

Covering letter from Hollie Miller

Report on trip to Japan (1st- 31st March 2013)

When I originally wanted to go to Japan, I wanted to go there to study Butoh dance, but once I found myself there a year after writing my application, I realised how much my interests and aims had changed and developed.

I was now keen to explore my interest in performance art and use my time out there to begin creating a performance and book that I will continue to develop in the UK. I have also been doing a lot of costume making and prop building, so used this opportunity to visit museums and galleries in search of inspiration. This research taught me a lot about different materials and working methods, and allowed me to become immersed in the history and development of Japanese art.

A collector of antique dolls, I had brought with me a 1910 Pierrot doll and made an identical outfit. I wore this outfit for the entire duration of my trip and took a photograph of the doll every day whilst I was out there for a month. I also invited strangers to photograph me in my costume. Merging the real with the surreal, a theme and a story gradually emerged that was so surprising and rewarding I allowed this to become the driving force of my trip.

Quickly setting the theme as red, each day I sought out something red; a red building, a red sculpture, a red light. I then photographed the doll in relationship to the found red object, this allowed me to really consider and explore composition and how the body relates to different spaces. As my quest took me on a journey out of the urban cityscape of Tokyo and into the jungle wilderness of Yakushima, I was fascinated by the change in such contrasting landscapes and how that affects the way people relate to their environment.

I found the restricted movement of the doll enabled me to explore more relatable pedestrian poses, some examples of the restrictions I faced were: the dolls fixed facial expression, the fact that the doll can only move its limbs a certain degrees and that it couldn't stand without support. I was also interested in being dressed identically to the doll and photographing it in public spaces how this made the documenting process become a performance.

Travelling in this way meant I was able to visit many museums and galleries over Southern Japan, the highlight of which was the Japan Rural Toy Museum, near Himeji, which had over 80,000 items. The museum housed hundreds of Japanese folk toys including dolls, masks, toys and kites. I found this incredibly inspiring and it encouraged me to continue searching with my doll. Another highlight was Tokyo's Ueno Park, which has the Tokyo National Museum, the National Museum for Western Art and the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. I spent two days there and was particularly interested in the historical Samurai costumes, of which I later discovered many more at Matsumoto Castle. I was fascinated by how these costumes of war were extremely theatrical but primarily designed for practical purposes, incorporating maximum movement, protection, intimidation and disguise.

I decided when I was out there that I wanted to challenge myself every day to find something new and unexpected; by allowing such freedom and fluidity on my trip, I achieved a different purpose to my project that I originally anticipated. I believe that this has had a great impact on my work and approach to making work, opening up my concept of performance to new and exciting possibilities. I have also greatly increased my knowledge of Japanese art, which has influenced the current costumes I am building in collaboration with artist Di Mainstone and in my performance duo The Arch of Starch.

I think it would be helpful for future awardees to be put in touch with a previous awardee who has visited the same country, so they can receive some advice as it can be quite daunting traveling on your own. I believe this support gives you much more confidence to experiment

and explore on your trip. I was fortunate to know Dominique Baron-Bonarjee, who had recently been to Japan, and was extremely helpful and supportive of me, giving me the confidence to push myself to explore new places and meet new people.

Please see my report enclosed; I thought the best way to describe my project and its outcomes was through enclosing an extract of the book as a work in progress, it includes a selection of images and text that describe a part of my journey. I am currently working this into a live performance in my identical costume to the doll. I hope to present this work at dance venues in the UK, starting with Chisenhale Dance Space.

Hollie Miller



*Pierrot was sent off
into the unknown.*

*But he was never
alone.*

*Who took his
photograph?*

Me. Pierrot.

*Larger and full of
flesh and blood.*



Running to a safe place, he finds himself at the bottom of a red staircase.



Resting at an in-between point, Pierrot pauses in anticipation of a new direction.



*He arrives at a stone marked
X.*

*Its solidarity gives him
confidence that this is real.*

*His porcelain lips touch the
hot stone and he dives into
its kiss.*



*He rides through the internal
labyrinth of the stones blood red
organs.*



Spat out at a concrete entrance.

He walks in, relentlessly pushing on into the darkness; his white body stark against the black shadows.

As I, Pierrot, carry Pierrot, further into the unknown, I find not necessarily the unordinary but the unexpected.

I am continuously surprised.



He swims with red whales.

The smaller whale eyeballs Pierrot. A message is passed between animal and doll, interpreted by the human watcher.

But you never look back Pierrot. You don't see me behind the camera. Yet I am always there.

*Searching and seeing.
Documenting.*

How can you share something you have experienced alone?

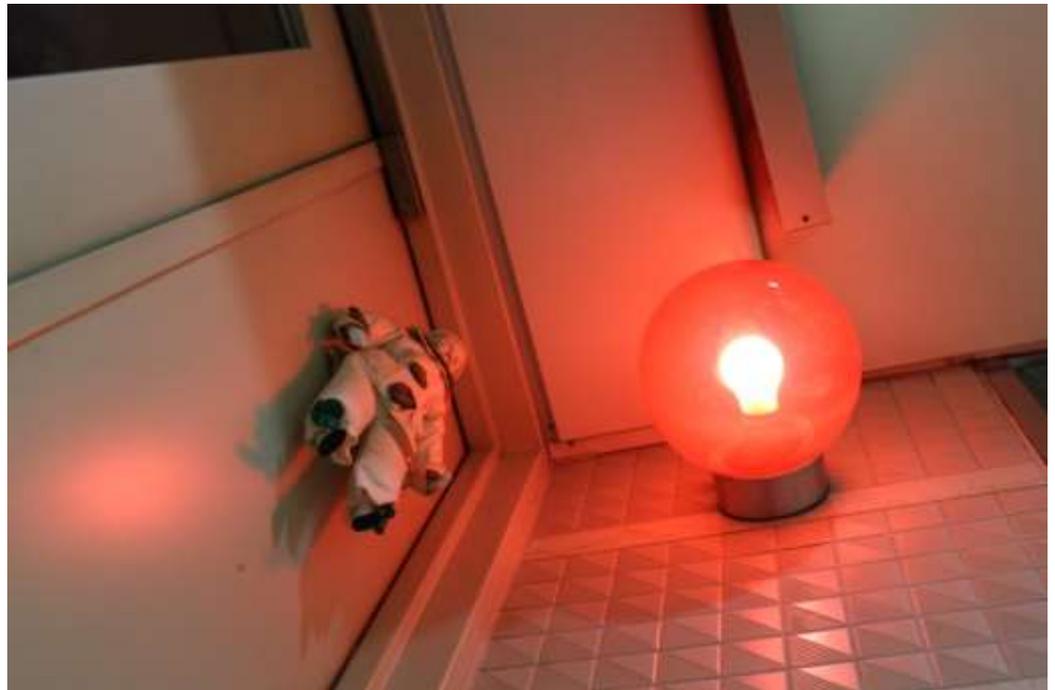


The red whales take Pierrot to a tribe of red bibs.

The moss figures begin to chant and lift Pierrot up towards enlightenment.

Pierrot feels his body peeling out of himself and he feels his spirit lift out of his mouth.

He can see the red planet from a distance, hypnotized by the curvature of the horizon; he reaches to hold the huge world in his tiny arms.



Just before he touches the round red planet he begins to fall.

His spirit runs to the deepest cave of his belly, before shooting back up and opening into a red parasol.

He grabs it and drifts slowly and softly to the ground. But as he looks below him the colour of the earth has changed from red to green.

What will guide him now?

He gulps a green gulp.



As he walks into this new terrain his red past is laid out behind him. Each red memory solidified, captured and contained in a photograph. With no red to guide him he becomes lost in the forest. Roots spread over rocky ground, like trip ropes, tricking Pierrot's tiny feet. He walks and walks until he comes to a clearing above the clouds.



He can now see above the trick-some trees and the green landscape unfolds below him to reveal its red secret.

A red bridge leads right to the mountains heart.

He finds direction once more.



Searching deeper into the jungle he finds a ghost ship with a red hull that will take him to the red heart of the green mountain.

He rides it through the floating forest.



The lull of the waters send him to sleep and he awakens to frothing mist pulled back to reveal a plastic choked beach. The debris of the shipwrecked red hull surrounds his paralysed body.



In a fateful twist of events he finds himself on a disused railway track where he waits for a ghost train.

Who can save him when he is alone? Only he can save himself.

Surrounded in a circle of red death.

But he is not alone.

I, Pierrot, have been there all along, behind the lens; searching, seeing, documenting.

As Pierrot lies there a man appears with a microphone and then another and then another.

'Look up!' They say.

Pierrot looks up and he sees the red bud of the banana tree and he hopes that Pierrot will save him.

