Abstract

„Action stage design" is a term which was originally used in the mid-70s in the connection with 1975 Prague Quadrennial. Soviet critic Viktor Berjozkin chose this term to describe a new approach which was apparent in the majority of national expositions.

It was an alternative approach to dramatic space, the traditional proscenium theater was systematically abandoned. New possibilities of producing in non-traditional, mainly non-theatrical spaces which offered closer contact with audience were searched. In aesthetic approaches the action stage design abandoned rampant focus on art, illusoriness, embellishment and complicated technical solutions. On the contrary it took inspiration from „earth works" (arte povera) and pop-art. They used „poor" - which means - common and natural materials [mainly fabrics] and everyday objects. Simplicity and inventiveness became an important requirement of the new aesthetics, as well as constant confrontation of dramatic and empirical reality. Stage props were meant to be mainly polysemous. It means that a scenic element could change its meaning and function a few times during the performance thanks to actors activity. For example – a bed became a dining table, an altar, or a prison. It demanded big imagination of spectators, they often became a part of performance. Costume and mask got more important in action stage design. These elements complement one another with dramatic space and acting action, they heat up and sometimes blend. A stage can become an actor or a costume, an actor can become a stage, a costume can become an actor. Together it creates an original and impressive dramatic piece which uses simple instruments to achieve maximum effectiveness.

In my work I deal with action stage design in Czechoslovakia at that time. In this complicated political and cultural situation aesthetic of action stage design got stronger impressiveness and urgency.

At first I write about general context of theatrical events in the `60 and `70 and characterize the term „action stage design". The following sub-chapter deals with scenographic predecessors of this trend who can be found in the first half of the 20th century. The next chapters are dedicated to chosen stage designers of the `60 and `70, who developed action stage design. The final chapter establishes the work in art and theoretical contexts.

Key words: Action stage design, theatre, actor, direction, costume, polysemous stage prop, dramatic and empirical reality, arte povera