

PACITTI COMPANY THINK TANK

PAST EVENTS RESOURCE

This FREE download refers to:

PERFORMING COLLECTIONS: THE SHADOW MUSEUM SEASON BUTLER

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GENERAL THINK TANK INFORMATION

Housed within the specially refurbished Victorian Wing of the Ipswich Museum and Art School Gallery, the Pacitti Company Think Tank is a building-based resource for the ongoing exploration and study of live performance and radical praxis. Pacitti Company welcomes broad audiences at the Think Tank, to a curated rolling programme of local, national and international events. These activate thinking and discussion around live art, performance and wider cultural topics. The Think Tank offers accessible, affordable public events, led by artists and experts from a range of diverse fields. These events and sessions are recorded by various means, so that a cumulative body of research and knowledge extends beyond the experiences of those present, into territories that serve researchers, students, archivists, practitioners and policy makers.

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For any further information please contact thinktank@pacitticompany.com

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THE SHADOW MUSEUM SEASON BUTLER

Museums are one of many kinds of place where we can go to see ourselves, both in the (hi)stories in which we recognise our own lives, and in things that feel so remote that we recognise ourselves in relation to this difference. I found both operating in the Ipswich Museum when I was tasked to create a performative response to it for Performing Collections.

The resulting "Shadow Museum" was a collection of objects, sounds, moving and still images which I collected from unseen or unnoticed parts of Ipswich, a kind of negative (in the non-pejorative sense) constructed to show the place back to itself. With this I was also able to play with the politics of representation that informs Victorian museums. I wanted to see what would happen in a museum about this place in the contemporary moment – rather than a museum about Others and Elsewhere's – and how the audience would react to the storytelling element falling into different hands than the traditional authority of museum curators. Visitors to the Shadow Museum were encouraged to write the captions for the collection's pieces, while the "curator" (my animation of, and homage to, the Nigeria Gallery mannequins) sampled and retold the visitors' own stories.

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DISCUSSION FOLLOWING SEASON'S SHADOW MUSEUM SESSION AT PACITTI COMPANY

RECORDED BY LUCY WALKER

Attendees had been invited to put labels onto Season's objects she had mainly found around the waterways of Ipswich, contemporary photographs, and objects which people had donated/contributed; // with Season impersonating a curator (with strong colonial twist) gathering stories, and inviting people to contribute a story which she then interpreted, typed out and hung on a line – ready for use in the museum.

Lucy's notes of Robert's conversation with Season and subsequent discussion points:

RP: What did you want to achieve? What happens when you collect and put in a story?

SB: I wanted to challenge authority, representation and authority; who tells the story. I was tasked with making a response [to the Ipswich museum collections and displays]. I wanted to make a collection and see how we start to define all these things. How we use these objects within a 'meaning making' matrix. I spent time in the Nigeria gallery and want to shed light on the explanation of things displayed. Shadow/ reflecting ethnography.

RP: Performing collections: exploring a working model – artist residency – 2 way traffic of conversation, eg. about objects and things. 10 day residency.

SB: I spent a lot of time walking round the canal system and waterways [in Ipswich]. I'm interested in these urban spaces with tall grass and weeds and animals. I also spent time in the museum and in the stores with Will and Lucy.

RP: Trust: this has enabled the taxidermy to be in the room tonight [Acknowledges museum]. Go back to the museum.

SB: There is a conversation to be had. The Nigeria gallery – manikins with heads and no faces and no hands. Labels in the present tense – not given a history.

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Botanics: my mother is a herbalist – has the idea that plants in the immediate area of their house might help cure a person. Ipswich – dandelions – kidneys.

RP: Topline

SB: Headline: last suggestion – become an explorer – an apt provocation; very positive. It takes a lot of objects to make something feel like a collection. I didn't know whether people would engage – I loved the response – so much came from future.

Audience:

- So many dimensions – too many? Museum locked; Colonialism; relationship of individuals to objects.
- Is that all one? Compare the stories in museum and stories here.
- SB: I'm questioning the fallibility of authority. I set us all the task of changing things into objects, knowing that it is doomed to failure.
- Science – enquiry – new information - truth – stories
- Museums are ruling class institutions
- Forced me to no longer be passive about receiving dominant narrative
- SB: How do stories go from point of origin through conduit to museum tag beside an object.
- MT (Marie, C&IMS outreach) felt like an object and liked it that 'the curator' was interested in her.
- Class problematic: does not know an exhibition that is classless
- MT: I take objects out to people, with no knowledge, gets a response.
- RP: we need a glossary for conflicting words.
- Unlocked: dancers; Supplementary School: Chinese and Portuguese in response to collection.