

SILENT WITNESS

A WORK BY MICHAEL KLIËN

proposition

Changes in Governance

michael clien

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Concept and Realisation: Michael Kliën

“We have enslaved our imagination, limited the world of minds to a world of frozen instances. Imagination draws from perception and this spells out our limits. Never limited by imagination, only by perception.”

BOOK OF RECOMMENDATIONS

For SILENT WITNESS choreographer Michael Kliën embeds himself with neither role nor primary purpose into an established social system exceptionally foreign to his own experience and knowledge. Throughout this period he conducts himself in his usual manner by attempting to make friends, having tea, conversations, share/solve problems, etc. In 2011, as part of a solo exhibition at IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art), Kliën embedded himself in the Irish Government for the duration of two weeks.

Kliën does not document this event and does not aim to 'translate' this experience into any tangible media. Nevertheless something remains when a human being without any designated role is living amongst others. For once, stories told are spreading, whilst actions and conversations, as heralds of the 'secret slowness of movement, reverberate in manifold and unpredictable ways. Fundamentally SILENT WITNESS is a choreographic work, as conditions are created for changes to write themselves into lives, minds and flesh. Yet, it is a purposefully 'objectless' choreography, its actions have no gestalt, no product, and all of its residues are spread amongst and between himself and it all. The work itself is not for sale and no money is exchanged in this process.

During Silent Witness a label positioned in a public space (museum, etc.), which allows the audience to imaginatively partake in the process. The following, indicative, paragraph is written on the label:

Michael Kliën
Silent Witness, (date)
Objectless choreography

Kliën is currently spending two weeks embedded in ... [the realms of government]. During this period he engages with the economy through patient observations and personal connections with individuals. Kliën does not document his experience and will not aim to translate it into any tangible media. Silent Witness is a choreographic work: purposefully 'objectless', its actions have no product as such. The experience is absorbed and reverberates in unfathomable ways.

RECORDED REFLECTIONS ON SILENT WITNESS 2011, IRISH GOVERNMENT

Rosa,

Nothing changes if no one starts listening.

I am finally taking a stance: stopping this industrious world-building to immerse myself into incomprehensible otherness. Living amongst the ordinary unknown without a primary purpose; life without communal validation; a choreography of revelation.

Last week I was in government. Spending two weeks roaming the corridors of the Irish Parliament, The Dail as well as the Senat. I assumed a position that was no work at all, yet, required the upmost dedication and concentration. To be the thought-tree falling in the middle of the room of ministers and civil servants. The tree that no one seems to hear, its fall resonating in silence. And still, I governed. I governed with all my might, which you could argue wasn't a lot in this instance, and I can't disagree with you. I didn't pass any law, I didn't propose one. Nobody thought of asking me, and if they would have, I would have had nothing to say. Being the nothing in this vast ocean of certainty - an endearing role. The silent witness, who speaks, who identifies himself when asked and is still without mandate, with no role, no primary purpose. Suspending diligent producing to assume the in between: the realm that pushes itself between chains of reason, that is of physical substance, a Nothing that cannot be denied.

Last week I did protest. I took the most radical stance in my life. I protested, in perplexed resentment towards my own realities, validations systems and epistemologies. The ones I can't escape as I've been thought up by them. My system of probability knows so little as to how to extend itself to its proper height. Protest as an aesthetic act, not in nervous reaction to painful events, not in anger, but in a profound state of suspense. Why reasoning has recently escaped me is hard to fathom. Not knowing anything, sensing everything. I sharpened everyone of my senses in these buildings of the legislative to infuse myself with the faint heralds of history and ideologies of power. For a while there was some poetic space in the machine. It will affect me. It will affect others.

BIOGRAPHY

MICHAEL KLIËN (*1973, AUSTRIA)

Michael Kliën is an acclaimed choreographer, artist and producer of numerous touring productions, installations and events. In 1994 he co-founded the arts collective Barriedale Operahouse (in operation till 2000) and worked as a choreographer for Ballett Frankfurt, Volksoper Wien etc. From 2003 to 2011 he was Artistic Director/CEO of Daghdha, one of Ireland's premiere dance organisations. His artistic practice encompasses interdisciplinary thinking, critical writing, curatorial projects, and centrally, choreographic works equally at home in the Performing as well as the Fine Arts. Michael Kliën's work has been predominantly dance-based situated in galleries, museums or on stages. Increasingly, visual art works form part of his practice; yet, other creations may act directly upon the social sphere (Social Choreography). He holds a PhD from Edinburgh University based on connecting aesthetics to system theory. Amongst a considerable body of work, Michael Kliën's seminal choreographies include *Einem* for Ballett Frankfurt, *Sediments of an Ordinary Mind* and *Sense and Meaning* for Daghdha (Limerick) as well as *Choreography for Blackboards* for Daghdha Dance Company and Hayward Gallery (London), *Slattery's Lamp* of IMMA's (Irish Museum of Modern Art) permanent collection, 'Parliament' for Benaki Museum and the participatory work 'Jerusalem - Choreography for Greece' for the Athens Festival 2014. www.michaelklien.com



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