

Judy Cole interviewed about Lay

What is 'Lay'?

'Lay' was a performance that I devised within our last movement-based creative Project Group. It followed a previous performance called 'Lay-by' that drew on my experience of being thrown off track in my life and being often on the road, pulling into lay-bys for a cup of tea or sitting in graveyards and pondering what to do with my life.

'Lay' was an attempt to come to terms with further upheavals in my life – how to find one's steps into creating something that can blossom out of adversity and change. While preparing the piece I broke my wrist and the performance reflects my attempts to accommodate that also.

The booklet is a collection of images from one of the four performances of 'Lay' – the others were in different indoor settings. Of course it cannot convey the music, recorded sound and the whistle of the boiling kettle.

When you look at the book, do you see "blossoming out of adversity"?

Yes, I do. I very much like the weavers, who start from the ground, covered in nature's litter and begin to weave together the threads of a new life. I see their struggle, but I also see their vitality and courage and willingness to engage.

I also really like the end where I can just lay, just rest; there is more satisfaction in the lying down, which is not collapse; just lying with the possibilities.

Can you say more about the weavers?

There's that expression – hanging by a thread. We just need one connection to make a start. It's like placing one foot in front of the other when we feel we've got no references, no base, no starting point. Then we just have to place one foot in front of the other. So in this case I just weave, just keep adding, not really knowing what I'm doing, creating some form of installation.

So, here behind me are the weavers, representing me putting one foot in front of the other.

In the foreground is me having the struggle.

Part way through there comes the inspiration, when something wakes you up, wakes me up.

What was it that that woke you up?

In my case I had felt lonely and alone. It was important for me to have everybody else in the performance so that I wasn't lonely. It felt important to me to be clear within adversity, within the confusion. If I can be clear within adversity, there is the possibility of growing, of less pain, of transformation.

In this performance the waking up was represented by music. But in general, the waking up means remembering that our life is always being woven by everything around us, our family, friends, environment. They're in conversation with each other. All of those things are always still there, still active – we are the ones that drop out. All we can do is wait – it's like those spiders that swing and make a connection with something. At some point we may find that our heart opens and then our creativity can begin to flow. And then, if we're lucky, we can start to enjoy it or enjoy it again.

What was the significance of the teacups arriving?

In the original 'Lay-by' performance, my comfort was having tea on the road. Bringing the teacups in here brought a sense of comfort. A sense of order amongst the confusion.

And the significance of the cloth?

That was twofold. It was my bedding and the baby's blanket, another comfort. At one point it became a bandage for my broken wrist.

But you needed to leave it behind?

It was important to let it go, in the same way that a butterfly crawls out of the cocoon. If you leave her behind, you leave behind the memory of needing to be bandaged/cocooned.

Who was the performance for?

I think it was for me, so that I could witness and clarify the process. I remember thinking that I had nothing more to lose. That gave me a licence to put into the world a feeling that I would normally keep more hidden. maybe it was an enactment. It was my way of expression, mainly without words, using the body. It's how I make sense of the world. it was a way to go back to that raw sensing and feel myself again. There was a sense of healing and purification about it.