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Deflorian/Tagliarini. Progetto Reality (2011)

rzeczy/things

Concept and performance Daria Deflorian and Antonio Tagliarini.
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Organization and communication Filipe Viegas.
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Reality

Concept and performance Daria Deflorian e Antonio Tagliarini.
Starting with Mariusz Szczygieł's REALITY reportage.
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Deflorian/Tagliarini. Progetto Reality. Presentation

by *Lorenzo Guerrieri*

rzeczy/things

The stage is littered with cardboard boxes, as before or after a move. Here and there different objects emerge from the boxes. Daria Deflorian and Antonio Tagliarini roam between the boxes and objects.

The short performance is a takeoff on *Reality*, a book by Polish writer Mariusz Szczygieł, who narrates the 748 diaries in which a woman, Janina Turek, noted every minute detail of forty years of her life, translating her experiences into numbers, lists and catalogues.

In *rzeczy*, as in *Reality*, there is a powerful consistency with and resemblance to the style of direction, drama and acting used in *Rewind*. If in *Rewind* the conversation of the pair sprang from the vision of the “invisible” *Café Müller*, here the objects stimulate the dialogue as hypothetical clues leading us inside Janina’s “reality.”

Daria Deflorian starts with an account of Janina Turek’s death in the street. The actress tries to imagine the scene, the passers-by, the ambulance. Daria muses that at some time after Janina’s death her daughter must have gathered all her belongings. Meanwhile Antonio rummages in the boxes. He takes out, for example, an old video camera and when he points it at the Daria she recalls an old nursery school photo in which she failed to recognize herself.

With Janina’s story placed on hold, the items the two find in the boxes (which in the theatrical fiction are imagined to be the woman’s) spark a subdued dialogue between them, made up of short narratives and brief personal recollections. Daria recalls, for example, what used to be said about Marlon Brando, that his acting was inspired by objects. We are told about Janina’s diaries, that she recorded everything she ate each day, and all the trips she took, even just a stroll across town. From the boxes the two extract knick-knacks (one of which is handed to a spectator), elementary school notebooks, old photos (Daria says she loves pictures of strangers and shows the front row spectators some of those photos that she and Antonio actually found somewhere) and music recordings. While Lou Reed’s *Perfect Day* plays on the phonograph the two continue to

talk and joke with each other, inaudible beneath the music.

Daria then says that among Janina's things there must also be items that had belonged to her ex-husband after their divorce. Meanwhile, new objects emerge from the boxes: shoes that Daria tries on, a mechanical horse that Antonio trots around the stage.

The performance ends as it began, quietly. The dialogue of the two actors leaps from one topic to another, superficially serious, from recalling a life experience to a scene from a movie and a sentence from a book. Daria says that Janina would have liked her motto to be: "I want to be true."

Reality

Reality develops, modifies and expands the *rzeczy* project, emptying the stage of the objects and boxes and keeping as fundamental references, on the one hand, Janina Turek's minutely detailed diaries, postcards and notes, and on the other, the fantasies and surmises the actors confabulate about her actual daily life, with the core question about this "reality" and the possibility of communicating it.

Along the right side of the stage there are a small armchair, two straight-backed chairs and a coffee table. At the center of the empty stage Daria Deflorian and Antonio Tagliarini rehearse Janina Turek's death from a heart attack on a Cracow street in 2000. The two aren't satisfied with their various attempts, they fall and get up again, joke, try to imagine that day, her collapse, a passerby running over to her. But it's too difficult to portray, and Daria laughs at Antonio's attempts to act the part of the passerby. Antonio finally decides to use a blanket to cover the unseen woman's body. What did she think of in that instant? Antonio imagines she gazed at a tree there in front of her, as for the first time. Daria fancies that maybe Janina recalled that moment many years earlier when, as she was wiping her shoes on the mat outside her door, she decided to start writing her diaries, to record every concrete detail of her life. Those 748 diaries that collect forty years of her life and that Mariusz Szczygiel's Reality book narrates.

"I want to write the facts and just the facts, just reality," Janina decides: even the return of her husband from Auschwitz is a fact noted without comment or emotion. Daria imagines the city of Cracow occupied by the Communists as she arranges the coffee table with a vase of flowers and a plate before Antonio, while he peels an orange, eats bread and explains that Janina noted every single lunch, dinner or breakfast, as well as every encounter, gift, everything she read, even people she caught passing glimpses of.

The two actors go from describing some of these events, as Janina noted and numbered them, to repeatedly imagining scenes of her daily life. All the little monologues that follow concentrate on concrete details of her everyday life. They try, for example, to reconstruct her Sunday morning, spent in solitude, remote control in hand, seated in her armchair before the TV, watching those programs that would later be included in the "TV programs watched" list of her diaries. Suddenly the remote goes on the blink. Daria starts railing in Polish, harsh but moderate, perhaps as the elderly Janina would have. Antonio then circles the armchair, imagining himself in the body of the seventy-nine year-old woman, hump-backed and alone, clueless as to how to kill the time.

They resume the list of diary notes, "special events" of all kinds, from a swim to the purchase of a cup at a McDonald's lunch. Daria has an instant of bewilderment: "It isn't true," she says, interrupting the story of a small chance event (Janina, while watching a Fidel Castro parade from her window, is distracted by bending over to pick up a pencil, and so misses the passage of Castro) which she is actually inventing.

But the two keep inventing: a chance encounter on a tram between Janina and Tadeusz Kantor, the Polish director, maybe on his way back from a tour of *The Dead Class*: two elderly people who don't know each other, exchanging a glance.

A long monologue by Daria follows, summarizing the meaning of Janina's diaries, their absolute precision, ink and handwriting that remain unchanged over the years, the most meticulous records. Daria points out and lists the five-digit amount of many of the events catalogued. Then Daria and Antonio cite the existence of the 3000 postcards that Janina sent to herself, reading some of them to the spectators, with their typical lucid dryness. Again they raise the issue of the day of Janina's death. We know from her diaries, the actors state, the exact names of the TV programs she watched the day before.

Another thing we know is that when Janina died no one knew at all about her diaries.

The show ends with a monologue by Daria while she is hidden behind the blanket. Daria describes a Balinese dance which takes place just behind a curtain: the dancers prepare impeccable, meticulous choreographies and makeup.

The show takes place entirely behind the curtain. Daria wonders about the spectators, "What do you see?"