



ME~NOVENTI

# Ubiq

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Directed by Gianni Farina

Music Stefano De Ponti

With Consuelo Battiston, Alessandro Miele - *distribution to be confirmed*

Production



EMILIA ROMAGNA TEATRO FONDAZIONE  
TEATRO STABILE PUBBLICO REGIONALE



PROSPERO



ME~NOVENTI

# Ubiq

Ubiq is, first of all, a labyrinth.

It is an atmosphere, a remote, but constantly approaching space; blurry but at the same time very clear.

It is a Chinese boxes game, a never ending narration where to get lost.

In other words: what is more similar to the impossible ubiquity than the bewilderment?

The forerunner of the bewilderment in modern literature is E.T.A. Hoffmann, whose echo is spread in the whole Europe, went through the nightmares of Russian novel and the visions of Villiers de l'Isle Adam and Kafka, until generating to the warped realities by P. Dick and D. Lynch.

With the intent to follow this thread that appears unexpected in different cultures and distant ages, we selected some recurring themes, some exemplar characters that we would like to regenerate, so to create a black novel of bewilderment.

My friends, the time has come to renewal your identity!  
Only one night at the theatre for Ubiq and your Ego will flourish!  
Yes, Ubiq! That new post-contemporary low-price show!  
Follow the instruction for a better use.

If the work of art pretends to reflect the world, we can't exempt ourselves from thinking up a "subtle fraud" to the detriment of the community, which is, in this case, the public.

The above mentioned fraud is a labyrinth of contexts in which the public loses the link between the narration and the form. The constant action of breaking the frames of the representation, and the rules linked to the spectacular form have the intent of leaving the spectator alone in the multitude and deprive him for a moment from the unnatural frame that we call reality.

It's about revealing a fraud through wiles and deceits.

We move towards the free game, modifying continuously the rules of the strictly structured and immutable game. A constant alteration of the scenic agreement, various levels of representation mixing up and overlapping: what should be look at? What are we missing?

Where is the show?

Everywhere.



## E.T.A. HOFFMANN

Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann (Königsberg, January 24th 1776 - Berlin, June 25th 1822) was a writer, composer, painter and German jurist, exponent of Romanticism.

As a lawyer he is employed in Prussia administration from 1796 to 1804, then from 1814 until his death. He is also an illustrator and painter, his independence and his taste for satire often cause serious trouble with his superiors, of whom he doesn't hesitate to make a caricature. Known with the name of Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann or E.T.A. Hoffmann, he begins his literary career as a music critic. Author of numerous short stories and novels, becomes one of the major figures of German Romanticism in France and inspiration for many artists in Europe as in the rest of the world

### The uncanny

With his text *The Sandman*, E.T.A. Hoffmann, provides Freud the key elements to develop the essay titled *The Uncanny*.

The ubiquity of the night shadow becomes the common denominator of every situation, the dream in terms of a struggle within ourselves, as an opponent intangible double are some features that create the suspended atmospheres and hypnotic that fascinate us of this artist.

But these suggestions are not the only reason of our interest in the German author: the coincidence between the investigation of the language that we have been developing in the past two years and the formal solutions adopted by Hoffmann are the primary cause and the engine behind this choice.

The restless nights that go back in the memory, drowning the characters of Hoffmann's tales in a feeling of remorse and delirium, are suddenly away from the reader, are no longer the center of the work.

Instead, what is really close to the reader is the author, who emerges from the text and imposes a critical distance, a detachment; Hoffman eludes the psychology in favor of actions and roles, and what is left is the technique of narration.

It is through the use of the game and its tools that he can create a work that catches the reader in its whole being, that surprises him, and, beyond the narration, creates a system that addresses to us, it concerns us.

We assume therefore his technique of writing on the writing as first stone in the creation of a labyrinth.

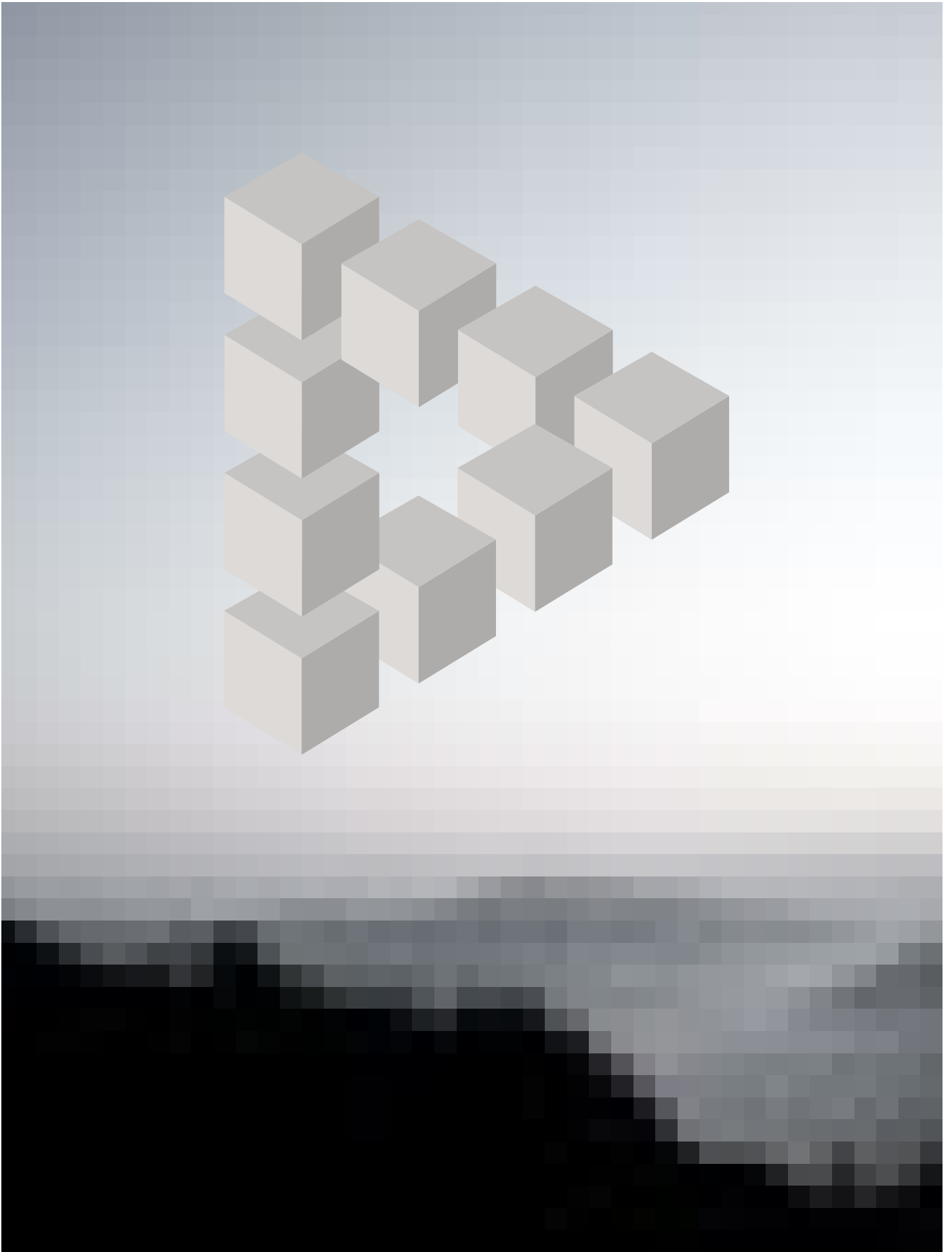
In *The Sandman*, as in other stories and novels that we use as a narrative pretext, the amazement comes mainly from the unexpected changes in perspective that from the happening in itself.

The time shift, the interlocking structure, the paradoxical double-figures that populate his vision and the tendency to repeat itself, are all elements that contribute more than the narration to transform reality into grotesque.

The structural complexity, we refer especially to the novel *The Devil's Elixir*, is the center of the work and the real link to a different perception of life.

The reality is complex and Hoffmann tries to grab it without oversimplification. The tortuous nature of his work does not delegate only to storyline the task to talk to the reader; it's the act of writing that is important, and our role as viewers becomes crucial.

Bewildered by "Hoffmann the fantastic", victims of his fraud, we would like to share with the witnesses of *Ubiq* an unusual space-time, so to get lost in the paradoxes of a play that questions the theater. We would like to show to the audience the unmasking of the techniques, putting them in a state of confusion, generating unusual perspectives and other possibilities.



## **THE SANDMAN (Der Sandmann – 1815)**

*“The plot, the characters and the theatrical action are a question of minor interest”*

Villiers de l'Isle-Adam

Our starting point is a text with its characters and its atmospheres.

A slight plot which has to be taken the flesh off. Its bone. Less. Its marrow, its essence.

The text is always a pre-text for us. Something where to start. Our necessity is to rewrite, to modify it according our current needs, to absorb and bombard it with further reflections and references, to chew it with our actors. So as to take possession of it and so that it may take possession of us. It is a kind of marriage open to likely infidelities.

The sandman is the first step and its plot is the first thread of the tissue.

It will be enriched, made fat and completed by a long series of thoughts.

The result will be the birth of a new dramaturgy.

### **Plot**

Everything starts with the terrible childish recollections of the student Nataniele. He is afraid of the stories about “the sandman” that he identifies with the lawyer Coppelius and his obscure statements: “Your eyes here! Your eyes here!”. The incessant and hateful presence of this ambiguous character throughout Nataniel's short life – a character presenting himself also as Giuseppe Coppola, optician and seller of barometers – will leave its mark on the main character's destiny. Far away from home, Nataniele purchases binoculars at Coppola's, through which he admires and falls in love with Olimpia, his neighbor's daughter, professor Spallanzani.

When he goes Spallanzani's home to ask for his daughter's hand, he finds him quarreling with Coppola because of Olimpia who turns out to be a lifeless doll. Nataniele gets crazy and he is sent to an asylum. Once recovered, he comes back home to his fiancé Clara and her brother, Lotario, with which he kept up a correspondence during his long stay at the hospital. One day he goes to a tower where so as to admire the view he finds the binoculars of Coppola in his pocket. When he uses them he sees his fiancé as the wooden doll, Olimpia, and he tries to throw her out of the tower. Lotario goes to her rescue and saves her. In the meantime, Nataniele continues to move convulsively until he recognizes the hated lawyer in the crowd and throws himself out of the windowsill.

### **Further suggestions**

Influenced by the ambience, the repetitions and the suspended atmospheres from Last Year at Marienbad (L'année dernière à Marienbad, 1961 – by Alain Robbe-Grillet and directed by Alain Resnais); by the humanity of trapped ghosts in The invention of Morel (Adolfo Bioy Casares – 1940); by the more than human android in Tomorrow's Eve (Villiers de l'Isle Adam – 1886) as well as by Hoffmann imagery. We will betray our point of reference with invasions and interventions. With that we will be cavies and victims of the experiment of creation.



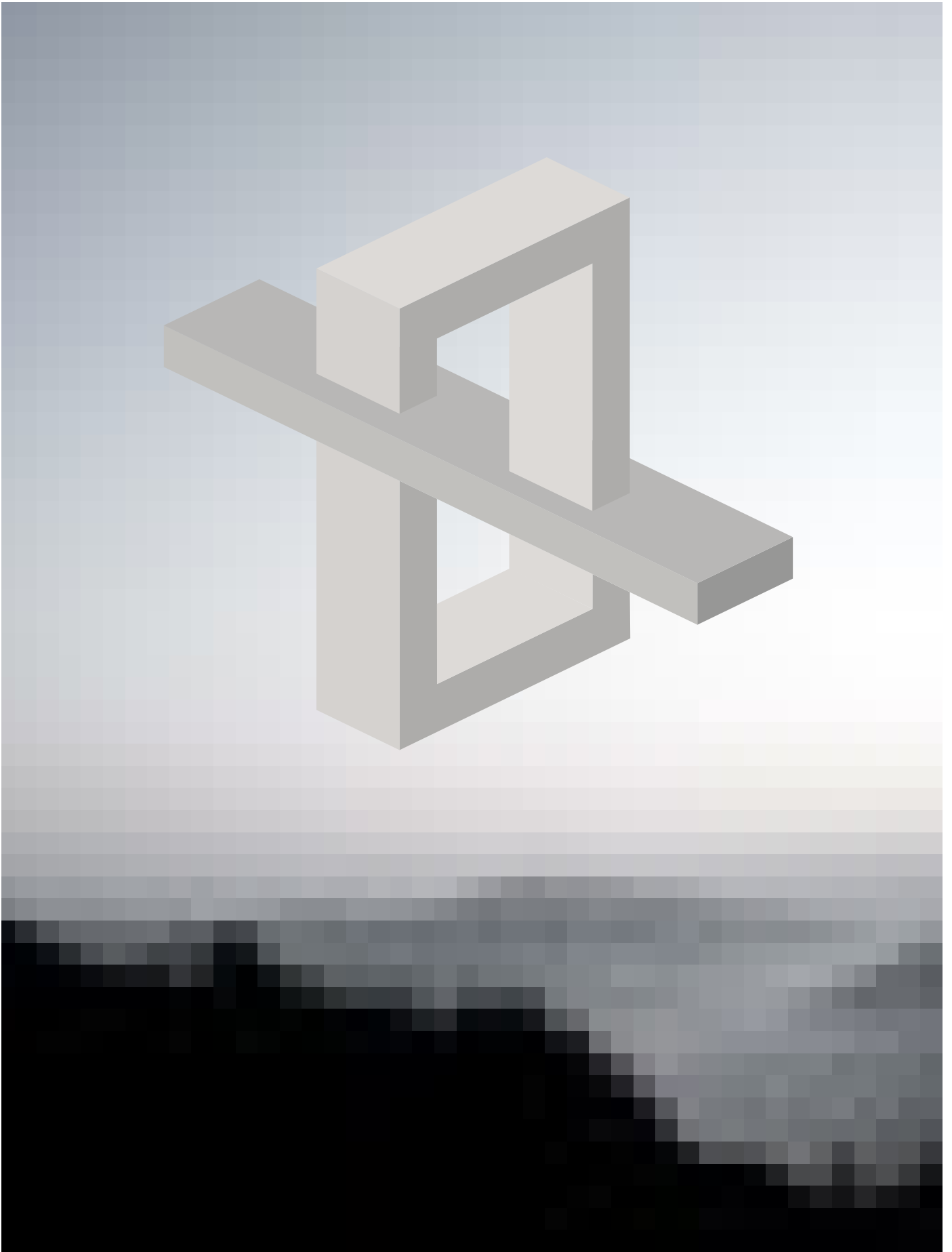
## THEMATIC GUIDELINES

The boredom, the grayness of everyday life and the sloth impend like contemporary Fate over our characters' dull life. The sense of annoyance that they feel pushes them to action, yet their body remains still, as if it was drawn into a dense liquid. It is sweet to be wrecked into a life made of indolence, to abandon the body to inaction, yet conscience does not accept it, she requires an action that elevates, she is not satisfied with boredom and hopes for a change. She throws herself, she soars herself. But nothing changes, since the distance between desire and action is tremendous.

Who is attempting to do the same are Hoffmann's middle-class figures, impoverished angels that turn their gaze up, towards a dreamed but already forgotten place, a place of which remains only the flavor, the scent of good. They preserve a certain elegance, an ancient elegance, last relic of a lost condition. Elegance in manners, in behavior. Like living statues they adorn the spaces, phantoms of a kafkian castle about to collapse. They live in the fog of a dull existence, devoid of any passion, any dream. Life is their own prison, the illusion of a change is the mortal wound and they end up being an army of individuals doomed to fail.

The only characters that manage to stand up among the shadows of these existences are grotesque, slimy, odd. As the only way to escape is downward, living at the bottom of a decadence from where we origin, choosing to be part of a beastlike, grotesque, evil existence, caricature of everyday life. These figures are part of the obscurity in which they live, they disquiet with their ambiguous identities, their excessive characteristics, their mysterious abilities. Yet they seem to be confident with their everyday life, they always occupy the steps of an upside down pyramid, embedded in the ground towards the deepest and farthest point of existence. They are skilled fiddlers able to open wide gashes in reality, demons bearers of anxiety and confusion.

And it is right this confusion what our enquiry is about, firmly persuaded that that is the passage towards another dimension, a dimension of ubiquity. A dimension in which common distinctions of everyday life get lost, in which contrapositions such as positive-negative, before-after, tall-short, logical-illogical do not make sense any more, in favour of a system in which everything exists simultaneously.



## THE ZONES

*“Everytime we discuss a frame that was given for granted, we find ourselves in a situation formally similar to the paradox. It is not only the reliability of the frame that collapses, but even our identity, our reliability.”*

M. Sclavi

We divided the theatrical action in Zones that will host different levels of representation, more or less close to the audience, that often generate sudden contextual gaps through the superimposition of situations that break the narrative coherence and most of all the spectacular form.

What we consider relevant is not the variety of levels of representation themselves, but the moment of crossing from one to the other. Crossing these limits, the spectator is obliged to question all that has happened up to that moment, he doubts the context of which he is witness, until he breaks the final frame, the reality. The identity itself gets lost into the never ending crossing of the borders: from a game to the other, the roles change and the rules turn upside – down.

### Zone 3: the representation

In this level, the long shot generated by the distance from the stage, there won't be a direct relationship with the spectator. The fourth wall and all theatrical agreements belonging to the representation will build up another space, another time, a linear narration that involves the audience into a description of a novel, a black tale born in the dark world of Hoffman.

The peculiarity of this narration is in the various embeds, in the time gaps belonging to the German author, in the repetition of situations and words that are first kept in an underground level, then taken into the surface, and realizing a loop.

Some possible mixes are the dialogues found in *Last Year at Marienbad* and in the novel *The invention of Morel*.

The characters of this zone are depicted by an acting which pretends to be simple and rarefied, very close to the cinematographic cut, absolutely reliable.

Very important will also be the musical contribution, that helps to support the fragile unreal atmosphere, in contraposition to an acting which is concrete and real.

### Zone 2: the audience exists

The second level will be represented by a sort of “commentator”, a narrator addressing the audience who presents and completes the dramatic exposition. He is a medium long shot interacting with the public but he will soon become distant, not a collaborator but someone who is totally involved in the mechanism of the representation and of the fraud.

He, clearly distinct from the previous figures, will introduce a totally different performative relation, eccentric, sarcastic and ironic, in a total contrast with the zone that hosts the fragile narrative system.

The inhabitants of the zone 2 possess the quality of a ghost, of the apparition, of a revealing event that will break reality. Like the host in *Morel's Island*, they wander among the inhabitants of a different dimension, unable to affect directly on the things around them, but who own the power of contemplation. They don't change the play on the stage, but they judge it and reinvent it, offering the audience some unexpected visions.

### **Zone 1: The Real**

The third level assumes the presence of a disturbing element in the theatre. He is in close-up shot and can turn the medium long shot narrator into background, revealing the invisible connection between the reality of the audience – the present Hic et Nunc, and the no-time space of the long shot, the zone 3.

This level hosts the audience, it is the reality that will collapse once the public will realize to be included into the narration, gaining the consciousness to be one of the elements into the holistic totalising system.

It is the everyday frame where we all live, so a familiar space. The actor that lives in the zone that we call “reality” has to slip secretly in this space. In the first moment we must trust him, we must perceive him as a inhabitant of our own world, not as part of the spectacular system. He is our neighbor who coughs, he is the smiling girl at the entrance, he is “one of us”.

### **Zone 0: Ubiquity**

*“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”*

Wiltgenstein

The fourth and last level is represented by a strong visual effect, with ancestral and onirical taste; a catalyser able to sum up all the various levels of space and time, able to act all depth long into the relational and the visual field. He is into the novel, but at the same time he is aware of the audience. He lives in the stalls but has the evocative quality of an icon, of a symbol: he is the paradox of the actor, he is over all and everywhere, at any time, he is the essence of the ubiquity.

It is a game of complicità between actor and audience, a certain look and a winning smile saying: “we are conscious of the game, and we are part of it”.

## **MENOVENTI**

Menoventi is a temperature.

Watching upside down the thermometer of a warm salon, you can realise that it's your own home's temperature, only the point of view changes.

Actual reality is reality upside down actually.

Without any pre-definite poetic, we face every new project throwing in the whirl of random the first rough intuitions that, naively and desperately, clutch to the hands of serendipity.

There are thematic fluxes under our feet, but every work enjoys its aesthetic peculiarity that denotes the initial loss of words to depict it: we walk on ice, actually.

From the second work on, the research of the company focuses on the relation among actor and viewer, unable to ignore the presence of the audience: the audience exists.

The representation leaves its space to the happening, hic et nunc, playing with theatrical conventions so to remind to the witnesses that the scenic object concerns them, anyhow.

Irony is a second leitmotiv, a grin that aims to take a look on the abyss.

If previously laughed about the strange coincidences that persecuted the characters of our novel, we now realize that there's nothing left to laugh and that the warmth of the characters is generated by a cold flame, very cold, at -20° C.

## **GENESIS OF A PROJECT**

Grown up in three different geographic areas of Italy, Consuelo Battiston (Pordenone, north east), Gianni Farina (Ravenna, centre), Alessandro Miele (Naples, south), the three artists developed diverse formative path in their own territories.

They met each other while working among 15 young actors with the famous Italian company Teatro delle Albe, at the creation of the project "Salmagundi" directed by Marco Martinelli. During this experience they got to know each other artistically and humanly.

Induced by a shared concept of making theatre, in spite of the strong diversity of the members of the group, in 2005 the three actors gave birth to Menoventi company.

2006 is the year of production of their first show, In Festa. Other works are Semiramis (Menoventi - Festival es.terni) and InvisibilMente (Menoventi - Emilia Romagna Teatro Fondazione), both in 2008, and Postilla (Menoventi - Festival es.terni) in 2009.

## **PRIZES AND AWARDS**

### *Semiramis*

Performance selected for the call for proposals Dimora Fragile, organized and supported by festival Es.terni '07 (Terni).

Winner of 2007 edition of the competition Loro del Reno, promoted by Teatri di Vita (Bologna).

Second coming for national prize Extra - segnali dalla nuova scena italiana, competition organized by GAI - Giovani Artisti Italiani.

### *InvisibilMente*

Performance in the final for the National prize Vertigine, promoted by Lazio Region and Fondazione Musica per Roma, selection by Giorgio Barberio Corsetti.

### *Postilla*

Winner of the call for proposals Nuove Creatività, promoted by ETI - Ente Teatrale Italiano.



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