

It was good to be back at the National Review this year, especially with Julian Maynard Smith, with whom I worked on my first major show, Invisible Work in 1984-5, which was performed at the Midland Group in Nottingham, just before Nikki's move to Glasgow. I was revisiting that early work with Ape to some extent, second-hand furniture and little else: a sort of camping, homeless, non-aesthetic.

My second piece, If the Cap Fits, with Caroline Wilkinson, followed Nikki to Glasgow at Third Eye Centre in 1987. Animal was the first performance at the Review in 1989. This was a larger scale piece for five performers. It began with a mass of soft toys facing the audience; a performer treads through them apologetically and then watches another trample through them regardless. I think it might have been the first performance of Animal (it was so long ago). It went on about half an hour longer than its eventual running time. The work has always been funny without that being the point, what was important to me was the structure of the pieces, which includes any speech. I have always seen the work in relation to sculpture and the notion of Live Art only makes sense to me in this larger context. It wasn't so easy being funny in an art context then, I suppose I have always wanted to attack a consensus, or I have identified with an outsider position. It is a plea for seriousness without adoration or worship.

It is hard to see other work if you are performing on the same day. it is impossible to queue for it. The memorable things for me this year (2009) were Wendy Houstoun's 'endless' dance, She engaged with the audience initially, albeit indirect, but is lost eventually in a repetitious reverie that is both celebratory and chilling. Wendy was also my second co-performer on Ape. Another wonderful moment for me was Florence Peake's dying moth played with intense concentration to a small group sitting around a table in a darkened room, watching her fitful, intermittent flapping hands under an angle poise lamp. There was much that I missed, but those are two moments that will stay with me. Franko B declaring some work to be bourgeois shit and damning others as 'entertainment' introduced a lively polemic. Whether the religiosity implicit in much of the work that plays on variations of the Passion, sacrifice, reverence and shamanism has a greater claim to seriousness than the more secular work, I don't know. Nor, which is the more bourgeois. It comes down to particular cases rather than types of work. I have always enjoyed making work that is funny in a context where some will find that painful. The National Review has always worked against a consensus and promoted radical work of all kinds. The eclectic mixture of work promotes contention and controversy, long may it continue.

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