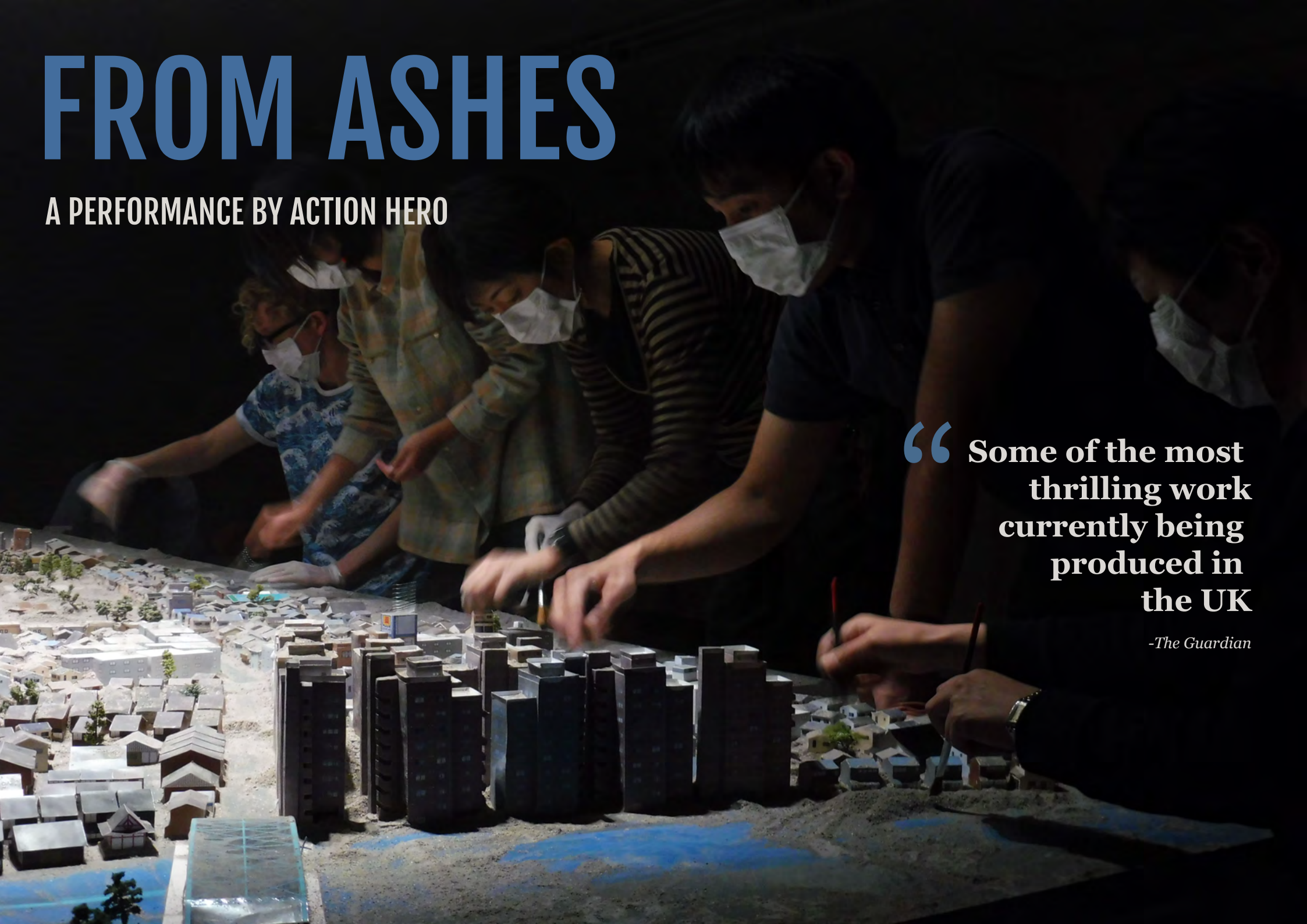


FROM ASHES

A PERFORMANCE BY ACTION HERO



“ Some of the most
thrilling work
currently being
produced in
the UK

-The Guardian

ABOUT THE PIECE

From Ashes is a durational work with a strong participatory element, both in the process and performance. Over 2 weeks, participants build a version of their city from paper. In collaboration with a local architect, to scale buildings are designed to reflect the architecture specific to the location. Over 1000 tiny paper craft buildings are then created by hand, and slowly, the city emerges. Then, the entire city is covered in ash. During a durational public performance, audience members are invited to slowly brush the ash away from the city in a tender act of repair and recovery, until the city is revealed again, still standing.

BACKGROUND

From Ashes was commissioned by 21st Century Museum, Kanazawa (Japan) and Forest Fringe (UK). The piece developed out of a 5 week residency at the museum, and premiered in Kanazawa in October 2015.

From Ashes is Action Hero's second durational work, but takes a step towards participatory and socially engaged practice. The company's distinctive and accessible style is translated into a project that works in any language and with any community, taking participants and audience on a meditative journey that enables us all to reflect on the future of our cities in the shadow of a changing climate, nuclear threat and war.

CONTEXT

Conceived in response to a residency at Kanazawa's 21st Century Museum, *From Ashes* is a tender process of collective renewal. Through a gentle and hopeful action, it creates space for thoughtful meditation on the monsters that haunt us, renewal in the wake of disaster and the rituals that allow us to recover.

A yellow flash...sky and sea burst into view, painted in flaming sunset colours. White particles were falling on us, just like sleet.

-Matashichi Oishi, crewman, Lucky Dragon 5.

The use of ash calls into mind the ash that fell from the sky after the atomic bomb (both in WW2 and on Japanese fisherman at Bikini Atoll) and its representation in pop culture via Godzilla, Ishiro Honda's metaphorical manifestation of nuclear weapons who turns Tokyo to ashes. It also reminds us of the destruction of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and the ashes in Japanese Buddhist funeral rituals. The miniature city that lies beneath these ashes then, is one that has weathered the storm and, despite the threat of disaster, is intact. The audience's slow uncovering reminds us that even in the face of violence and catastrophe, the human spirit prevails.

In a wider context, the ash speaks to the threat of climate change, to cities buried beneath the weight of a collapsing coal mining industry and the global climate crisis, triggering natural disasters that are distinctly man made. It also asks us to reflect on nuclear power and to ask whether it might be this, the same power that is wielded by nations as the ultimate weapon, that saves us from climate chaos.

From Ashes is a gentle process of recovery and restoration revealing not a scene of devastation and destruction, but of a city still standing.

DOCUMENTATION

This documentation is from the process and performance at Kapo, in Kanazawa, Japan, 2015.

Video: vimeo.com/143647513

Photographs: <https://500px.com/actionherolive/galleries/from-ashes>

“ See why this maverick company...
is attracting so much attention

-The Guardian



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 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.

CONTACT

Gemma Paintin
Gemma@actionhero.org.uk
+44 (0) 7717 096 813

James Stenhouse
James@actionhero.org.uk
+44 (0) 7515 378 689

actionhero.org.uk @ActionHeroLive

PARTICIPATION

The participative aspect of *From Ashes* is crucial. We will collaborate with a local architecture studio to design some buildings specific to your location, and will need your support in finding a suitable partner. Making the paper buildings is time consuming but more importantly, it is integral to the artistic process of the work. In order to construct the necessary number of papercraft buildings, and to ensure the project meets a broad range of audiences the project requires active and organised participation from local communities. We also require least 6 participants and/or assistants who can be present every day.

TECHNICAL

<i>Duration</i>	2 weeks public process, 2 days performance
<i>Get in</i>	2 days
<i>Get out</i>	1 day
<i>On the road</i>	2 performers
<i>Space</i>	A publicly accessible, gallery-type space
<i>Venue crew</i>	3 crew for get in
<i>Equipment</i>	A 2m x 5m wooden table must be constructed by the venue before the process begins. In addition, please provide 5 tables for paper craft making and a colour laser printer with 120gsm paper. Some craft materials will be required (eg: glue, knives).