

Exploring shock (value) in Vienna

Me and my class travelled to Vienna for a week to go to workshops and performances. We went to the Albertina modern museum to see the Marina Abramović exhibition. It was showcasing some of her works. In many of them there is some shock value. Often they require a lot of mental resilience to be able to keep to the score. For example in one of the pieces they were riding a car in a circle for hours upon hours. Many of them also include some self-harm and there were also pieces where the audience had to step in and save her. At times I felt that I got sucked into the shock instead of understanding the piece or its context.

Next encounter with some provocative material was when we went to watch ANTI-MUSE – *to those yet to come* by ANDREA VEZGA ACEVEDO, IRIS OMARI ANSONG, MIRABELLA PAIDAMWOYO* DZIRUNI, MANGORANGES and CHERELLA GESSEL. In the piece they use twerk and whine as movement material. As I felt the piece itself wasn't so provocative, but it's dependent on who is watching it. Through a christian shame based purity culture lens, the piece has some shock value, but through another lens it might not. What I found the most shocking was the audience's reaction. There was a part where the music was more upbeat and the performers were also getting faster and more energetic. The audience started screaming in encouragement, which in this kind of a theater space felt unusual. It broke the rule that in a theater you sit quietly until the performance is over.

We took the Tuning Class by Malcolm Manning. It was a class based on somatic work. First half of the class we were doing walking based exercises often focusing on spirals in the body. Around half way through the class, once again my expectations were defied. We were instructed to lay down on a mat with a blanket, so that we won't get cold, which makes sense, but I was a bit flabbergasted. I hadn't been in a dance class before where we're laying down with blankets. That wasn't on my bingo card. How can something so simple and functional still cause this kind of a reaction?

We had a discussion with Ádám Czirák. Before it, though, we were asked to watch some videos. I went in blind, having zero information what kind of videos I was about to witness. The first video was a clip of Apollon by Florentina Holzinger, where a naked woman is putting a nail into her nasal cavity with a hammer. In the discussion we briefly talked about the freakshow-like nature of the video. Humans are cautious creatures and shocking things have some power to captivate our attention. Somehow I'm reminded of Gladiator shows in ancient Rome. Yet again I arrive at the question of purpose. If things are done purely for the shock value, is there enough depth in it? If there is depth and it brings things to something shocking, how to not let the shock overpower the message? Do these questions matter at all? Does a good piece need something intense?

We "saw" Tino 'seghal's *This Variation*. It was in a pitch black room where the performers were singing and dancing around the audience. Being in a completely dark unfamiliar room with unfamiliar people can be intense at first. After a while though I started craving for a change, which never came. It's interesting how our relation to a situation can change so fast.



Counting the rice at the Abramović exhibition