

This is how we begin...

In thinking about artistic process - I think about the moments that lead to the starting points of making a live performance. Very early on in my career, I listened to an old crackly tape recording of musings by Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment one of the UK's pioneering performance companies - where Tim is talking about the moments before the ideas come - and in that pondering he articulates some of the questions that are central to how and why - we/he/they begin -

And he asks - "How can all the things we see in the city be in the performance" - and I think of - a street light bouncing off the pavement, a woman holding a statue [of the Virgin Mary] under her arm, a landlady locking up the pub for the night, a young man in uniform looking in the window of someone's living room, a boy checking his watch, a woman stumbling out of the pub and screaming at the top of her lungs but it appears no one hears her...

And he asks - "How could you make a performance that really spoke to the world we live in now" - and I think of - the tv playing a news bulletin talking of the events of the day and the parading of colour, and with bodies laid out to rest in a stagnant sitting room, and a bedroom with 60's dresses hanging in the wardrobe and the men in drain pipe trousers, and the transcendence of time with her spinning in the middle of the room, and the dance of the autopsy report checking the bullet holes for size, and of the ruptured memories of written artefacts that are articulated through the silhouette of the men in trenches or through the vocal apparatus of a woman standing against the doorway or sitting on the jukebox.

And he asks - "What kind of performance might you make if you were brought up in a house with the television always switched on" - and I think of - who gets to tell the story, whose narrative rise to the top or sinks to the bottom of a closed file, who is asked to be silent, who is asked to speak, how do we witness, where must we look, how deep must we dig, who is there to listen, why should it be heard, who needs to see a version of themselves look back at them, does it matter if she stands there in costume or in a widow's dress but if her words are our words then what must that do to our soul. What does it take to give permission and who has the power to bestow such permission, and who is brave enough to take permission without charge, and how can we place the agency of others at the very centre of how and why we make work?

As Theodore Zeldin explains to us, the 19th century grew industry, the 20th Century developed science and the 21st century is a time for humanity to understand itself. I don't know how well we are doing but perhaps we are just on a steep learning curve. I ask how do we understand ourselves and the world we live in, in the context of others. And when we stand shoulder to shoulder with each other, how do we turn to each other and understand ourselves in the context of our neighbour even if they are 100 years in our past, if their reality has only found a voice

now. How do we acknowledge the inherent reverberation of the past that resonates in the present -

And I ask - how do I do my job to ensure that the interrogation of process, context and the realisation of work that matters to all of us who are makers and audience alike. My job is to bring a set of people to the table. Our job is to bring the historian/curators idea to the rehearsal room, to ask the questions that have yet to be asked, to place the proposition to the stakeholders and to instil a belief in the embryonic starting point -

And he asks - "How can all the things we see in the city be in the performance "- and I think of - the everydayness and the ticking clock, and the cutting of bread, and the pouring of water and the running up the walls, and the fall of a stool on a wooden floor and tearing open of hearts and minds to embody and portray - and I think of all who see themselves in the faces, minds and stories of others - and I think of how we survive and why they lived through the unlivable - and I think of the people who live next door and who knock on the door during rehearsals to ask to come in and see what we are making.

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