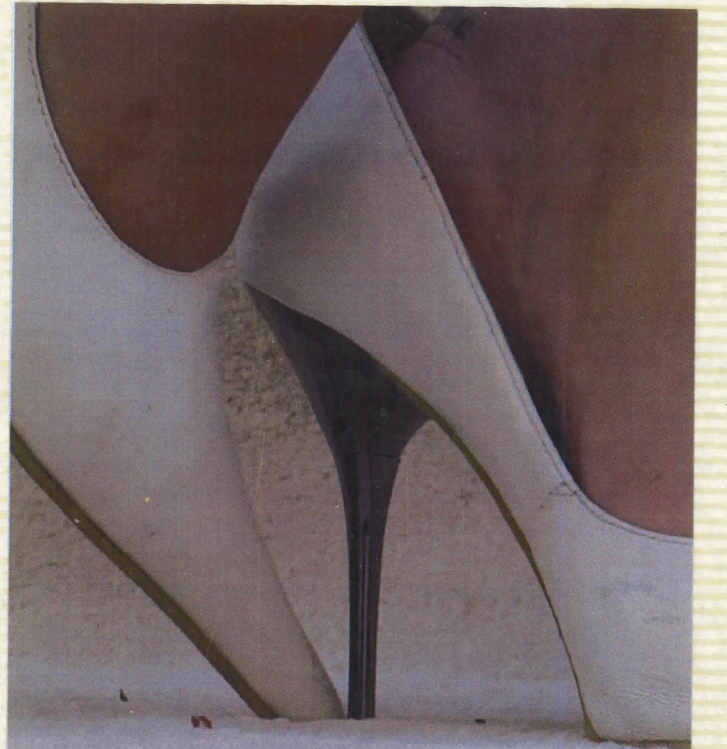
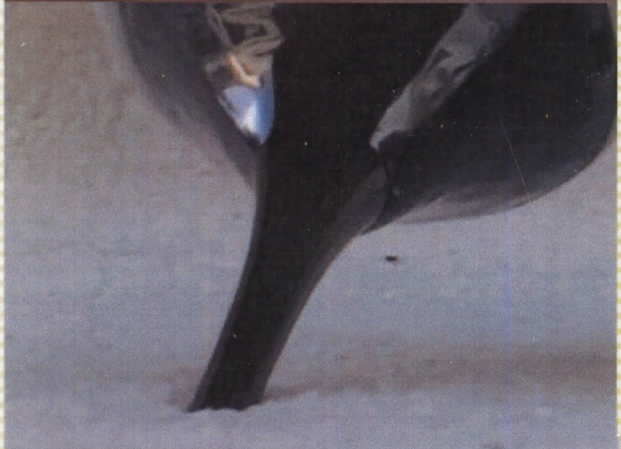






JERK

From a short story written by Dennis Cooper
Creation 2008

Directing : Gisèle Vienne - Dramaturgy : Dennis Cooper - with Jonathan Capdevielle





Troubling 'Jerk' reveals the real puppets

BY GIANNI TRUZZI
Special to the P-I

As lone performer Jonathan Capdevielle sports the title of this disturbing piece, "Jerk," across his sweat shirt, it's unclear if it's labeling him or commanding us.

Gisele Vienne's staging of Dennis Cooper's dark novella, briefly on view at On the Boards, is softly jarring. Based on the grisly Houston murders of 1970s serial killer Dean Corll, who raped, tortured and killed 27 teenage boys in his basement, it is a cathartic retelling through puppets by one of Corll's young accomplices.

As the imprisoned David Brooks, Capdevielle is fragile, a young man whose nervous laughter leaks from the embarrassment of our attention and the absurdity of what he is about to do.

Vienne adheres narrowly to Cooper's slim volume, in which Brooks insists that his audience read silently certain portions of his narrative. The odd device makes our own imagination complicit in the crimes we are soon to witness.

Our senses are confused by the horrifying and ridiculous sights before us, of hand puppets in a mix of human and animal forms committing grotesque acts of violence and sex. Corll, as a panda, snuffles lengthily at his



Jonathan Capdevielle and the puppets from "Jerk" present a cathartic retelling of the grisly 1970s murders by Dean Corll.

victim's limp doll body, then pumps his finger-fist into the cavity squish. The tongue of human Brooks mashes against eager puppet partner Wayne in homoerotic arousal fueled by this cruelty.

Vienne prolongs these transgressive sequences to excruciating length, deliberately provoking our growing discomfort.

THEATER REVIEW

JERK

CREATORS: Gisele Vienne, from the novel by Dennis Cooper

WHERE: On the Boards at Behrke Center, 425 Queen Anne Ave. N.

WHEN: Through Sunday

TICKETS: \$24; sold out, wait list available at 206-217-9888

In Cooper's speculation, Corll makes his victims into monstrous puppets in his desire to fully "own" them. In their new lifeless shell, he turns them into somebody else, television actors he has lusted for.

The subsequent events, in which Wayne kills Corll and Brooks kills Wayne, lead to an ultimate discard of puppets, or any movement at all, with Capdevielle's final ventriloquism portraying a youth who has completely lost himself. He is at a drooling remove, leaving us alone with the horror of his acts.

By the sullen end, Vienne finally has the puppets she really wants; it's our strings she's pulling.

Arts writer Gianni Truzzi can be reached at gtruzzi@comcast.net.



HAMLET AND THE EMPTY FORTRESS OF THEATER

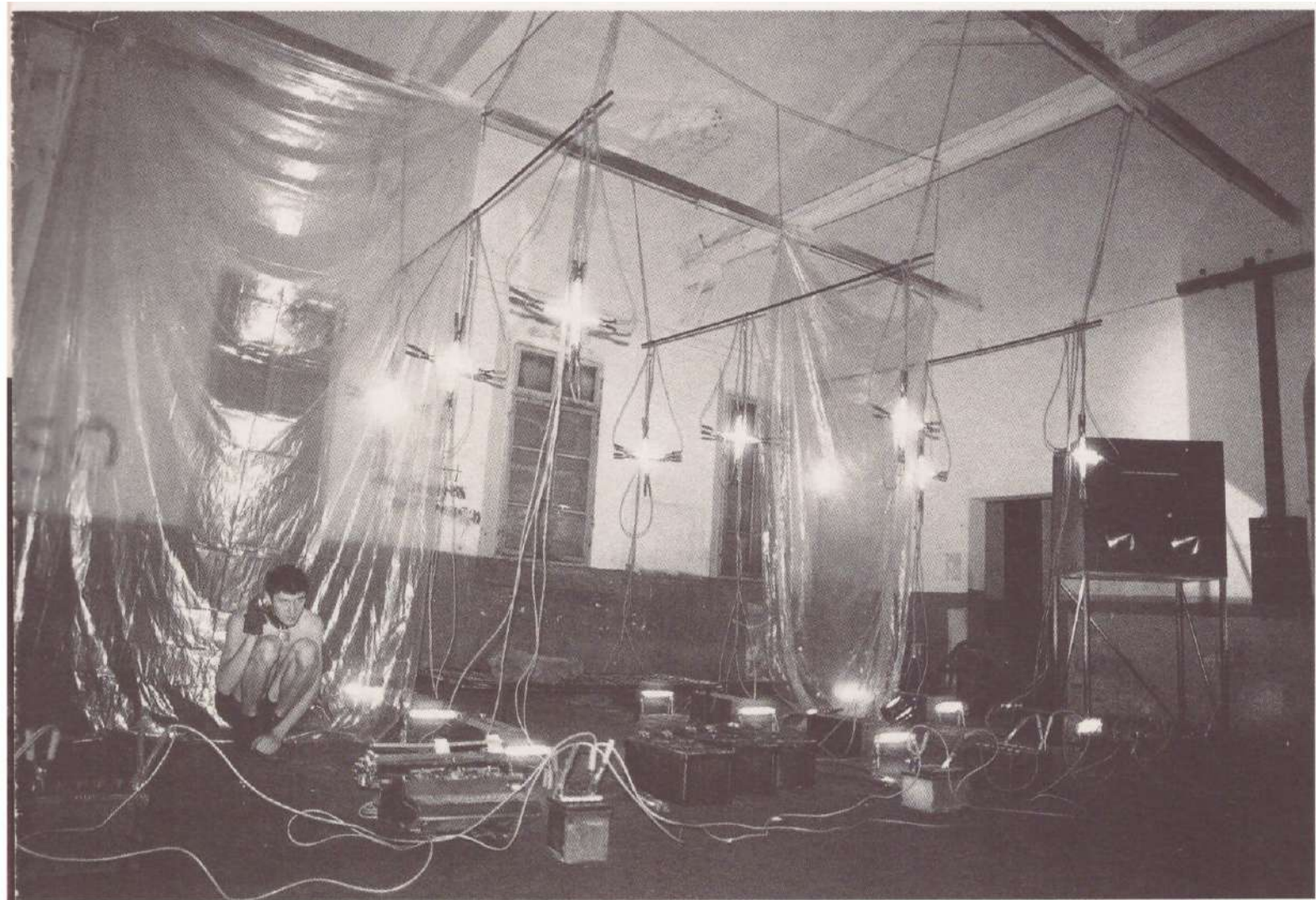
ROMEO CASTELLUCCI in conversation
with ANNALISA SACCHI

AS: Società Raffaello Sanzio (known today as Societas) was born from a position of radical foreignness to traditional theater, but also to the forms of political engagement associated, in the 1980s, with direct activism. You all came from the visual arts and arrived at theater almost by accident. I wonder, however, if the term “foreignness” is enough to describe that position. Was it not an active refusal, a form of intransigence that translated itself into the very name of the company, into the works on childhood, and into the choice to break away from dramatic literature? How was this position constructed, and what sustained it?

RC: We were a group of people with a shared background in the visual arts. The name we took—Societas Raffaello Sanzio—did not have an entirely clear meaning, and somehow had an ironic component to it. Our main source of inspiration was art history. At the time, we distanced ourselves from theater—what we saw on stage did not interest us at all. It was too tied to literature, too bound to a prescribed idea of political commitment. We found ourselves making theater almost by accident. The word “accident” often recurs in how we work, also in relation to *Hamlet*.

At the time, performance had found a particularly fertile ground in Bologna. The city was probably the most advanced in Italy in this respect, also thanks to the presence of Francesca Alinovi, an acute critic who strongly shaped the exchange between the arts. While at the Academy of Fine Arts, we created performative actions that gradually became more and more complex. At a certain point, we chose to openly embrace fiction, to ride it—fiction seemed to possess a much more radical dimension than the unmediated presence of performance art, the ontology of which had become tiresome.

Other incisive experiences were the encounter with Il Carrozzone (a theater company that later took the name Magazzini Criminali) and their proximity to Carmelo Bene, who rehearsed his performances in Cesena. Carmelo conceived theater as a linguistic field; he understood it as a blaze. The perspective of Magazzini Criminali was belligerent, icastic, an encounter with violence—their first works had tremendous power. Then came the discovery of Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*—another lesson in



SOCIETAS RAFFAELLO SANZIO
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Amleto



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morte di un mollusco**

Hamlet: the vehement exteriority of the death of a mollusk

**ROMEO CASTELLUCCI /
SOCIETAS RAFFAELLO SANZIO**



ROOM TEMPERATURE

Dennis Cooper and Zac Farley

GDL525

MAY 30 2026, 18.30



A screening of 'Room Temperature' followed by a talk by Dennis Cooper and Zac Farley moderated by Ivan Cheng

Gymnasium hall, Gouden Leeuw 900, 1103KV, Amsterdam