, protecting the view of the mechanics of the theatre. An imitation of reality, a mimicking of imitation.

They stand close to each other, leaning on each other, nudging back and forth to prevent the other from falling over, but also trying ever so hard to solemnly play their role in creating the motion of the curtain. It feels as though they are struggling to maintain their balance on a surface that is shifting, an unstable stage. The Curtain draws all the way around. As the Curtain draws open, it draws closed; one end attempting to reveal, and the other to conceal.

A sudden break in the movement.

The theatre of history presents itself as a bold structure, towering high, with a wheel spinning around its core. On pedestals and plinths, it crumbles and adjusts the form it is producing, continuously. Tinkering and stabilizing. Weaving, and constructing leaps: past-present, past-future.

And the immemorial silence, it lies between the tree of memory and the bark of history. Or in the space between that piece of chewing gum sprawled on the ground and the pavement that has become its permanent home. Its surface like Plato's ball of wax, a landscape of imprints of the past.

The Witnesses chant again, 'On this stage stands a machine so skilful it can create new knowledge, which can protect the fragile body from harm and also heal an open wound.' Shuffling back and forth again they continue, 'This machine can build bold structures that will change the course of future

histories. Imagine a world where we can build machines that create memories of a future for us...' One of the Witnesses stumbles to regain their footing; bodies are so close, feet are being trampled at this point.

This situation repeats itself. Repetition, after all, is the key to everything.

While the Witnesses have little control, they quite happily perform the role of the curtain. They return to their chants.

'There is no instrument of the past as great as the document of culture. It is as barbaric in its attempts at representation as is the subject of its representation.'

The Witnesses in their draped clothing carefully break their poses. There's an intermission. They can't leave their position; their movements have been carefully curated. Instead, they slouch and lean on each other, allowing the weight of their own bodies to be supported. Anxieties of nostalgia and revisionism seep in, weighing down the air.

The audience trickles back in for the final act of the Prologue.

The Witnesses resume their upright positions. Still sore from the previous act, they attempt to stretch out their limbs while remaining motionless. It is only in the expressions of their faces that we notice they are actually moving.

The Curtain moves again, this time reciting with the movement of the machine.

'Do not mourn, for even in memory there is no return. Memory is poison
And History is a fool's cup of tea, comforting only at the right temperature.
Culture could perhaps be our Trojan horse, or our Angel's trumpet.

Forgetting is poison, which works for a short time but causes pain when you sober up.'

Their words linger in the air as the audience watches closely, edging on their seats, either from excitement or boredom.

Motionless at this point. Caught in the history of future potentials.

‘There is a history to every movement and motion; it is trans-generational inheritance. The memory of a past that is not recognised, but remembered, adopted, adapted – yet only ever verging on becoming forgotten. Rotations and winding threads of history's labour on the spinning wheels of future potential will become our mode of operating.’

An audience member comments, ‘This reminds me of that story of Louis XIV being presented with a garment made by some version of this machine the Witnesses speak of. It tore into shreds.’

The Witnesses move, reposition themselves, and continue.

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