

## Things We Have Learnt About Salt

- . 1.It makes a nice crunch when you walk on it
- . 2.It's impossible to get perfectly straight edges when laying it out on stage, so don't even try. I mean it: don't.... You've tried it, haven't you? And it looks naff doesn't it? Will you trust me in future? We'll have to re-do the whole side now...
- . 3.It looks like sugar, but it is best not to mistake the two, particularly if you are in search of a durational metaphor that involves the processes of dissolving. While Bergson's sugar cube and Search Party's salt catwalk might have the same soluble properties if placed in hot tea, we have discovered that the tea won't taste as nice with dissolved salt.
- . 4.Indeed, we can't quite decide whether salt has a place in a durational metaphor at all. The sugar lump, and Bergson's insistence on waiting for it to dissolve, may well be a representation of duration (duree) so embraced by many contemporary performance artists: a lived-through experience that is not regimented by exact notions of time, a healthy break from the nine-to-five urban routine. And if Bergson was living today he would certainly embrace Search Party's table - tennis as - performance - metaphor - for - community/identity - event (Search Party vs...) and would not leave the table until Jodie Hawkes' Anglo-Saxon/ nation-of-shopkeepers /no-good-in-bed arse had received the tonking it so richly deserves. But the game will end at some point in time with nothing more sinister than a handshake and a commentary from Pete Phillips on the connections between Bergson's personal geographic and his ideas of community, place and belonging. And Bergson will move on to something else - perhaps the lived-in experience to be found in semaphore. But what if your understanding of duration never finishes? What if you find yourself in something that makes you step outside yourself for more than a few hours, days, or months? What if your sense of performance continues in such a way that makes Tehching Hsieh look like a bored teenager and you start to think of something that is never ending? What if you are 29 years old and for the first time you sense that the past holds something that might just be worth holding on to? What if possessions start to matter, as things to retain and to pass on? What if you have a beautiful daughter who reminds you that 'youth' isn't (just isn't) a comparative term; who every morning at 5.30am, gleefully reminds you that you are no longer indestructible; whose needs replace your own; whose very presence announces your life-long commitment (bond?), not only to her, but to her other parent? Watching and waiting for something to dissolve becomes a metaphor worth junking - at least for a moment, or repeated moments - and a metaphor of preserving something, or someone, or some time, becomes compelling.
- . 5.It isn't beautiful (except when placed under lights and set against a jet black dance floor); it's not sweet; it can be corrosive; it's certainly not nice on

the skin (particularly the face); and it has this irritating habit of leaving a residue even when rigorously cleaned away, leaving you in trouble with stage managers who have to come in early the next day to give the floor an extra mop. But salt is, for us, a symbol of moving and pausing at the same time; of stopping the clock and allowing something contained and shaped and ordered and agreed, just for a moment in our otherwise durational lives

- . 6. And then there is Lot and Lot's Wife. When God plans to overturn and destroy the cities of the plains, he sends angels to Lot and Lot's Wife, forcing them from their home in Sodom, saying: "...save yourselves with all haste. Look not behind you. Get as fast as you are able to the mountain, unless you be involved in the calamity of the city. Go on: scam!" So Lot, Lot's Wife and family pick up what they can and leave, urged on relentlessly to a new dawn and a new life; told to forget what is behind them... to never, ever look back. But Lot's Wife says, "Whoa there, Dobbin... where's the fire? Slow down, you move too fast, you've got to make the morning last: can't I just turn around and take in the view of what I have lived just one last time...?", but the Angels say "Don't be sentimental and nostalgic: back there, it's burnt, its spent, it's a calamity; the future's bright; the future's up there in those adjacent mountains...". But, despite the compelling argument and general authority of the angels, Lot's Wife (who has no name apart from Lot's Wife) turns and LOOKS BACK. And Lot's Wife is turned into a pillar of SALT for her stupidity. And, given her time again, we've learnt that she'd probably do it again: there're worse things than being turned into a pillar of salt you know...

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### **Support**

Research and development supported by Arts Council England, South Hill Park, BAC and Forest Fringe. Further development in association with Ferment & Bristol Old Vic and The Showroom, Chichester.

Growing Old With You was developed at Residence, an artist-led organisation creating space for artists to make performance, live art and theatre in Bristol. [[www.residence.org.uk](http://www.residence.org.uk)]