



A small constellation

“What speaks to us, seemingly, is always the big event, the untoward, the extra-ordinary: the front-page splash, the banner headlines... What’s really going on, what we’re experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?”

What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms. To question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us. We live, true, we breathe, true; we walk, we open doors, we go down staircases, we sit at a table in order to eat, we lie down on a bed in order to sleep. How? Why? Where? When? Why?”

Describe your street. Describe another street. Compare.

Question your teaspoons.”

(Extracts from George Perec’s “Essay on the ‘infra-ordinary’”)

Don’t lose sight of anybody else.

Some people meet in a room. Each of them gets familiar with who else is there. They become a group, at least for now.

The group goes out together into the city. They have a simple set of instructions: don’t lose sight of anybody else; go wherever you like; nobody should lead the group; don’t let the public know the group exists – try to blend in...

A couple of hours later they return to the room they met in. Together they build a white-card scale model of the experience they’ve just had. A representation of the world outside and what just happened in it.

A small constellation is a strategy for making an instant performance about seeing ourselves in relation to others. It asks us to make ourselves invisible, to blend in with the crowd. In doing so, we become aware of our presence in the everyday, of our visibility in the city. We might even become garish, hyper-conscious of ourselves within familiar surroundings - or conversely, quietly disappear....

The project takes the form of a participatory event in public space in a city for between 10 and 100 people. Participants take part in a short workshop to establish the rules and techniques for the event and then make their way out into the world. They return to reflect upon and document their experiences through building a scale model. The building of the model is open to the public and the model can remain in situ once the event is over.

A small constellation grew out of the making of Quarantine’s production *Entitled*, and has since been developed at Festival a/d Werf in Utrecht, Dublin Theatre Festival and SHIFT Festival, Contact, Manchester.

A small constellation is created and led by Quarantine’s co-Artistic Director Richard Gregory and designer Simon Banham.

Company Background

Quarantine was set up in 1998 by artists Simon Banham, Richard Gregory and Renny O'Shea to make theatre, performance and other public events. The company has been in the vanguard of artists across the last decade or so working with untrained performers. Quarantine has developed a distinct methodology with a clear aesthetic and dramaturgy, establishing a unique and radical way of working and engaging with contemporary life. The work is made out of lengthy and intimate research with its performers and participants, often working with people who are rarely seen on stage.

¶ *Quarantine is quite simply a marvel, a company that's right at the forefront of British theatre... immensely touching, totally human yet also intellectually rigorous in their examination of the nature of performance and the raising of questions about what makes theatre seem real and reality so strongly theatrical.*

- LYN GARDNER, THE GUARDIAN ¶

We've made 28 original pieces of varying scale. There have been family parties, shared meals and cookery lessons; karaoke booths, radio broadcasts and journeys in the dark for one person at a time - as well as performances on stage for audiences in seats. Although the form varies, the work has an identifiable set of contradictory qualities that somehow coalesce – fragile, clumsy, intimate, knowingly-subjectively-beautiful, banal. The approach embraces ambiguity, serious intentions and doubt - and is driven by asking questions.

Recent touring includes: Festival de Otoño en Primavera, Madrid; Festival a/d Werf, Utrecht; Sadler's Wells, London; Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival, Groningen; Auawirleben, Bern; Norfolk & Norwich Festival, Norwich; Theater Spektakel, Zurich; Heimspiel, Cologne; HAU, Berlin; CAMPO, Gent; Kilkenny Arts Festival, Kilkenny; Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester; Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester; Fierce Festival, Birmingham; Barbican Arts Centre & BAC, London.

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