

## Kevin Finnan

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In a recent review of my current show Perfect in the Sunday Times, Clifford Bishop described the piece as “a warm, beguiling, oddly reassuring work” I was nonplussed. How had this come to be? I felt disoriented rather like the indignant Ozzy Osbourne bemoaning his predicament when finding himself onstage with a bubble machine as he proclaimed to the ever patient Sharon “but I’m supposed to be the prince of f\*\*\*\*\*g Darkness”. How indeed could bubbles surround the prince of darkness? Suddenly, I had a work that is “warm and beguiling”. I had never had a work described as warm and beguiling. I certainly did not consider myself to be the prince of darkness but I had been producing (or so I thought) high-energy dance and feeling more at home with the darker side of human relationships. Things had changed.

2004 was an intense year for me personally and also for my company Motionhouse. There was the culmination of two major projects, the Edge performance project at Watergate bay in Cornwall and Dancing Inside at HMP Dovegate. The Edge was an enormous performance event that took place on the completely tidal beach at Watergate Bay. It included over 700 children from the ages of 4 to 18 performing alongside 20 professional dancers; a dozen major installations created by teams of artists with a further 500 children; giant sand cities; a fleet of pirate ships and a dance with 4 JCB diggers. Walking around relaying instructions by two-way radio felt more like organising D-day landings than a performance event. Hugely contrasting in site, the Dancing Inside prison project was a very intense and demanding experience for both the Motionhouse dancers and myself. The project brought together a group of long-term residents at HMP Dovegate to make a performance work which was then shown on (and ‘toured’ to) the residential wings of the prison. I believe that this was a richly rewarding project for everyone concerned. I certainly learnt a lot from it.

After successfully completing these projects, instead of resting as any sane person would do, the dancers and I set out to make our new touring work Perfect. To complete the madness, at the same time I was desperately struggling to submit my PhD. I had hoped to complete it before commencing work on Perfect. It should all have worked so perfectly... However, the demands of other projects did not leave enough time for that to happen and I was left having to hand in my PhD on the very day that my new show premiered. Sometimes, from complete madness the unexpected happens and it certainly feels like that now... Why was I even bothering with a PhD? The answer to that is the problem of longevity. If an artist continues to create work over a long period of time, what is it that fuels this work, and what is the mechanism for development by which the

artist can change and develop which is essential if the work is to continue to grow? The answer to these questions points up what is common to artists and what is unique. I suspect that what fuels artists to continue to produce work over a long period of time is a curious blend of need and desire to create work. How each artist engages with the development of his or her work is unique to them and reflects the individuality of their work. Purists might argue that an ongoing practice develops itself organically. My personal response to this notion is that it is true, but only up to a point. I felt I needed a framework to question and challenge the ongoing 'organic' development of my work so started down the 'dark path' of academic research.

I was initially concerned that the strictures of academia would crush the creative spark of my work. Academic research has to conform to a particular structure of argument and justification. To engage with this it is necessary to learn a new way of thinking which appears trammelled and limited by comparison with artistic exploration. To my surprise, I found the clash between the two disciplines to be very creative. This creative clash had a price however, a mountain of ongoing frustration. One way to deal with the ongoing frustration of two forms of research was to keep returning to the underlying sense of enquiry. How and why do things work as they do? As an artist I try in my own way to respond to things around me, the experiences of my own life and the experiences of my friends are noticed in relation to the way of living in the world. I try and notice the particular in my life and the lives of those close to me - which speed past in the everyday - and consider this information in relation to the political and social situation in which it unfolds. It could be argued that academic research looks for arguments and answers. This cannot be the goal of art - I believe that art looks for good questions. One of the exciting aspects of artistic research is the opportunity to make intuitive leaps into the unknown, to move fast and explore, whereas academic research is more akin to the laborious (but worthy) process of bridge building from one notion to another - justifying an argument with exhaustive reference to others. The excitement of intuitive leaps is that you do discover new things. However, the academic research taught me that in continuous leaping sometimes you miss things.

In my work over the last few years I have become increasingly interested in the relationship between the physical spaces we construct through architecture such as homes and workplaces, and the spaces that we generate through social interaction such as relationships. It was natural then that my academic enquiry should follow the same lines. The interesting thing to me was how the two different enquiries led to a completely new direction for me. Academic research teaches many things; a fundamental, however, is *how* to research. It teaches you how to open up a field of enquiry, not just follow the leaps of your individual interest. In learning to broaden my research process and question basic assumptions my work began to change. Instead of my particular interest in the relationship between architectural space and the body, I began to explore the relationship between the body and the different experiences of space we live.

This reversed the polarity of my thinking - instead of space and the body I was now considering the body as it experiences space, which led me to consider the role of time. This led me ultimately to the creation of Perfect.

Each of the three pieces The Edge, Dancing Inside and Perfect engage with the relationship between time and space as we live it today. It sounds very deep but it isn't really. It is just a noticing of the conditions we live in rather than a casual acceptance of the way things are. The Edge performance was a playing of how we are in a place dominated by time: the sea covers the beach every high tide. We go to the beach for a particular experience of time. In prison, time and space become highly focussed and controlled and it was interesting to explore those experiences with the men through the practice of Contact Improvisation and in the creation of a performance. Contact and performance create the possibility and the opportunity for different relationships to time and space to be explored. Dancing Inside was a very moving project for me.

The making of Perfect and the completion of my PhD at the very same time was the most demanding thing I have ever done. The undertaking of academic research while continuing artistic research is a double-edged sword. The good side is that there is a wonderful opportunity for the work to move on. The crap side is living like a monk with every waking minute spent either in the studio or chained permanently to a laptop, with all family and social relationships abandoned.

In Perfect I attempt to explore different experiences of time - the present discerned in the joy of the moment of sensation, feeling the sand between your toes; the future depending entirely on your present point of view, such as the many different ways of considering the future that every prospective parent goes through in the wonderful expectation or deep foreboding possible in the time of pregnancy; the accumulation of time that we see in the mirror every day - as we grow older we carry the marks of our past. Each of these thoughts created images for Perfect. They came from a broader field of research combining intuition and a questioning why. I did not always know the answer but knew that they formed an interesting question - what is our time like?

In the making of Perfect I felt there was only the work and nothing else, I had no other life and perhaps that brings me back to Ozzy and the bubbles. Perhaps in the complete absence of any life of my own I was able to explore what I was missing. The work champions living life in a way that I wasn't. So maybe that is how it came to be warm and beguiling? It is amazing where your searching can lead.