

Walking in «Ex-Libris»

By Nikos Verginis – 02/04/2019 - Athinorama

As a co-participant said, it was like being in a doll house. As if, for about an hour, we turned into the heroes of a new, unique book, which was written there and then, I would add. Walking from one hall to the next in Law Faculty Library - the old Chemistry Laboratory - of the University of Athens in Exarcheia, we, visitors-participants, learned a lot. **Noiti Grammi Theatre Group** and the artistic director **Olga Pozeli** invited us to become the flaneurs in a promenade performance called **'Ex-Libris'** that emerges from and revolves around books. We, the silent flaneurs of the Library, felt as if we were reading a book that totally absorbed us and we couldn't take our eyes off of it and, so, we lost track of time. The library was closed to the public, but it opened the doors to its secrets to us, just like a good book that one feels related to.

From the first word to the final full stop, we experienced it almost breathless. I say 'almost' because, at some point, we used our sense of smell to remember the scent of an old book. At another point, we used our sense of touch to feel a wrinkled page and, then, we tasted the combination between the love of books and food, while at the beginning we had 'lost' our eyesight by keeping our eyes closed in order to hear recorded poetry accompanied by original live music. Sight, taste, hearing, smell, and touch, all our senses were required in order to get to know the stories and the heroes that were born, grew up and aged right there in front of us. Someone told a story, someone turned into a story, someone made up stories – not from book plots, but from wine stains, notes, creases and tears on book pages left or made by readers.

However, it wasn't just as if we were observing their stories like ordinary spectators. On the contrary, **there was a feeling that we were part of their co-creation, accomplices**, as we also confronted our fears, seeking our remedy, looking at ourselves in the mirror. That's why the ending was perfect, because each one of us had the opportunity to tell their own story with a view to inspiring others or, simply, tell it inspired by what they experienced. Every single one had the chance to relax, to read for as long as they liked, or to leave a note to the writers and the performers, who took us on a ride along this route.

Eventually, though, when the 'promenade' was over, **it was like the denouement was written and the book was closed, shifting us back to the present**. At present, we do not seem to find a moment to read, as we once did, we cannot appreciate old libraries or old used books, we prefer to gorge on television series and advertisements, gossip, and sports programmes. Events like 'Ex Libris', though, prove that it might not be too late and, perhaps, the last word on our relationship with books hasn't been written yet.