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Matthias Sperling performs *To hand*

Performing "To hand" in "Body & Void"

To hand has a meditative quality, inviting visitors to the gallery to linger for a time, allowing their attention to travel freely between the static sculptural work in the room and my quiet on-going activity amongst them. Carefully balancing my weight on up-turned ordinary plastic pots, I slowly navigate my way across the gallery floor without ever touching it, by continually re-arranging my supports beneath me as I go.

When Siobhan Davies and I first developed *To hand* for Claire Barclay's installation at the Whitechapel Gallery in 2011, one of our interests was finding out how a performance could co-exist with other art works, just as groups of non-performative works commonly do in gallery exhibitions. We were thinking of the way that sharing a space can highlight particular things about different works, while nevertheless still allowing them to remain independent entities that complement, rather than absorb one another. We were also conscious that if our performance used more theatrical modes and was designed to remain the sole focus of visitors' attention, it might cast the other works in the room as a stage set rather than as art works in their own right.

Compared with previous sculptural shows that I have performed *To hand* amongst, in *Body & Void*, I'm suddenly no longer the only reclining figure in the room! In the extraordinary company of these other works, I'm aware that, for the first time, there is an added dimension for me to play with; how I arrange my own body in relation to those forms around me that are particularly suggestive of human figures. Alongside these immediate parallels in terms

of the ‘body’, I enjoy that To hand also has a real affinity with this exhibition’s exploration of ‘void’ – the making visible of internal space. One of the most important things about the performance for Siobhan and I is the way that my self-imposed physical task allows a complex and ongoing decision-making process to become visible. The close proximity and long duration of this type of performance situation opens up an opportunity to uncover this human process that is always present in all of us (performers included!) but usually remains internal.

www.siobhandavies.com

www.henry-moore.org/pg/events/to-hand-live-installation

Written by Matthias Sperling. Photos courtesy of Siobhan Davies Dance, rehearsal photo
Pari Naderi

Matthias Sperling is a London-based choreographer and performer. His collaborations with Siobhan Davies include *Table of Contents* (2014), *To hand* (2013) and *The Collection* (2009).