

Janez Janša
Slovene National Theatre

On 28 October 2006 the Strojans, a family of 31 (including 14 children) were forced to leave the Slovenian village of Ambrus under police escort, and taken to a refugee centre in Postojna, 30 miles away. They had been under siege for two days, trapped by a crowd of fellow townspeople who were demanding they leave the town, under threat of death. The Strojans are “tzigani”, to use the local word, gypsies.

The months following the “Ambrus incident” saw an increase in episodes of racism, directed especially at the Tzigane community. But the most disturbing part of the whole episode was the fact that the aggressive language used by the people of Ambrus, legitimized by the political élite, who took it on and thus normalized it.

It is this very language that the *Slovene National Theatre* invites us to think about: its harshness, but above all its ambiguities; its open, aggressive racism. *Slovene National Theatre* (Slovensko narodno gledališče or SNG) is the installation based on a theatrical piece that works on two levels. On the stage there are four actors standing in a row side by side. Wearing headphones, they mechanically repeat fragments of the media storm that blew up around the episode. At the back of the stage are five giant plasma screens playing videos in which, against a background of five places that symbolism the ostracism of the Tzigane gypsies, Janez Janša (the artist behind the show, not the prime minister) obsessively repeats the mantra “Tziganes... Tziganes... Tziganes”.

Domenico Quaranta