

ARIKA 12: EPISODE 3, COPYING WITHOUT COPYING

The final part of Arika's triptych of programmes presents a weekend of four free events dealing with originality and identity

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ARIKA'S LOVE affair with hardcore Marxist dialectic has always been tempered by a fascination with post-modernity, especially in its most nihilistic and deconstructive versions. Marxists tend to claim that post-modernity's preoccupation with excluded narratives like feminism, anti-colonialism or anti-globalism can be threaded together around a socialist core, and much of the debate in Episode 1 centred around this possibility.

For Episode 3, Arika are going straight for a prominent post-modern concern: what is originality, and can it exist in an age when even individual identity is being questioned? Copying without Copying is Arika's most theatrical Episode so far – it includes performances of Eichmann's trial and Chto Delat?'s musical *The Russian Woods* – and throws down in the cat fight between artistic ownership and the collective creativity of communities. Marxism and deconstruction may share a passion for the savage critique of normative culture, but their intentions are radically different: Marxists want a better world, while deconstruction is happy to break up the existing one.

Luther Blisset – the pseudonym used by various anarchists, after a charming British football hero – articulates the heart of this Episode in his *Radical Subjectivity*. Arika's programme notes echo Blisset's belief that nothing can be told without the teller including their own history or value system – but where Arika use this to problematise the way that media is experienced, Blisset was encouraging artists to embrace it, even as he critiqued the false objectivity of the curator or writer. The sharp irony is that Luther Blisset could be anyone: meanwhile, each performance at Episode 3 has a clearly defined author.

Compared to the usual festival rush, Episode 3 is sparse: four events over a weekend, climaxing in two and a half hours of a "spectacular musical show which discusses the representation of a nation state, its characters and history." Chto Delat? acknowledge that it seems absurd to struggle against the violence of our times through art, yet their intellectual engagement does not

prevent them from co-opting popular forms: mythology, musicals, the idea of a nation's soul are all reconstructed towards a serious end.

Starting the weekend is a performed installation based on the transcripts of the 1961 trial of SS Lieutenant Adolf Eichmann: the difficult content – Eichmann's trial threw up questions about state sovereignty, international law and personal responsibility – is matched by an appropriately challenging format, a fusion that Arika actively encourages. Throughout the three episodes,

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the festival has analysed militarism, the agenda behind advertising, the problems of art in a world bedevilled by callous politics and the suspicion that individual identity is being manipulated by consumerism. The discourse moves well beyond the events, and has inspired a series of online and radio discussions.

For this last episode, Arika has gone free: there is no door tax, only a request for emotional and intellectual engagement. The transition from experimental music to experimental festival has happened, and even Luther Blisset's radical attack on the intrinsic bias of the curator or writer is slightly satisfied.

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 EPISODE 3 - THEATRE PREVIEW - MAR 2012