

FFF: The Friendly Face of Fascism. For an Aesthetics of Devices

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

Roger Bernat: Bachelor's Degree holder in Dramatic Art, speciality Direction and Dramaturgy, from the Institut del Teatre, he is the creator and director of shows that have been translated into several languages and performed in over 30 countries.

Roberto Fratini: Playwright and professor of Dance Theory at the CSD in Barcelona (Institut del Teatre). He has lectured at the Università Statale in Pisa and in L'Aquila. He leads workshops and gives masterclasses and lectures in several academic and theatre institutions around the world. He has published *A Contracuento. La danza y las derivas del narrar* (Ediciones Polígrafa, 2012) and *Filosofía de la danza* (Edicions UB, 2015) with Magda Polo Pujadas and Bàrbara Raubert.

English translation, Neil CHARLTON

Abstract

Manifest of the theatre company The Friendly Face of Fascism founded in 2008 by Roger Bernat and others, featuring the guidelines of an aesthetics of devices.

Keywords: manifest, mobilisation, participation, interactivity, play, device, aesthetics, audience, phantasmagoria, fascism

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FFF shares with its time the aim of keeping the population permanently mobilised. In the “society of the spectacle” we are all performers.

FFF does not produce shows but rather designs devices. Its audience is not made up of motivated observers. The idle operators are the audience and the leading characters.

FFF blurs the line between actors and spectators, and between activity and passivity. The FFF spectators are both victims and executioners. FFF does not seek to de-dramatise the world or dramatise theatre. FFF is cruel rather than cathartic theatre.

FFF produces devices that help interaction. Users manipulate the device and the device manipulates users. So FFF devices are political artefacts.

FFF knows no barriers between stage and stalls, between public and private. There is no distinction between those who participate and those who, remaining on the sidelines, perform the role of spectators. Every corner, physical or mental, will be absorbed by the artefact. FFF is *totalitarian* theatre.

1. *The Friendly Face of Fascism* is the name of a theatre company formed by Roger Bernat, Roberto Fratini, Txalo Toloza, Cristóbal Saavedra, Ana Rovira, Marie-Klara González and Helena Febrés. It was named as such in 2008 by Pedro Soler and Roger Bernat. Some of its shows are *Domini Públic* (Teatre Lliure, Barcelona, 2008), *La consagració de la primavera* (Teatro Milagro, Mexico, 2010), *Please, Continue (Hamlet)* (Théâtre du Grütli, Geneva, 2011), *Pendent de votació* (Centro Dramático Nacional, Madrid, 2012), *Desplazamiento del Palacio de La Moneda* (STML, Santiago, 2014), *Numax-Fagor-plus* (Kunsten Festival Des Arts, Brussels, 2014), *No se registran conversaciones de interés* (MUCEM, Marseilles, 2016-17) and *The Place of the Thing* (Documenta 14, Athens-Kassel, 2017).

2. This manifest is inspired by the *Manifiesto Canalla* (La Fura dels Baus, Barcelona: 1983) and the *10 items of the covenant* (Laibach, *Nova Revija* No. 13-14, Ljubljana: 1983. Translated into English online).

Nobody enjoys FFF devices. By acting, spectators perform their emancipation as best they can and take on, perplexed, their role as operators. By legitimising the tools of emancipation the user obliterates diversion.

FFF replaces pleasure with a complex form of joy or *jouissance*, recalling that *jouissance* is the lived plenitude of a substantial lack. Dissatisfaction is the heart of the aesthetics of the device.

FFF spectators work to produce their own image. FFF spectators are idealistic workers who, as a reward for their endeavour, receive fragments of its political fiction.

FFF spectators are workers who belong to a system. Abusing the spectator – *excess* – gives the device a form – *Grace*. FFF receives spectators as a treasure with the sole purpose of squandering them. FFF is the value added of the system, its *squandering*.

FFF finds its form in the interaction between device and users. The more invisible the device, the more visible the interaction. However, far from alluding to virtual “relational” harmonies, FFF considers that the only beauty of relations is their unbeatable difficulty.

FFF does not have a language or style of its own. FFF does not express the vision of an individual and neither is it the result of a territory, a landscape or a country. FFF borrows the language of power. FFF is the copy of the system, its *realization*.

FFF *is* a technology and spreads *through* technology. Programming, planning and design enable both the autonomy and control of the spectator.

FFF fosters mobilisation and achieves inhibition.

FFF fosters interactivity and achieves interpassivity.

FFF fosters play and achieves tedium.

FFF fosters exploitation and achieves conspiracy.

FFF fosters noise and achieves silence.

FFF cultivates crowds and harvests solitudes. These paradoxes will enable phantasmagoria: the fictitious memory, the spectral appearance of a collective subject that was once called people. This ghost is to the solitary spectator what the father’s ghost was to Hamlet: an instigation to “do theatre”.

FFF targets an immobile crowd confined to the seat – like the worker to the laptop, the pupil to the desk or the sick person to the bed – and invites them to pretend.

FFF doesn't share the ghost of the avant-gardes for which the spectator is a passive being that has to be awakened. FFF mistrusts a male theatre that imagines a female audience.

FFF also does not share the fantasy of *prose theatre* in which the committed spectator goes to the theatre to confirm that the artist is also committed. FFF mistrusts a theatre that invites the cleansing of consciences in the saving waters of the stalls. If at least the theatre was the last place to get bored! But even this last hope, in a permanently mobilised society, conceals the false conscience of those who seek to falsify the world by simplifying theatre.

FFF cultivates conscious fiction. FFF doesn't represent the crowd but produces it. *The Friendly Face of Fascism* is the audience made form.

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