

The Extended Programme Note

Not A Tosser

What is it? Come in, escape from reality and witness the most marvellous living creature. The concealer of all collections an accumulator of all clutter. Do not mistake this compromiser for a tosser.

Not a Tosser, is a performance installation which aims to explore the relationship between the accumulator and their objects and highlight the ridiculousness of one's clutter collecting, by researching the way in which people retain objects of apparent little value. This performance discovers the human need to retain objects which have an emotional rather than a practical value to its possessor. The reason why people retain certain items which have no material worth, are driven by an array of different factors; these can range from the emotional relationship between the item and it's possessor, for example, a souvenir of a memorable occasion, or because of a primitive instinct within human nature which may suggest that the individual is inclined to meticulously retain objects, which he or she feels may be of use in the future.

The objects that I have chosen to work with within the piece are of my own accumulation: my father's clothes, car parts, wires, records, video tapes, a baby blanket, a Barbie doll, a pair of clogs and other clutter; these objects are all in effect useless junk however precious some may seem. The process initially started with smaller objects, such as: key-rings, brooches, coins, written letters and knotted costume jewellery, which were found in an old jewellery box hidden within a space; when reacquainting myself with such objects a great sense of nostalgia became apparent as each souvenir generated its own narrative (Stewart, 1993, p.135). Stewart (1993, p.23) describes that:

nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness in which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience. Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as a narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack.

Through this feeling of nostalgia, the narrative for each object became apparent. The objects in my performance are metonymic, and are not homomaterial (Stewart, 1993, p.136); their value can be compared to Stewarts discussion of the Eiffel Tower souvenir and its narrative. Stewart (1993, p.136) explains that:

if I purchase a plastic miniature of the Eiffel Tower as a souvenir of my trip to Paris, the object is not a homomaterial one; it is representation in another medium. But whether the souvenir is a material sample or not, will still exist as a sample of the now-distanced experience which the object can only evoke and resonate to, and can never entirely recoup.

Like the object of the plastic Eiffel Tower has nothing to do with the real Eiffel Tower, it may instead evoke an experience of that particular trip. Objects seen in my work such as the Mini Cooper part does not pertain to being part of a car; the narrative is, that it was linked to my late father who's hobby was to renovate classic cars. The large clogs which I also use have no relevance to Greece where they were purchased, but their narrative leads to my aunt who had them as a young woman and has passed them to me. Stewart (1993, p.136) continues to explain that 'within the operation of the souvenir, the sign of functions not so much as object to object, but beyond this relation, metonymically, as object to event/experience'. The understanding of Stewarts concept that the 'souvenir distinguishes experience'

(1993, p.135), aided my decision making when choosing objects of "otherness" that would highlight the ridiculousness of the collected clutter - hereinafter termed the souvenir.

At this stage, I began experimenting with the notion that if the souvenir is metonymic is it changeable and questioned if I could alter its meaning and narrative so that is it no longer metonymic but is an exact and not an allusion? I thought about the somewhat primitive response in which we keep souvenirs that we feel may prove useful in the future; the Neanderthal collected many objects such as lead and transported them long distances in order to create new objects such as tools or jewellery (Muller and Shrenk, 2008, p.84). I decided to explore this within my practice and create new souvenirs out of souvenirs. For example, in my performance you will see the clogs used as pockets and a platform shoe made out of a Mini Cooper Stereo and broken house phone. There was a somewhat primitive feeling that became apparent during this exploration; I had initially during the beginning of my research explained that the reasons why people accumulate their souvenirs is of a primitive instinct within human nature.

The idea of space was becoming significantly more important as the process developed; the notion of the visible and invisible spaces in which objects are stored. The concealing of souvenirs is almost bestial and unconscious: it is easier to store souvenirs in boxes than to make a conscious decision to *toss* them away. When describing the Concealer, Baird (2002, p.15) explains:

the Concealer is similar to the Accumulator, but his stuff is neatly packed away or hidden so that an outsider won't catch on to the fact that he has clutter too. The Concealer loves storage containers of all types: boxes, baskets, bins, canisters, containers, file cabinets, and crates. His items are often neatly stacked and carefully labelled.

Baird's description of the Concealer, brought to my attention how I found my accumulated souvenirs: placed in a space within a space a 'centre within a centre' (Stewart, 1993, p.151). By placing objects within such spaces such as loft's and garages, merely highlights the point that the object is to some extent inaccessible, but yet, the fact that the object remains in the possession of the individual can bring a degree of comfort. In essence, the object is placed at the back of the person's mind where it is 'out-of-sight' without being completely forgotten (Baird, 2002, p.20). From this idea I decided that I would exaggerate the space in which we store such souvenirs and create a giant box in which the audience can enter the invisible space and witness the ridiculousness of our clutter concealing. The particular spacing of the giant box within the space is also significant, as it portrays the notion a box in which has been placed and 'having been forgotten, and abandoned in a corner' (Bachelard, 1994, p.142).

As part of my process, I have taken the ideas of a small section of Herman Hesse's *Steppenwolf* - *The Magic Theatre*: the box has become my own Magic Theatre in which I, as the Concealer, am confronted with the reality of my collection the useless objects have restricted my freedom of movement. The human body has now become the object, the other, the P.T Barnumesque hidden museum character.

To be seen at all hours at Barnum's Museum.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Baird, L. (2002). *Cut The Clutter and Stow The Stuff: The Q.U.I.C.K Way to Bring Lasting Order to Household Chaos*. United States of America: Yankee Publishing Inc.

Cut The Clutter and Stow The Stuff is edited by Lori Baird the purpose of this book is to inform its reader, not necessarily a academic student or researcher, in the best ways to tame the clutter you have stored in your home using the revolutionary Q.U.I.C.K. clutter-control system. in five steps you could have a clutter-free home. This book was very useful to my work, It allowed me to understand the different types of clutter collectors such as the concealer, the dropper the accumulator and the tosser. Baird discusses the clutter traits of each of these clutter collecting types as though they are characters of a book this helped me to imagine myself as one of the characters such as the concealer when creating my own work.

Bachelard, G. (with Stilgoe, R. J.). (1994). *The Poetics of Space The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*. United States of America: Beacon Press Books.

The Poetics of space was written by Gaston Bachelard, who was one of Europe's leading philosophers. He is also the author of two other books: The Psycholansis of Fire and The Poetics of Reverie. The Poetics of Space is a phenomenological interrogation into the meaning of spaces and spaces within spaces such as: a house, a draw, a corner, shelves, chests and wardrobes. This book is particularly useful to my research as I am looking at the idea of the invisible space once the object has been stored into these spaces it is unseen. Bachelard touches upon, in the latter part of the book the idea of objects that are in the depths of the corners and have been abandoned. I feel that this text would be appropriate for students, researchers and consumers.

Hesse, H. (2011). *Steppenwolf*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

From 1904, Hermann Hesse devoted himself to writing, establishing his reputation with a series of romantic novels. Hesse has won many literary awards including the Nobel prize for literature in 1946. The protagonist is a character called Harry, a productive, organised, intellectual and middle class man. The part in which I have focused particularly on in this book is The Magic Theatre in which Harry stumbles across one night when he is walking through the old quarter of the city. It states "Magic Theatre Entrance - Not For Everybody" in this theatre is 'exactly what awaits' Harry. In this magic theatre he will be erased of his 'superfluous' reflection and will see a true image of himself. This book is useful to my work as it is allowing my process to develop further naturally, it is allowing me to change my concept from autobiography into fiction.

Susan, S. (1993). *On Longing Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

This book was written by Susan Stewart, a Professor of English at Temple University.

The intended audience for this book is students, researches and general consumers. This book is useful to my work as the focus of discussion addresses the relationship of language to experience, of the body to scale, and importantly narratives to objects. Susan Stewart also looks at the "miniature"

as a metaphor for interiority and at the "gigantic" as an exaggeration. In the latter part of her essay, Stewart examines the ways in which the "souvenir" and the "collection" are objects mediating experience in time and space. Stewart also discusses how objects such as the souvenir can bear the burden of nostalgia. This book is extremely relevant to my work as I am looking at the link between objects and narratives and also the ways in which without these narratives the nostalgia does not occur.

Secondary Sources:

Anderson, W.S., Damasio, H. and Damasio, R.A. (2005). A neural basis for collecting behaviour in humans. *Guarantors of Brain*, 128 (1), pp.201-212. Retrieved from <http://brain.oxfordjournals.org/content/128/1/201.article-info>

Cornelia Parker: Thirty Pieces of Silver 1988-9. (n.d.). Retrieved from Tate website: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/parker-thirty-pieces-of-silver-t07461>

Dancetechtv. (2011, July 22). "*La Ribot Distinguida*" Documentary from Luc Peter (English Subtitles) [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqU0CsQuGr0>

Hudek, A. (Ed). (2014). *The Object*. London: White Chapel Gallery.

Hauser & Wirth. (n.d.). *Christoph Büchel Images*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/3/christoph-buchel/images-clips/>

Heeseop Yoons Masking Tape Installations. (2012). Retrieved from Beautiful Decay Website:<http://beautifuldecay.com/2012/10/18/heeseop-yoons-masking-tape-installations/>

Oldfield, M. (2013). *The Secret Museum*. London: Collins

Ponty-Merleau, M. (1968). *The Visible and The Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Muller, S., & Shrenk, F. (2008) *The Neanderthals*. London: Routledge.

The Barnum Museum. (n.d.). [Home page]. Retrieved from <http://www.barnum-museum.org/manmythlegend.htm>

The Tate. (n.d.). *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*. Retrieved from <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/cold-dark-matter>

Unclutterer: The Collyer Brothers, a Study in Compulsive Hoarding. (2007). Retrieved from Unclutterer Website: <http://unclutterer.com/2007/04/26/the-collyer-brothers-a-study-in-compulsive-hoarding/>