

SHE SHOUTS, SHE SCREAMS, SHE DIES

FABIENNE AUDÉOUD IS A HIP YOUNG ARTIST WHO USES RADICAL UNINTELLIGIBILITY AS A FORM OF EXPRESSIONIST THEATRE IN THE HOPE OF CONFUSING AND ENLIGHTENING US ALL. HER WORK DOESN'T JIVE WITH THE USUAL LONDON CROWD; INSTEAD SHE STICKS HER NECK ON A BLOODIED CHOPPING BLOCK OF HER OWN CHOOSING.

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abienne Audéoud is not afraid to get down and dirty with her own version of lunatic comedy and post-minimalist cool utterances, being as she is part of a new breed of artists going below and beyond the usual user-friendly pop pap. Recently nominated for the Becks Futures 2 award – the ICA's 'Turner prize for the kids' – for her show with ex-Bank member John Russell; she now collaborates with him regularly. Together they entertained a drunken private view crowd in the trendy Trade Apartment Gallery in the not-too-distant past by staging the mythic drunken murder by arch-beatnik William Burroughs of his wife, Joan Vollmer. That also travelled to this year's Edinburgh Festival, which is not bad for a performance piece that only takes about three seconds to complete. (He shoots, she dies, blood). As she methodically explains it, "we took what seemed to be the most accurate version of the events, as reported by people who were in the room when it happened. Burroughs and Joan Vollmer were high on drink and drugs, she said 'let's do the William Tell one', she put the glass on her head, he aimed and shot – with a gun he intended to sell because it was aiming low. Facts, but not the whole story. Not that there could be something like a whole story. We just performed what we knew of it." Elliptically traversing fiction and fact, and yet blunt and to the point, she comes across as a person possessed of a gruffly poetic sensibility, expressed with a sharp economy in her art.

This shooting is but the most recent escapade in a long line of strange adventures. For example, she initially came to London from Paris to produce a

chamber opera with the ENO. As she recalls: "Suddenly I was called a composer... I found myself stuck in a role I hadn't really chosen." From then on, instead of carving a niche in the world of classical music, Audéoud decided to establish her own highly individual artistic hermetic cave. Her formal musical background has served her well, with her interest in complex, sometimes strangulating sound giving her video and performance work a strangely visceral, almost nauseous, impact. Now, after having written articles on the politics of 'art music', conducted weird performances notable for their schizophrenic grandeur, and, most recently, through a series of collaborative paintings with John Russell that, in their own words (scrawled across their scabrous surfaces), "have the aggressivity of a little dog who has had its arse hair pulled", her time is at hand.

When you talk to Audéoud about herself and her work, it is hard to avoid one of her favourite subjects: flaky *femme fatales*. The shooting with John Russell was merely the most recent episode in her litany of fallen ladies, and many of her earlier works have explored the hysteric glamour of the diva of opera and silent film. She dourly explains her relationship to the diva as "an interest in the shift between glamour and humiliation. I am interested in the drama and the humour within it. In the hysteria inherent to that." A recent video of hers is a darkly comedic one-person tragedy, loosely reproducing the true story of one such besmirched madam. She describes it thus, with a wry sadistic smile: "the Hollywood diva commits suicide at home. She performs it, best costume, best light, theatrical setting, and leaves a note for her audience. Things go wrong; she is found with her dress torn apart, in blood and shit. The absolute drama of suicide... extreme horror, but when I tell this story I can't avoid laughing." Ouch.

We quickly change the subject, yet violent and tragic comedy is something that runs through her work like an ominous thread. When asked about her early influences, things become a little clearer, with a slightly gothic clarity. As she laconically explains, "I read *Bataille* when I was young, like I read Michaux and de Sade. I had no idea they were such a reference in art discourse. I read it all like a novel. Books I had to hide, some got burnt. I grew up in a sort of sect of strict Protestantism where art was part of what was called 'the world'; everything that isn't done for God." Book burning and scary religious sects safely behind her, Audéoud is now well established as one of the talents of the future. Strange then that she has recently moved to Maastricht, the centre of the European Union and a far cry away from London's dirty-denimed masses. But then artists have always been known to move in peculiar ways.

