

EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION

A PERFORMANCE BY ACTION HERO

“some of the most
thrilling work
currently
being produced
in the UK”

-The Guardian



ABOUT THE PIECE

Extraordinary Rendition is a multi-media immersive installation for one person at a time, incorporating live performance, sound and video inside a purpose built cabin. Over the course of an intense 12 minute experience, solo audience members encounter a hybrid space: evoking an aeroplane cabin but built with the same materials and to the same dimensions as a detainees cell at Camp X-Ray in Guantanamo Bay. Greeted by an attendant who seats them in an aeroplane seat, they put on headphones as text jumps across three small video screens. The attendant serves them coffee and speaks to them via telephone intercom. The text evokes war films, deserts, conflict reportage; landscapes both of the theatre of war and of the inner psyche as the piece asks what it means to be part of a battle for hearts and minds.

BACKGROUND

Our long-time interest in film, the iconography of popular culture and the potential for violence in these media intersect in Extraordinary Rendition in an experience that is, in many ways, the polar opposite of our other works that explore similar territories. The piece acts in conversation with our wider body of work; where Hoke's Bluff is joyous and communal, this work is a solo experience, isolating its audience and placing them deliberately in a state bordering anxiety. The architecture and the ambience of the environment facilitates a work which is disquieting and unsettling yet oddly familiar. The immersive installation implants images that play across the watchers mind like jump cuts in a movie. Working with video for the first time, and continuing experiments with sound that began with our 2010 work Frontman, we have approached this piece as a design task; how could we create a space for the interplay of a series of complex, unnerving realities around conflict, the military, the entertainment industry and global complicity in torture as part of the 'War On Terror'? The result is a deeply political work, locating its spectators at the heart of the military-entertainment complex and exploring how it holds all of us in its dark orbit.

CONTEXT

The militarization of the civilian domain and the ambient presence of warfare in our daily lives are often most present in popular culture; mainly through mainstream cinema. The ways in which pop culture and the military collide or collaborate and our subsequent implication in the brutality of war through our participation in a heavily mediated culture is complicated and often hidden from view. Although it is a global phenomenon, the military-entertainment complex is perhaps most visible in the jingoistic Hollywood projects financed directly by the U.S military, or the mutually beneficial relationship between the creator of Zero Dark Thirty, Call of Duty or 24 and the military strategists waging war via the ‘battle for hearts and minds’.

There are however, more unlikely manifestations of the strange intersect of mass pop culture and modern warfare. The use of Britney Spears songs to torture detainees held by British and American troops, the privately owned jet that flew the Liverpool football team to away matches in between Rendition flights for the CIA, British detainees at Guantanamo Bay being asked over and over again, “do you know these people?” whilst being shown photos of Donald Duck, Michael Jackson & Che Guevara. These overlaps and interlacing threads trace much deeper connections between the internal landscapes of our minds and the landscapes of Iraq and Afghanistan where a long and violent war is taking place in our name.

Extraordinary Rendition takes a rhizomatic approach to dealing with these complex, interconnecting strands. Deleuze and Guatarri describe a ‘subterranean passage of thought’; there is no beginning or end to the world and how we understand it. Rather, it is like a rhizome. Small parts of it are visible on the surface, appearing to be separate and unconnected, but under the surface those parts are all linked together; part of the same organism. In the context of the military-entertainment complex, the notion of the rhizome re-contextualizes the apparently benign traces of warfare that hide in the shadows of media culture as equal parts of a larger network of violence and brutality.



DOCUMENTATION

Photographs: <https://500px.com/actionherolive/galleries/extraordinary-rendition>

TECHNICAL

<i>Duration</i>	This is a performance for one person at a time. Each performance lasts 12 minutes, with a maximum of 4 people per hour. The piece can be performed in blocks of 2 hours, up to 6 hours per day with a minimum 2 hour break between blocks.
<i>Get in</i>	1.5 days (nb: get in must be completed the day before the performance)
<i>Get out</i>	4 hrs
<i>On the road</i>	2 performers
<i>Space</i>	An empty, blank space to accommodate box sized 11ft long x 5 ft wide x 7 ft high with black out. The ideal space is either a black box, a gallery space or a found space (ie: a basement) without carpet. The space must be self contained, temperature controlled and free of sound spill with plenty of power sockets.
<i>Venue crew</i>	2 crew to assist with loading in, build and loading out, plus one AV technician on call during get in to troubleshoot if necessary. During the performance we require 2 stewards, one inside and one outside the room.
<i>Equipment</i>	The company will travel with the wooden box, specially built chair and all tech equipment in a long wheelbase van. For international performances where the company cannot drive to the venue, the box and chair must be freighted or built locally by an expert. Minimal additional lighting (ie: with birdies or similar) is required. A full tech spec is available on request
<i>Access</i>	Extraordinary Rendition is performed in English with English text on video screens. The box is wheelchair accessible.

ABOUT ACTION HERO

Gemma Paintin and James Stenhouse live in Bristol, UK, and create interdisciplinary performance together under the name Action Hero. For the past decade, they have worked almost exclusively with each other and have toured together to more than twenty countries across 5 continents to critical and popular acclaim.

Action Hero have performed in theatres, museums, galleries, bars and public spaces everywhere, from an old cinema in Bangkok to Shanghai Grand Theatre, from a blues bar in Texas to a Satan's Riders Motorcycle club house in Tasmania. Their work has been presented at some of the world's most prestigious festivals and institutions, including PS122 in New York, Theatre de le Ville in Paris, Brut in Vienna, Fusebox Festival in Austin, Culturgest in Lisbon, PuSh in Vancouver, CCCB in Barcelona and 21st Century Museum in Kanazawa.

Their ongoing interests lie in the iconography of popular culture and its use; both as a weapon and as a shared cultural memory, and although their work manifests in many different forms, the live experience is at the heart of everything they do.

Gemma & James have been shortlisted for several awards and won an Austin (Texas) Critic's Table Award in 2013. In 2015, a book of six of their works was published by Oberon. In 2016 they were in the final shortlist for the Anti Festival International Prize for Live Art for their contribution to the field.

CONTACT

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