

HAIKU in LONDON KweekWeek

A haiku is a short Japanese poem composed of three verses, which are very abstract and suggest underlying themes generally relating to the relationship between man and nature. On the 13th February, Team KweekWeek witnessed the unfolding of a show interpreting several haikus, performed by the Italian company Controluce Teatro d'Ombre and the Japanese group of Butoh dance Shizuku.

The representation took place at Rosenfeld Porcini, a contemporary art gallery located between Tottenham Court Road and Goodge Street. The gallery, built over two floors is sleek, its design mirroring the artworks hanging from its walls – at the time the body of work by Spanish artist Enrique Brinkmann, *Painting in Space*. Similarly, the set of the play was simple, composed of three white screens, and a piano.

The show starts out slowly, with a gentle melody playing softly on the piano. The single protagonist, a man painted in white, coiffed with a bun and wearing only a few layers of white sheets around his waist advances towards the screen, slowly removing the sheets one at a time. It is winter, and as if the man is shedding the trace of society that grips him to embrace the unknown that is before him.

As the play unfolds, we see the man facing different situations, suggestively going over mountains and rivers, escaping a carnivorous fish, and discovering new environments, all the while learning about himself and the many facets of his personality and capabilities. Not a word is spoken throughout the whole journey, save for the pianist reciting the directional haikus that punctuate the play. These limericks cover the theme of the seasons, and the trials faced by man as he advances in life. We savour the rest of the show immersed in the melody of the piano, at times light and delicate, and at others intense, and almost scary.



The ending sees the man embracing nature, after many internal and external duels. As the last note sounds, the room gradually wakes from its voyage into this vision and applause takes over. The three participants in the play: the pianist, the man and the puppeteer step out, and meet with the crowd to further discuss the events they all just experienced. We are still entranced by the colourful, yet eerie scenes just captured – this form of art is very subtle, but suggests many underlying themes upon which it would be worthy and interesting to reflect. As the protagonists seem taken by congratulatory spectators, we commend the gallery on this representation, and the project it takes part in to showcase live art.

Haiku was a performance, not only delicate and harmonious, but also profound. The simple settings and props enhanced the meaning of the play and the scarcity of words afforded the audience a better enjoyment of the music.