

Point Blank

In your earlier plays, *Or Press Escape* and also in *New Game*, technology plays an important role. *Or Press Escape* takes place entirely on a computer desktop, and in *New Game* we find ourselves in the world of a videogame. In this play too, *Point Blank*, the main character looks at the world through a camera. How important is this technological mediation in your work?

When I'm creating a play, I don't start from the medium. With *Or Press Escape*, for instance, I wanted to make a performance about the state of being alone. But, of course, as soon as you address the public directly, then you break that situation of being alone. To solve that problem, to avoid having to address the audience directly, I used the computer as a kind of reflection screen or mediator. On the other hand, we are living in the year 2007 and this is my reality. I don't write letters, I write e-mails. We are doing this interview through Skype, instead of live or over the phone. I find these instruments interesting: they inspire me, they stimulate my imagination more than the classic table and chair of the theatre or the plywood of a fake set. They're instruments which I'm used to and which I feel comfortable with. But I don't consider myself to be a new-media artist. It's just a fact that I no longer print my photos but I store them digitally on my computer. And so I work with this technology. It is also a practical choice. In the case of *Point Blank*, for instance, it's more practical for the presentation of the photos to project them onto a screen than to ask the audience to pass around the pictures one by one.

Then why do you still explicitly choose the medium of the theatre?

I like the genre of theatre for the concentration which it allows. It has a certain length which makes it possible to develop a more profound and more complex story. I like the live situation between the audience and the performer(s) and the intimacy which such a situation can bring. I also like it when as a spectator I get enough space to experience that. But when the performer(s) or the performance itself overpower the situation - by being too loud, too extroverted, by going too fast or by overdoing it - then for me that blocks the intimacy which could emerge.

Personally, I find it very interesting to watch people work on stage. In my opinion, there is something particularly theatrical in watching someone press a button and to see that the light goes on, in sharing in that concentration. For this performance too I made some very practical choices. Someone has to project the photos, and so I'm going to be seated on the edge of the stage, just about visible to the audience.

Is the loneliness of the individual a radically contemporary issue for you?

When I look around me today, I can see in any case a world in which it is easier to shut yourself off from your surroundings. You watch television or work on your laptop. Speaking for myself, I can certainly say that I always find it difficult having a normal conversation after I've spent hours behind my computer.

For *Point Blank* you chose an 18-year-old girl as your main character, a girl who captures the world in pictures. Why did you find that to be such an interesting starting point?

The performance is based on the experiences of a girl I know who has the same age. I felt very close to her because I had a similar experience. When I was 16, I moved to New York, without my parents. It took a few months before a school agreed to take me in without my parents there. I had nothing to do all that time, I knew no one, so I kept myself busy by following people in the streets. That's how I got to know the city. Most of the time I soon lost sight of them, or I got bored after a while.

For that girl, observing people is a way of gaining experience through the experiences of other people. She wants to learn more, wants to know what options she has before making her own choices. And those choices can be very different: today, for instance, I was on the train and on one side there was a young man, around 22, in a striped suit, who could have been working as a real estate agent. On the other side there was a young hippie of the same age. People make different choices in life. A lot of course is determined by your family and the environment you grew up in, and you need a minimum of comfort to be able to make those choices. As for the protagonist of *Point Blank*, taking those photographs gives her better insight into the options which she can see around her, into the ways she could lead her life. Of course it has a lot to do with curiosity. When you're 18, life is still quite a big mystery.

By projecting the photographs, you end up in another form of theatre. Rather than watch something which has been staged, you watch a slice of life, from someone's real life.

In *Point Blank* it was important for me to open up the theatre to the people in the photographs, to create in the theatre a passageway to 'normal' life.

**Edit Kaldor in conversation with
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