

CONTRAPASSO

BY MARKO SVART

FOR BALTIC NORDIC FRINGE NETWORK
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INTRODUCTION

Since early 2023 I have been exploring various concepts and mythologies surrounding Hell.

Last May I presented an exhibition for Reykjavik Design Festival (**DesignMarch**) where I translated **Dante's Inferno** into designed objects and installations.

My proposal for The Baltic Nordic Fringe Network, is an extension of my work in this subject. The piece is called **Contrapasso**, and is a performance inspired by one of the few laws in the Inferno.

"as an artist, i have responsibility to explore and develop conceptual interpretations of life and death. researching various philosophies and theories deepens the understanding (or misunderstanding) of existence and allows me to drift ambivalently, but consciously through purposes and ideas.

it is then my job to compose or formulate these concepts into an apprehensible medium.

I view my artistry as one whole existence, believing in the importance of using art for personal, cultural and social exploration.

I often play with the idea of art affecting the artist, instead of the other way around."



THE PERFORMANCE

My work is an interdisciplinary performance for two people, combining modern dance, action painting, and exploratory art.

The performance follows various characters subjected to nonsensical philosophical sins and situations. Melancholic and slightly humorous stories are intertwined with ponderings about existentialism and expressed through sporadic dance. Explorations of self-induced rules and expectations are analyzed and lectured throughout the performance.

The idea is to move the audience through various mindsets as observers, and towards the end of the performance, the audience will be integrated to the performance as the "divine punishment" against the performing artist.

The performance length is approximately 45 minutes

Stage setup and dimensions are flexible.

THE BACKSTORY



In Dante's *Inferno*, contrapasso (from Latin *contra* and *patior*, meaning "suffer the opposite") is the punishment of souls "by a process either resembling or contrasting with the sin itself."

One of the examples of contrapasso occurs in the fourth Bolgia of the eighth circle of Hell, where the sorcerers, astrologers, and false prophets have their heads turned back on their bodies such that it is "necessary to walk backward because they could not see ahead of them." This alludes to the consequences of predicting the future by evil means and displays the twisted nature of magic in general. This example of contrapasso "functions not merely as a form of divine revenge, but rather as the fulfillment of a destiny freely chosen by each soul during his or her life."

Contrapasso differs drastically from the biblical principle of 'an eye for an eye,' with which it's sometimes confused. In Dante's poem, punishments must arise from the crime itself, not from the damage it has caused". Pearl argues that Dante is breaking away from the popular notion that the severity of a sin is determined by the damage done to society, suggesting instead that a sin is more or less severe because it is more or less offensive to God, not to man (or rather, that each punishment derives from the offensiveness of the sin itself, rather than the suffering of its victims).

BRIEF ANALYSIS

When put in context of attribution in psychoanalysis; self-induced rules and can be related to reaction formation or psychological hedonism, and the outcome as an existence distortion or cognitive dissonance. An action taken in self-interest will ultimately be turned into punishment. The latter is especially prominent in artists - something which I often explore in my art.

Artists are the definite impersonation of self-interest, even in what seem to be acts of altruism. **Or**, perhaps art is the higher being, either good or evil, that demands full commitment, and therefore no ambivalence.

In reality, humans are not motivated to strictly avoid pain and only pursue pleasure, but instead, humans will endure pain or accept sins to achieve the greatest net pleasure. Accordingly, all actions are tools for increasing pleasure or decreasing pain, even those defined as altruistic, nonsensical or hurtful and those that do not cause an immediate change in satisfaction levels.



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