

COEXISTING ROOM

a reflection on Clémentine M Songe's „Living Room“

The text interweaves descriptive reflections and poetic responses to the piece; translating into words images of the shared liveliness between human and non-human actors.

Simultaneously, the theme of home awakens in the writer a feeling of concern, linked to the pandemic, lockdown measures and their repercussions on both personal and cultural life.

Various furnitures and other familiar things inhabit an elevated platform in the centre of the stage. Their arrangement and quietness gives a sense of containment at first. Even where there are no physical walls, the eye of the viewer traces clear borders between things. The setting has a concentric quality: a space containing other spaces, with a common centre. As everything starts moving, the boundaries of the living arrangement become blurred. The performativity of the ensemble continuously alludes to the relation between the interior and the exterior of spaces as well as bodies. Bodies of things, of humans and architecture, animating each other in a reciprocal play.

Entering the living room, Clémentine takes off the shoes,
leaving outside the traces of the world.

As if we could keep distance between inside and outside,
as if our bodies and our environment were not porous.

A sand fall of red glittering dust pours out of one shoe.

Micro plastics accumulated over time, at the periphery of our bodies.

It falls out of the shoe, into the bucket and onto the ground, does its journey end there?

Things hiding under the carpet, like hairs and monsters.

Things we don't want to throw away,

things we don't know where to throw,

become monsters that will outlive us.

My experience of the performance is one of meditative contemplation of seemingly useless actions, repeatedly aimed at a purpose, but emptied of meaning. It portrays a modality of life typical of this pandemic, where people find most safety in their own homes. When privileged enough to have one. When privileged enough to be safe. Where does the border lie between a safe home and a safe cage?

Clémentine sits down on the sofa-chair, settling in the intimacy of ergonomics.

Swiftly, the laptop crawls on our laps, our most affectionate pet,
seeking human touch, it opens up, it purrs.

Electromagnetic waves radiate through our bodies as we hook into the net.

Anaesthetic interconnectedness.

On the keys our fingers play an etude of ticks and clicks,

our browser munching on cookies.

A sense of boredom and estrangement transpires from the performativity of Clémentine, conveying a feeling of „the new normal“. At the verge of a potential lockdown in Berlin, theatres might be un-lived, again. Un-lived by human bodies perhaps, but the things left alone continue to do their thing. Meanwhile, our domestic environment becomes not a living room, but a room where we comfortably survive.