

Copies without an original

The French-Austrian company Superamas also has a firm Belgian anchorage. Someone operating on this European scale, was bound to one day aim the spotlights on the 'European dream'. This happens in 'Youdream'. A piece that doesn't end at the doors of theatre, but expands to the web (www.youdream.be), TV and cinema. And as customary with web 2.0: your dream receives a place in this as well.

'You dream' opens with the projection of video chat sessions on a screen. Taking part: a Polish, a Danish, a Swiss, two Frenchmen (of which one is posing as an Italian) and an American. Enough nationalities to let flourish all clichés, prejudices and false pretenses about the 'European spirit'. In passing, stereotypes about gender differences are also being mangled.

The subject of conversation is the dreams of the participants. This soon shifts to the question of what is illusion and what is reality. This becomes apparent through a minor trick. When a curtain on the stage is pulled away, you discover that the chatters are not in their homes behind their PCs, but are on stage faking the situation.

Of course! We're inside a theatre. These are actors playing a part! Yet it has an alienating effect that almost all details they give away about themselves are real slices of life. Is the issue at stake here the classical question of who we 'really' are? Do we find ourselves on the slippery soap slide of identity?

In a sense, yes. Only: Superamas is not the kind of group to give a classical answer to this kind of question. There is no moment in which the masks suddenly drop. From this point onwards, behind every new image the performers paint of themselves both live and on screen, plenty of others will turn out to be hidden. They dream together a plethora of lives, all equally false or equally real.

Quite appealingly the audience, encouraged by compere Philippe Riéra, can also put forward their dreams (and via the web as well) and are sometimes rewarded for doing so by their realization on stage. This creates a special bond between spectators and performers.

However the sting of the piece is situated in the second part. Suggested by one of the spectators, a movie suddenly starts to run. In this film the stories tumble across each other like crazy. Here Agata Maszkiewicz blatantly changes roles, with the bizarre consistency of dreams. At first she appears in a theatre play as Maria Walenska, the Polish lover of Napoleon. Then she reveals herself as the actress/member of the resistance, playing this part during World War II. Just as unexpectedly she then becomes the actress playing the second actress, who comes on stage to receive the applause. In that same shot she also turns out to be seated in the house as a spectator.

She is not the only one who keeps shaking things up this way, although she does bare the palm. It becomes more and more prominent that these dream images, because that is what they are, have indisputably been modeled on Hollywood movies, among other things about the European past. This thought has surfaced with Superamas before. Movies are (no longer)

being shaped after real life; it is real life that adapts to the example of film and media. In one breath it is suggested that we also attain the bulk of our (historical) conceptions from it.

After this long piece of film 'Youdream' draws to a close once more as a live spectacle, as if the movie actors stepped out of the screen. This does not mean that they give rein to their phantasms any less. On the contrary. The prudish, sensitive Karen Lambaak from the chat sessions shows herself here as a skilled sex kitten and pole dancer. The Swiss Martin Schwab, who we got to know as a reconciling Christ figure, now paces about as a pimp lusting after sex and blood. Especially in his conversations with Diederik Peeters, you again recognize references to movies, particularly Coen Brothers' movies like 'The Big Lebowski'.

There is no moral to this story. There is only the somewhat uncomfortable observation that what or who we are is an almost accidental, possible version of who we all could be. But most of all: even though we often believe the contrary, in this day and age none of these possible 'me's' is 100% 'original'.

Pieter T'Jonck - De Morgen / Brussels

Kaaitheater 10th & 11th December, Vooruit 17th & 18th December