

One person talks then another person talks

Watching (listening) to Cutaway I become aware of all of the spaces between people and words in conversations. These are not empty silences (far from it) they are filled with nods, mmm, smiles, shrugs and giggles. I notice how much everyone laughs. Even when the subject is difficult people still laugh their way through as though the act of laughing smooths the way for less comfortable words.

I have spent time with the spaces between words and people. In the process of creating Cutaway I had the privilege of conducting interviews and listening back through the many waves of recorded conversations. In the spaces between one person talking and another responding I noticed there runs a thin thread of sound wave. This thin line takes on the bumps and shapes of the sounds in the room, it takes in the the mmms and records the sighs. I imagine it like a thread that holds people together from mouth to ear, from me to you. Each small moment of silence is different. I have mined the Cutaway interviews for these quiet segments and transcribed them by hand; my hand traces their tremors like a record needle. There are 365 different drawings (one for each possible audience member). Time is a material here; each drawing is original and like a fleeting moment, cannot be replicated.

This pile of drawings becomes a monument to the spaces between words and people; a pile of throat clearings and mmms along with silences of all shapes and sizes. These sounds are removed from conversations, freed from words and from their people they become like disconnected shadows that remember times between, before and instead of language.

Silences and absences speak loudly in Cutaway. My favourite moments are the pauses and silences when the performers and the interviewees are listening to something the audience can't hear. We are given a grand imaginative space (our own stage) that we can inhabit with the furniture of our own thinkings. There are very few props used in this stripped back performance, the show includes sandwiches and haircuts that exist only in the imagination.

Cutaway (a portrait) is anchored in the Port Adelaide of now. The portrait is of and by this community. The stories you have heard voiced tonight on stage were recorded by neighbours talking to neighbours, friends talking to friends and came from discussions within families. This production was made possible by a team of volunteers armed with sound recorders and driven by the desire to listen to their town.

Many people gave their time to be interviewed, inviting us into their homes, sharing tea and trusting us with their stories. There were also those whose interview was not included in the final cut, this group is ever present in the production (another type of silence in the work). They stand alongside all the people we could have interviewed, the list extends and expands until it fills the Port with words unsaid or unrecorded. If Cutaway is a portrait, the Port is a restless sitter who will look different in every light.

The work itself, the stories told, call up the spirit of the Port. Invoked here it has turned out to be a fighting spirit, inclined to make its own rules and to continue despite (or because of) the necessity for disobedience. People around here are breaking and bending the rules for their own good reasons; they are fighting with fists, with words and with their knitting needles.

Communities constructed of their own rules drift in and out of this place (this Port). Aboard ship new hierarchies are developed of captains and first mates; new social sets born of the need to cope with close quarters and miles of ocean. Cross over Woodville Road and enter the Port. Here the past is tugging at the present (negotiating a high tide mark for what is acceptable) imagining, dreaming and shouting the future into existence.

As you sat in the hall tonight you were sitting between the past and the future. On one side is a cream wall that has just been repainted, re-plastered and re-finished – the future of the Waterside Workers Hall. On the other is an older wall, peeling under the weight of the things it has absorbed. You, the audience are poised, paused midway between, listening hard to the present and making the future one breath at a time.

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