

No one, but flayed skin.

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There is no one on stage. People don't wander around, touch each other, lock their jaws, grind their teeth or salivate. Nothing or no one gets tired, sweats or bleeds. There are video footage of actors' heads repeating some phrases. Cut out, they are projected onto mannequins, who receive them as if they were a mask. These luminous masks complain of tiredness, whine, shiver, itch, sneeze and burp. Some, more curious, look for their eyes, make macabre jokes for being projected onto an armless dummy. All the time the characters seem to talk about a body we can't see. After another sentence, the faded video is projected onto another puppet, or nowhere at all. Only his voice remains. The sounds and images emitted look like specters of something that is no longer in sight.

After all, there is no body in "hollow head doll's foam". The play takes place in the interaction between the bits and pieces of an assembly of industrial and commercial spoils. There are robot cars, pulleys, shop mannequins, synthetic materials, chemical foam, old images of Arnold Schwarzenegger, ropes, simulacra of skin and hands. The same faces of the dolls are animated by cables, semiconductors, wires, light, gimmicks, videos and sounds.

The objects are not scenography, they are sculptures that Ilê Sartuzi made for a while, until 2019. The sculptures that the artist makes, regardless of the set presented here, are unorthodox articulations between elements that imitate body parts. In works that are not shown here, he composes a hand, for example, with fingers

that can have different dimensions, different colors, apparent mechanisms. An uncanny but humorous montage.

The elements with which Ilê works are not mechanisms that could replace nature. In a more recent video, made after this play, the artist works with an empty, digital body structure that seems to have lost its referent. As if only such substitutes were left, “hollow head doll’s foam” gives the impression that no living form is left, just the waste of what was the modern life.

The scenic action also seems to be made of these loose fragments. Whether due to the three-dimensional volumes assembled or dismantled, whether in the elliptical text, or the sounds emitted either by a mannequin or by a speaker. Visual or written materials have no necessary relationship. They are elements that vary, as if they could be attributed to anyone. The phrases spoken during the show are sequenced, alternated, scrambled and rearranged. As the artist has already commented, they are processed and sampled verbal tics, presented in one order, then in another.

In fact, even when there seems to be dialogue in the play, we cannot say this with certainty. The dolls don't even look at each other. They are presented as if they are not looking anywhere. They are presented as if absorbed, while repeating their sentences, changing moods. Maybe that's why we don't know if they respond to something or talk to themselves.

Therefore, I have the impression that, like the bodily appendages, the speeches are also fake — and I apologize for insisting. They are simple sayings, which seem to trap the characters in an agonized loop of commonplaces. Maybe they only know this small repertoire anyway. It's five sentences, fifteen words and that's it, that's all. It is for no other reason that the characters, half desperate, half joking, ask: “Stop putting words in my mouth!”.

Although “hollow head doll’s foam” manipulates a universe of automatons, Ilê Sartuzi's imagery seems to me quite different from the theme of robots and androids that fed the imagination of the world resulting from the industrial revolution.

Since the 19th century, fantasies around such machines have been, among other things, a metaphor for the overexploitation of industrial work, a technician symbol

of the changes caused by technical and scientific innovations. In any case, these devices indicated a transformed, wonderful and frightening world that would point to the near future.

This imagery of modernization was linked to ambiguous Promethean promises of transformation of everything by humanity and technology. Life would be different. Machines would bring convenience and alleviate our difficulties, as indeed they did. Even when cybernetics was shown as the figuration of dystopia, it was still linked to the potential of new devices. So advanced that they could eliminate people and take their place.

The cultural atmosphere of the play is different. The spectacle was conceived after industrial production was largely automated. A good part of our experiences is mediated by electronic devices connected to high-speed communication networks. In addition to being familiar, machines are constitutive of sociability today, in different parts of the world. Evidently, this did not mean a decrease in the super-exploitation of work or a fairer distribution of wealth. We live exclusively with these artificial, highly patented extensions that we believe to be our own.

In "hollow head doll's foam", the solitary mannequins speak of much that is not there. They tell the sensations of a phantom body, while mobilizing the vocabulary repertoire to recount cases of unspeakable violence and to make a joke. Everything, however, is fake, always fake, I repeat again. There is no constitution of a new personality or subjectivity, only superficial juxtapositions that fall apart with the same speed in which they are constituted.

Video faces, photographs, models, repeated, scrambled, serialized, reordered speeches are all prosthetic devices of intersubjective coexistence. The characters seem to resort to such a set of elements as people, when socializing on the internet, resort to avatars. These human relationships, mediated by identity prostheses, allow us to reconstruct personas in networks.

The use of artificial extensions of ourselves seems to find a picturesque interpretation here. Because, if we take the way in which the overlapping of characters occurs here, we get the impression that the voice doesn't quite fit their avatar, similarly

to a shirt that doesn't fit right. Thus, the attribution of a mask or voice to a mannequin seems blunt, unfinished, funny, bizarre. In fact, it is how part of the relationships between people can take place, in these gigantic advertising machines, of multi-million companies, sometimes larger than national states, which are social networks: like an infinite meeting of people in monologue, trying to outwit collective loneliness.

A mismatched, and very funny, love conversation that takes place in the play is the most perfect translation of these weird relationships. Made from an algorithm that generates a question and an answer, the dialogue goes from the absolute lack of intimacy to marriage, even indicating a normative path of appeased sociability. It's as if two broken monologues form a conversation. Meanwhile, latex skins, detached from the body, are dragged by a pulley system that could be triggering all the events in the theater. The flaying happens next to us, all the time, but no one notices.