

Gazing at *Exhibit A*: Interview with Brett Bailey

Anton Krueger

Brett Bailey recently toured a new work in Europe and South Africa, called *The Exhibit Series* (2010-2013). In different countries the work has appeared under different titles—*Exhibit A* and *Exhibit B*, while *Exhibit C* will be produced in 2014. These productions replicate and parody ethnographic spectacles of the nineteenth century, interrogating European colonial atrocities in Africa, as well as contemporary xenophobia. They consist of a series of installations housed in individual rooms that audience members enter one by one. Inside these rooms one is confronted by beautifully arranged spectacles referencing historical atrocities committed in Namibia by German speaking peoples, as well as atrocities under the Belgian and French colonial regimes in the two Congos. The “exhibits” also include references to more recent incidents of European racism against migrants from Africa. The work has been both applauded and derided. In Berlin, for example, activists called it “a human zoo” and protested that this was “the wrong way to discuss a violent colonial history,”¹ while others have called the work “haunting”, praising the production for its “dignity” and “beauty.”²

Anton Krueger teaches performance studies and creative writing in the Drama Department at Rhodes University in South Africa. Besides criticism on contemporary South African theatre, he also publishes in a range of other genres, including plays, poetry and prose. **Brett Bailey** is a South African playwright, designer, director, installation maker and the artistic director of Third World Bunfight. He has worked throughout South Africa, in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Haiti, the UK and Europe. His acclaimed iconoclastic dramas (e.g., *Big Dada*, *Ipi Zombi?*, *iMumbo Jumbo* and *Orfeus*) and performance installations (e.g., *Blood Diamonds: Terminal* and *Exhibit A & B*) interrogate the dynamics of the post-colonial world. His works have played across Europe, Australia and Africa, and have won several awards, including a gold medal for design at the Prague Quadrennial (2007). He directed the opening show at the World Summit on Arts and Culture in Johannesburg (2009), and from 2006-2009 the opening shows at the Harare International Festival of the Arts. From 2008-2011 he was curator of South Africa’s only public arts festival, ‘Infecting the City’, in Cape Town.

¹ Shirley Apthorp, “Black ‘Human Zoo’ Fury Greets Berlin Art Show” Bloomberg, 4 October, 2012. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-03/black-human-zoo-fury-greets-berlin-art-show.html> (Accessed 17 October, 2012).

² Brent Meersman, “Resisting the muse of imperial ‘science.’” *Mail & Guardian*, 7 June, 2010. <http://mg.co.za/article/2010-06-07-resisting-the-muse-of-imperial-science> (Accessed 17 October, 2012).

This public discussion took place between Brett Bailey and Anton Krueger as part of a series called “Talking Arts” at Thinkfest, at the 2012 National Arts Festival held in Grahamstown, South Africa.³ (An introduction to Brett Bailey is provided in the second paragraph of this discussion.)

ANTON KRUEGER: This is a series called “Talking Arts,” but I wanted to start off by saying that we should bear in mind that the real thing is the show itself, not this discussion of it. This particular show we’re talking about today, *Exhibit A*, is, in a sense, wordless. There’s no dialogue. The only voices we hear are a choir singing as a backdrop to the presentation of the human body framed in space. Perhaps this discussion is a kind of window dressing to that performance of an image, but it’s a different kind of game we’re playing here. The main thing is that show that we’ve experienced, and been moved by.

I don’t think Brett needs a lot of introduction. If you’re sitting here you’re probably aware of his pedigree as one of the most consistently innovative, intelligent, mind and soul-bending artists from South Africa—and, actually, the world, one might go as far as to say. He first came to prominence in the nineties with a trilogy of plays recounting stories about the amaXhosa people living in the Eastern Cape. These plays dealt with ritual in a way that hadn’t been seen before, and for that he was awarded the Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Award in 2001. He formed the company Third World Bunfight, which is now in its sixteenth year and since forming this company he’s been directing theatre productions, installations, opera, house music shows, and site-specific performances.

Brett Bailey’s work is idiosyncratic and iconoclastic. It’s about colonialism, and post-colonialism. All of his productions seem to have something to do with relations between Africa and the West, besides one work set in Haiti. *Exhibit A* has already been seen in Austria, Belgium, and Germany, and he has a residency coming up after the festival at Lake Como in Italy.

Brett, maybe you could start us off telling us a bit about the reception you’ve had in Europe from the public?

BRETT BAILEY: Actually very similar to the reception here. I was thinking, “it’s going to be so interesting to watch the South Africans. How are they going to respond?” But it’s very much like other places. A lot of people are crying when they come out, people are very moved, people like to sit quietly...it’s always interesting watching the chatter going in, but then there’s this isolation and quietness when peo-

³ Many thanks to Nathanael Vlachos for transcribing this interview.

ple come out. The emotions that people mention are feeling “disturbed,” and feeling “shame.” Shame comes up a lot.

ANTON KRUEGER: I suppose that as emotions go it’s not a very popular one. It’s not something you might want to use as the logline to sell your show: “Come and be ashamed. Feel guilty” (*laughter*). And yet, because it’s so beautiful, people have this aesthetic experience as well. So they have, if one dare call it an almost “richer” experience of shame, a curious mixture of shame and beauty.

BRETT BAILEY: There were two devices I’m working with in this piece. For one, I wanted to create images where you are seduced by beauty—you want to look—but the content is so horrific you also don’t want to look. You don’t know where to look. Somehow you find yourself between these two levels. And the other trick I’m using is having the people in the installations looking back at you.

People have asked me if I made this work in order to shame people. No, not at all. I made this work to excavate. Another thing that’s in this work is that I’m a white South African. One side of my family has been here since 1674. They were probably slave owners; they were complicit in everything that’s happened here. My own society, my people have been immensely enriched by a lot of these atrocities. Also, I was born in 1967; I was conscripted into the army. The role models at school were the priests, and the teachers who were putting forward a philosophy of racism, of racial superiority. So I can’t ignore that that’s part of my cultural DNA, my intellectual DNA. I was brought up with that. It’s the soil that I absorbed as a kid. How do I unravel that? What were the roots of that? What were the images that I was fed and that my ancestors were fed in order to perpetuate this myth that one race is better than the other? I wasn’t out to deliberately create images of shame, except a lot of the stuff I came across shamed me and then I tried to find the images that articulated that.

ANTON KRUEGER: Could you tell us something about the origins of the work? What first got you thinking about this theme?

BRETT BAILEY: I was given *carte blanche* by the Vienna Festival in 2010, and I’d been tossing around this idea for a while of a human zoo, an ethnographic spectacle. I picked up a book many years ago called *Africans on Stage*⁴. It looks at these spectacles, like a group of amaXhosa people who were exhibited in London, also Sara Baartman, and a pygmy who was exhibited in a real zoo in New York, and so on. But what I found really captivating was the image on the front of the book, which was a guy with a toothbrush moustache and a bowler hat, and a brown, rough sort of suit. And he’s standing there like this well-built chap, and the Hottentots are arranged around him

⁴ Bernth Lindfors (Ed.), *Africans on stage: studies in ethnological show business*. (Cape Town: D. Philip, 1999).

and they're reclining in a sort of Victorian pose. It's exquisite—I just wanted to be that guy, and I was like “Oh god, I want to do something like that, just to ruffle some feathers.”

So I wanted to go and collect people off the streets and set up an ethnographic zoo in Europe. But I realized that wasn't very PC., and so, because I was commissioned by the German-speaking world (the work was also going to Braunschweig in Germany), I zoomed out and I asked: “What is the German colonial experience in Africa?” I uncovered for myself the atrocities that followed the Herero Rebellion of 1904 and the subsequent Nama Rebellion death camps and the horrors that came out of them. And then I also thought it's so easy—I know from the situation in South Africa—it's so easy to say “Oh, this was a situation from a hundred years ago, it doesn't really have that much impact on us today,” so I started fishing around when I was doing my research in Austria, asking: how do I locate this in the present? I started looking at the status of asylum seekers and immigrants in the E.U. at the moment, and so I spread it into that.

ANTON KRUEGER: You sent me a few documents about the show and when I first saw the subject matter, I must admit I was a little taken aback. My initial response was to wonder how this was really all that different to the original exhibitions. There's this strange fascination we have with horror. I was thinking about the pictures we see from Auschwitz, which give us this weird, heady mix of feelings: from shock at the monstrosity of it, as well as pity and sorrow and compassion and other emotions.

BRETT BAILEY: And voyeurism, actually, I think as well. In Auschwitz I remember seeing this extraordinary photograph. It's one of the death camps and there's a group of spindle-thin prisoners walking, and there's a woman looking at the photographer, with bodies lying all over, and it's just...the extraordinariness of the human condition; looking into those worlds and seeing what the possibilities are—the horrific possibilities. It's fascinating...it's terrible.

ANTON KRUEGER: So how is this show different, to the exhibits of live exotic Africans a hundred years ago?

BRETT BAILEY: It's different in different ways. On the one hand, it's just theatre. In a regular theatre production there's an audience sitting in the darkness, and there are people on stage playing roles. And here you've got people in individual little rooms playing a character. None of those are their real selves, they're playing a role. And the audience goes in one-by-one. It's *staging* a human zoo, but it's not a real human zoo by any means. So on a very prosaic level it's obviously very different. On another level it's unpacking and critiquing the human zoo.

ANTON KRUEGER: Perhaps there's a difference in reception. In the real zoos, the reception was of mastery, conquest, an exotic (erotic, even) thrill; whereas the reception of your show seems to be this sense of profound shame we were talking about. Perhaps the big difference here is also the way that the performers are really staring at the audience. It's a very intense gaze.

BRETT BAILEY: Yeah, it's hard being looked at. I mean, how many of us are comfortable being looked at? We know we're not. I went into there last night and I spent ten minutes sitting in front of each of them. It keeps changing. Sometimes I'm confident and then I feel my insecurity come up and I look away and then I think "Oh my God, they can see me looking away," and it's that strange thing we all go through and they are going through it as well.

ANTON KRUEGER: It's a very strong device in the installations, creating a powerful emotional response. It's rare for people to have a chance to really look at each other like that.

MEGAN LEWIS (IN AUDIENCE): To me, the power in this piece, given the history of the staging of human bodies across Europe and America, is that the live actors' bodies are given the power of the gaze. It is about that eye contact that absolutely blew me away. I found myself at different moments either trying to make eye contact or feeling so uncomfortable that I would look anywhere else and then realize I'm looking at objects when there's a live body here and now I have to make eye contact with the body... That negotiation back and forth—what was most powerful was that they were set up as tableaux, as static images, and yet it's a body with the *eyes* who are returning the gaze. So I think that's where your critique comes from. That's where the power of this piece comes from. It isn't simply restating the previous exhibits.

BRETT BAILEY: For me, that's the only way I could do it. I wrote to a lot of academics when I was researching this and trying to find my way into this material. I went to historians and anthropologists, looking for references, stories, images, etc, and saying I was going to exhibit people in display cases. Without exception, the reaction was horrified—"You cannot do that!"—and it caused a lot of insecurity in me about whether this was what I wanted to do, and I was questioning why I wanted to do it. It was only when I found that thing of them gazing back that suddenly it all fell into place and I could do it. Without it I couldn't have done it.

ANTON KRUEGER: How do you prepare the performers for the installations?

BRETT BAILEY: The first thing we sit and talk about is: what is your experience of racism? What does racism mean to you? Where does it go back in your lifetime? How do you deal with that? And that comes into the gaze, the fact that they are looking back. The performers are told, as they sit there, that the real performers of this piece

are actually the audience moving through, and that they are the audience sitting and watching a lot of people walking through the space.

ANTON KRUEGER: And what are they thinking about while they're up there?

BRETT BAILEY: I give each of them a whole back-story about who they are and how they came to be where they are in the exhibit. I create characters for them. For example, there's one installation where the woman is sitting on the bed. She is naked from the waist up with her back to you, and she's looking in a mirror, making eye contact with the audience as they enter the room. I tell the woman: You were in your village one night and your husband was out fighting, your father was out fighting. You've got a child. Early in the morning before the sun rises, there's a fire. You hear gunshots, people are screaming. You run from the house, you grab the child, one child falls and you don't see that child again. You hide in a bush and see a rape going on. In the morning they find you. Your house is on fire and your mother was in that house. You walk for days and you're in the concentration camp now, you've been here for a long time. It's fucking freezing, your child is coughing all the time, there are children dying from cholera all around you, and the soldier comes around and he tells you to go with him. He takes you and you know you're going to be raped by him afterward and you'll submit because it means he'll give you some food for your child. So you're sitting on the bed waiting for all of this to happen. When you see an audience member enter the room in the mirror, it's the German soldier. He's taken off his clothes, and he's standing with a glass of whiskey in his hand. He's got a hard-on, and he's saying to you, "No matter if I hurt you, I don't want you to scream." And that's what she deals with (it's making me emotional to talk about it), they've each got this story.

ANTON KRUEGER: And how do you know whether or not somebody is up to the task?

BRETT BAILEY: I've just done the work in Brussels, and I used twelve, thirteen, fourteen immigrants living in Brussels. And in Berlin later this year it's the same, I use people living in Germany. I audition people—I sit with six people around a table, I show them a PowerPoint presentation, talk about the history, talk about what's going on and what it's all about. And I just sit and watch people and I look at who's got presence, who's really interested in this work, who's brain is tapping into this work, who feels that they really passionately want to be engaged with it. The work is really very physically trying, and that's what I talk to them about a lot as well.

I work with a different cast in every city that I work in, except for the choir who I found while I was doing a month of research in Namibia. Music really can help take people into a space and it really pulls things together. It has an emotional language. I

found Marcelinus Swartbooi, and I spoke with him and he put the choir together and arranged those beautiful songs.

The choir really became the heart of the work; it knits everything together. It was a long process and I found some really horrific stories, like the one of the women forced to clean the skulls of their husbands and families killed in the concentration camps so that they could be exported back to Europe. You have the horror of the colonial war, the concentration camps, how the concentration camps were testing grounds in a way for the holocaust and where Dr. Fischer was trying out his theories in eugenics and the experiments that were being done in craniology. So that one room with the choir tied everything together, I used that story as the central incident.

ANTON KRUEGER: I wanted to ask about the immigrants that appear in the show at the end. You've got the three that tried to enter Europe and were dealt with harshly, and then you've got the one South African reference to a mixed race woman growing up during apartheid. But in South Africa the death toll from that violence we experienced in 2008 was probably higher than any xenophobic violence that's happened in Europe in the last few decades. If you wanted to talk about xenophobia, would it not have been more appropriate to reference that, rather than to go back to apartheid?

BRETT BAILEY: The work was made for a European audience, as I mentioned in the program, to uncover what was hidden, to bring it out into the light. I wondered whether I should South-Africanise the work when I brought it here, because normally what I'm doing is making a work here and taking it to Europe, and here I'm doing it the other way around. I decided not to, to keep it as it was and to maybe make one little anchor that anchors it here. I did look at this iconic image of the xenophobic crisis in May 2008, of the Mozambican who was set alight. He was on fire and crouching down with flames coming up. I thought this would be an interesting image to use as the final image instead of the guy in the airplane seats, because the airplane seats is not our story, really. I thought it would be powerful, but the problem for me was that it would stretch the work out of shape, because what I'm looking at in this work is how Europeans have represented the African body and how those distortions have led to a particular sequence of actions and have legitimized some of the most terrible atrocities. To then look at how a mob of Zulu people in Gauteng have victimized the Mozambican person...although it touches on racism and on xenophobia, it's a different story, actually—it's a different narrative.

Right until the last moment last week I was wondering whether for the two immigrants I should put when they entered into South Africa so they're immigrants to South Africa, but that felt contrived. I thought, let me keep this, because I wrote that thing in the program, "reflected in the glasses of the display cases of this is our own

reality,” and I thought my audience is probably going to be intelligent, so I’ll leave those deductions to them.

I did look for the South African image—I looked at the Steve Biko story and the typical horrific ones, and I just thought there’s so much atrocity already in the show. There’s a lot of gore, and it can reach a point where an audience is a bit overwhelmed. So I thought it would be better to go to a small sensitive story of a little girl who lost her mom because she wasn’t the right colour. I told her (the performer), your story is you grew up with your mom, you had a family, you lived in Port Elizabeth, and there was stuff going on, your parents were talking a lot at night and one day you were told “You’re not good enough to be in this school. You’re not white enough to be in this school. You can’t live in this area any more; you have to go somewhere else. What does that mean to you? That little girl at that moment must have shrivelled inside of you.” Even though this woman that’s sitting there is in her mid-sixties, she’ll try and find that little girl and give her life so she can breathe again and let her pain out. It’s a shocking pain—I mean, I know what my mother means to me.

ANTON KRUEGER: I was trying to think of a precedent to compare *Exhibit A*’s to and I thought of Duane Hanson who made those live sculptures of Americans – trailer-trash types with shopping trolleys, waiters, ordinary people. They weren’t necessarily in as bad a situation as these people, but there seemed to be some similarity to your installations in that they were confronting the failed American dream. Those were life-like sculptures though. I couldn’t think of another example of live installation...maybe we can ask the audience if they know any other precedents? I mean, it’s a really unusual situation to put people in...

Audience member 2: Boer War Circus. It was an American circus manager in Cape Town, and after the Anglo-Boer war, he was not doing too well in the Cape with his circus, and he came across these Boers who had just lost the Anglo-Boer war. So he took a team of them over to America and created a circus. They had to go through the battle of Magersfontein night after night, losing the battle and surrendering. General Piet Cronjé was one of the circus actors, and he had to re-enact his surrender night after night.

Audience member 3: There’s a piece called *The Couple in the Cage* by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco, where they staged themselves as Amer-Indians that were discovered from some place in the Yucatan that hadn’t been discovered yet. They took it to museums all around the world. That was in ’93—

Audience Member 4: —But it was more of a piss-take.

BRETT BAILEY: It was, yeah.

Audience Member 3: It was, very much, and it became very much about the audience and their reaction to what they were doing, and whether they participated or not, because they had the option to pay fifty cents and have a photo taken, and so it was more of a—

ANTON KRUEGER: —a bit more of a parody.

BRETT BAILEY: Yeah, a little bit more camp.

Audience Member 4: There's also that kind of idea of religious tableaux. When I was at school, our annual nativity was not a nativity play, it was series of absolutely still—

BRETT BAILEY: *Tableaux vivant*. Yes, that was also an inspiration.

ANTON KRUEGER: I thought this was a real change from some of your earlier work. In your first book you wrote about wanting to make theatre that's "thriving and humming like a Hindu temple, with flowers and cows and children running and bells clanging and incense smoking and devotees dancing and offering libations!"⁵ So you made these ritualistic plays with all kinds of crazy things going on. But with *Exhibit A* and *Terminal/Blood Diamonds* (2009), there seems to have been a shift from that Dionysian ecstasy, to what might be called a more Apollonian aesthetic. Do you see this as a change of direction?

BRETT BAILEY: Well, for me it's always about creating an environment. I don't know if you saw *iMumbo Jumbo* (1997), *Ipi Zombi?* (1998) or *The Prophet* (1999). As you say, they were large works using drums and smoking herbs and dancing. I tried to create that experience, of being in there. Perhaps it was a little bit naïve, but I had this thing that: "Theatre can really heal people if done the right way, and I'm going to tap into the ritual of it and HEAL YOU ALL..." (*laughter*). But really it was about creating an environment. Because for me, the classic theatrical experience where the audience is sitting as you are and the action is happening here in the sort of fourth wall is never enough for me—it's always impoverished.

In a discussion Anton and I had a couple of days ago, I was saying something about intimacy, how my audiences have slowly become smaller. I moved on to a hundred people for *Orfeus* (2006) and for then went down to thirty-five per night, and now it's really become one-on-one. Although there's a difference in the energy of it, it's becoming more focused on a really intimate experience. I much prefer having a one-on-one conversation than being in a group of five or six friends—I love that intimacy.

⁵ Brett Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle and Wonder*. (Johannesburg: David Krut, 2003), 9-10.

Also, for me, a huge factor in my work relates to dreams. What I love about dreams is that you're often in a sequence of seemingly unrelated events and you don't always notice the schism between them. You just tumble from one to the other and there's a strange sort of continuity, they completely embrace you. If they're profound enough they might leave you the next morning with images that might be unconnected, but they really have a strange impact on you, they're imprinted on your mind. For me in a way, this work and *Blood Diamonds* and the underworld of *Orfeus*, was coming out of that—a very intimate journey, one-on-one and very strong, powerful images which really touch you. It's never completely clear what it's about, there's always ambiguity. So the energy might have changed, but I think there's very much a through-current from the earlier works in terms of creating an environment where you are completely embraced and held and tossed from one place to the next.

ANTON KRUEGER: I was wondering if you could comment on empire and colonialism, your sense of present empires or who our masters are. Who should we fear? Which imperialisms dominate us?

BRETT BAILEY: I think there are different imperialisms in different places. I'm doing *Medea* next and then I'm doing Verdi's opera of *Macbeth*, and I'm setting it in the great lakes region of the Congo where the first African world war happened. There were millions and millions of people killed in atrocities. The witches of the story are a group of Chinese, Lebanese, European-American businessmen who are funding this incredible pillaging and arms race in that area, trying to get the minerals out of them, and they're financing this war. They're like "we want those resources there, and there's this chap Duncan who's not wanting to deal with us, so let's put a fire under Macbeth's seat, turn Macbeth against Duncan." At the end, they've wiped out Macbeth, they've wiped out the whole lot of them, and the witches are in there with the machines going and gold coming out of the earth and arms everywhere. I think there are different monsters in all different kinds of places.

ANTON KRUEGER: A last question before we turn it over to the audience: in some of your earlier works, there was quite a direct reference to spirituality, to a world of spirits. I was wondering if it is possible to talk about these things without getting too hokey or new-agey about it. The review from *Cue* yesterday said that it was "a mortifying experience that, somehow, enriches the soul."⁶ Where are you at with this kind of talk about soul and spirit?

BRETT BAILEY: There's a woman that's been documenting my work for a while. She's been filming since 1997. She's battling with this movie, it's just not coming out, she can't get the story right. One day she found the story and it was "Brett the Heal-

⁶ Jason Kehe, "Stare if you dare", *Cue*, 29 June, 2012. <http://cue.ru.ac.za/2012/06/29/exhibit-a-stare-if-you-dare/> (accessed 17 October, 2012.)

er—He goes and finds where the sickness is and he heals.” And that’s so wrong, actually. That’s not my intention. I’m fascinated at the cracks between things, whether it’s between the real world and the supernatural world as in *Ipi Zombi?* and *iMumbo Jumbo*, between life and death as it was in *Orfeus*, between cultures, as it was possibly in *iMumbo Jumbo*, between political ideologies in *Big Dada*, *Macbeth*...It’s that space between, and I think just bridging that space or bringing stuff from whatever underworld is there, whether it’s a political underworld, or whatever it is, putting light onto something does bring it into consciousness. Bringing into consciousness makes you aware of it. Awareness is about enlightenment, that’s what it is. Whether it’s spiritual or not, it’s basic stuff.

When one of my actors (in *Exhibit A*) was a young boy in the eighties, he was walking down the street and this big burly white chap came and said “You broke into my house,” and the guy said, “Hello...?” and they hauled him off to the police station and they waterboarded him and he’s sitting here dealing with that now. He came to me and said to me afterwards, “This is really healing, this is so healing—I’m looking into white people’s eyes and for so long I’ve been scared and full of hatred; but I’m seeing that they’re crying and that they cry the same as black people. We’re all the same. It’s so healing”. So it’s not always an explicit intention of mine. I’m attracted to that ground where things rub against each other and there’s friction, and where there’s friction there’s rawness and things ooze out, and it’s scary and it’s beautiful and it’s human...then the healing comes.

Selected Excerpts from Q&A

Audience member 5: Hi Brett. Something I noticed this morning at *Exhibit A* and also *Orfeus* is that first ten or fifteen minutes before the performance starts when you’ve got one of your actors telling the audience to be quiet. For me, this is one of the most powerful parts of the performance. It’s something people talk a lot about afterwards. What were your intentions with that ten or fifteen minutes of silence with the audience before the performance really gets underway?

BRETT BAILEY: The thing is, you walk into a theatre and you sit down and you’ve got popcorn and stuff like that, and there are people jabbering about this and that, and the lights go down and suddenly you’re supposed to step into this other world. There’s no preparation. The mind has to be stilled in order to absorb things. You need to start to listen, you need to listen to your breath, you need to feel comfortable with silence because I’m really wanting you to be perceptive. I’m wanting you to read. If you’ve got a whole lot of other stuff going on in your mind, that stuff is with you. I want you to sit and be quiet and just start to feel the silence and the presence of other people in silence around you...I’ve done meditation courses over the years, and meditating by yourself is great, but meditating amongst people is amazing because there’s

the presence of silence, of concentrated energy all around you. It's creating a community of people in silence, in a way, that you can walk out of and stay in silence.

Audience member 6: Compared to *Terminal*, which I saw in 2009, I found this show so accusatory, like a stab through me. It was obviously meant to be that way; but with *Terminal*, I was shattered when that little child with their cold hand led me along. I was much more emotionally affected, as well as intellectually.

BRETT BAILEY: *Terminal* was... You know, I've never been a great fan of Grahamstown. I'm not talking about the festival, but the town. It feels like a little colonial settler town to me where not much has changed, actually. And when you take the students out of it, it's a scary little frontier town—on the Western side you've got a leafy suburbs population with a settler mentality, and you've got this hill, and for seven kilometres it just stretches into the depths of the ghetto towards the Transkei. As you drive up to the monument, the settler mother and father standing in their bonnets and their top hats gazing out and there's this bastion of enlightenment—the Settler's Monument. *Terminal* was looking at what Grahamstown was founded on—the African experience. These guys came here and brought enlightenment, brought Christianity and opened up markets and all that sort of stuff, and it was as bigoted and brutal as anywhere else. So it was looking at that and it was looking at what is Grahamstown today, looking at the harshness of Grahamstown, the impoverishment.

In Grahamstown there are these two faces that look at each other across a septic little stream—it's a scary, gloves-off view of apartheid. And that's healthy as well, because where I'm from in Cape Town, you can forget that there's poverty, you can forget that there's these many sides to the story. So *Terminal* was a look at that. It led across from the station into the cemetery, and the final image was a really beautiful old black man holding a very old white man lying on the grave, and he was cradling his head, and there was a moment of some sort of unity of very old people, like ancestors.

What was the difference? The difference... I don't know what the difference was, they're different works, they've got different energies. *Exhibit A* is about a big, global issue, and the works are monumental. The Congolese guy sitting on that huge platform with the hands—they're dealing with huge issues—the woman in this big red shrine with the heads and the skulls and the glass—these are real monuments to icons of colonialism. Whereas there was a small intimacy in *Terminal*. It's a small town, it's a small story. The trick there—like the gaze of the performers was the trick in this piece—was being led by a child. A small black child, a street child who's at the bottom of the pecking order in the food chain in South Africa, was guiding you. They were given the authority.

Audience member 7: I noticed that we were listed in the media as well.

BRETT BAILEY: “Observers”, yeah. You were part of the installation. The installation doesn’t exist without you.



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