

BY PER THEIL

In the Name of Jesus

Hotel Pro Forma has created a truly fantastic 'tale of wander' about the son who turns 2,000 this year: Jesus has made it into high-school, and childhood faith is in for the high-jump when 24 stations open to the human eye. It's all about ourselves.

MALMÖ

If you knock on the Virgin Mary's door, it won't necessarily be opened to real men. You can snatch a surreptitious glance behind the glass pane and see a red Norway lobster reveal all.

Into the bargain there's spotless white washing hanging out to dry. But what of the Virgin? She's probably out on the tiles. Pinned to the door is a yellow, rapidly scrawled note: " Back soon".

The Lord moves in mysterious ways. As does Kirsten Dehlholm. And this time—in a dual role as college principal and deaconess—she is leading her public along mysterious and manifold paths to a pictorial world that we certainly recognize as being our own cultural heritage despite not having seen it before. The story of Jesus' life and death is retold, localized and in particular pictorialized in Hotel Pro Forma's very own, (un)Christian spirit.

First, the site that Hotel Pro Forma has chosen for its new show " Jesus_c._odd_size", which is also inaugurating the Cultural Bridge. The venue is odd in every respect: ill-placed, misplaced, of all things. Kirsten Dehlholm and her artistic forces of Danish and foreign disciples have come to squat, if not in a humble hostelry, then at least at a coy Swedish university, located near the port. It could scarcely be any more prosaic; it doesn't get any more council school-like than this, ponging of the classroom when you chance upon the place from the inside.

Kirsten Dehlholm could have chosen a church, but has wisely committed herself to Swedish subject-matter that has been liberated of

any major history. The spirit, and at the best of times the Holy Spirit, comes as part of the pictorial material that Hotel Pro Forma breathes in and fleshes out with the 24 stations (performances, exhibitions and installations), conceived as 24 cardboard lids on a Danish Christmas calendar, albeit not to be opened in any particular sequence here. Kirsten Dehlholm's paths are past understanding, as mentioned, and the show includes a good and a dark route, a loving and a holy route. The point, of course, is that all roads lead to Jesus. Or, if you like, to the story of ourselves.

There's the story of the world of the heart—and the heart of the world, as lectured on in a lengthy video sequence in the auditorium by Erik A. Nielsen, Dr.Phil. There's Mary Magdalene, in the beautiful figure of Ulla Henningsen, tempering the mood, while in the select company of Göran Dyrssen's martyr Stephen she enters into the double tale of darkness about outcasts. And there's the illuminated room of the actual Story, the library, where the books stand side by side in the dark together with the luminous empty computer screens: tabula rasa. And as the librarian—in reality a disfigured man—proffers a chalice of comfort to the visitor and preaches the words of the Bible, love for one's fellow man is also turned against oneself. This is Hammer Horror on a megagothic scale, but it particularly touches the heart. It's a good room.

A religious revivalist show?

Indeed, you might well call it that, Kirsten Dehlholm's stimulating mixture of marketplace and fair-ground. Sometimes you queue for the Christian amusements, and as always with Hotel Pro Forma,

there are strange but intensely authentic people along for the ride: amputees, tattooees, stigmatized people. Misplaced. Odd size, odd people. And yet at no point do we talk of either a freak show or a reality show. Kirsten Dehlholm respects her fellow man too much for that. She simply has too much on her mind for that. She doesn't display our wounds, she heals them.

After all, there are all those pictures that have been specially made up too. Who knew, for instance, that for the 12 disciples there are also 12—or is it 24—grandmothers? They live on the third floor and give entirely new meanings to the concept of a nursing home. When we come to visit, we're the ones who are nursed. Congenial ladies with gold in their hair—pure guardian angels—who cannot wait to tell us all about their grandchildren. There's the Salvation Army, who strike up at regular intervals. And there's the Golgotha picture, in which the three crucified subjects hang in a vacuum of transparent plastic. Three suspended, distorted bodies in air pockets: On the way to death. On the way to life. As in any good performance, it is bristling with stations of birth and death.

But it's in the scene with the Last Supper, in particular, that the paths and story converge around ourselves. A communion table without food and drink, admittedly, but a

communion of recognizable and strange voices. The show's prodigal, stray and scattered disciples have gathered and take turns getting up to say who they are. A name day, then. My name is. Or voiced together with Judas in German: "Ich bin Judas". Jesus is the only one who does not utter his name. When the fair-haired Mike Diana, clad only in a loin cloth, is the last one to rise from the table, he does so in silence and not on behalf of himself, but on behalf of mankind: In the name of Jesus.

A better "travelling" exhibition, not to mention a "tale of wander", is difficult to imagine. Hotel Pro Forma's paths will surely not be perceived alike or received with the same fullness of mind. I think it is a fantastic birthday party. It is as though Kirsten Dehlholm has consciously removed herself from her much-familiar pictures—and beneficially so—to run a popular theatre, in the best sense of the phrase, rooted in medieval miracle and mystery plays.

One sees oneself from new angles, and on one's travels one meets endless new people. A lady stopped me, for example, and studied my name tag, which you are handed at the start: "jesus_c._odd_size". She looked at me intensely and then asked: "Are you Jesus?"

Any guessing what I replied