

Possible gods

"One must know oneself. One must know one's creator," is said by one of those in Richard Sandler's video 'Gods from Times Square', which is part of Hotel Pro Forma's re-staging of the exhibition performance 'Jesus_C_Odd Size'. The work consists of a rich array of individual experiences which we have to link together for ourselves. We move amongst them at our own tempo, visit each tableau, each experience several times, begin to see the interrelationships without undue haste. All the individual parts are aspects of God, more or less successful contacts with the sublime. The entirety is glimpsed later, like a jigsaw-puzzle that does itself when we look the other way.

It is a completely contemporary figure that says in the video that one must know oneself, know one's creator. Indeed, the entire work is utterly contemporary. It updates the icon-like images of the Christian that have accumulated in us – kept alive by an antiquarian Christian movement – with a sudden jerk. Utterly contemporary and curious are the crosses from the rubbish tip in the wonderful film 'Songs from the second floor' by the Swede Roy Andersson that have been collected here. Utterly contemporary is Jesus, in the form of the American draughtsman Mike Diana, with long, blond hair parted in the middle, like a sea could part. Or the completely tattooed disciple Jacob, whose real name is Muffe K. Gjølund and who has little to say. Conversely everlasting is the effect of the saffron-coloured angel in Dina Toft Jensen's compassionate, gentle face. She stands there as if she had fallen from heaven, universally present, frighteningly calm. She is one of the most potent sights at the performance.

Lawrence Malstaff's live installations on the church ceiling are equally powerful. In his

Golgotha, the three crucified figures are much closer to death than we thought. Vacuum-packed in a transparent plastic surface, none of their senses is still functioning – except, perhaps, a single eye that gazes at us from somewhere beyond the comprehensible. Or his bible of sand which, with small subterranean tremors, stages an image of randomness and the emergence in it of regularity. Or his chair, where one can sit like a blind god in a swirling white cloud.

So it is up to oneself just how much one experiences. One of the characteristics of the performance is the spatiality, the spontaneity: no proselytising here.

I found a key to the performance in one of the private rooms where one sits in a chair opposite a mirror which begins to shake and shift the point of fascination from the face and imagined faults to a Francis Bacon-like look of flesh in movement. Here, the expression is not contained in eye or smile but in the speed at which the demons become visible. If that is the key, then Hotel Pro Forma wants us to see, to open our eyes to a spatial, faceted conception of Jesus and the many celebrities around him that have become images of a single quality.

Hotel Pro Forma is always site-specific, the performances are created with great sensitivity for the given space. Indeed, it almost seems as if the performances never completely leave the rooms in which they take place. When one visits the venues, now quite considerable in number, where Pro Forma has been – from the Copenhagen Business School to the Glyptothek – one recalls how brilliantly the focal point of Hotel Pro Forma, Kirsten Dehlholm, has left her imprint. This will also be the case in Nikolaj.

BY JANUS KODAL