

# between the land and i

## **Review: Reckless Sleepers @ Contact - Edwina McEachran**

The theory of Schrödinger's cat: A thought experiment surrounding a string of multiple realities existing all at once. Once the box is opened, the realities collide, to make one. But when inside they all exist as infinite possibility. [This animation](#) by Agota Vegso will explain the theory much more eloquently.

[Negative Space](#) (the sister performance of [Schrödinger](#)) starts and ends in a white box, with moments of wild destruction and slapstick energy thrown in. When a hammer is replaced by a flower, replaced by human touch, replaced with absence, there are also very brief but lovely moments of intimacy which cut through the tension nicely. It was an intriguing mix of infinite combinations, with little moments of performer interaction existing both separately and in unison. Sometimes seeing someone being chased with a hammer sent the audience into hysterics, and sometimes the same movements felt dangerous and uncomfortable but these subtle changes were what made the performance great.

There is however a question of struggle between performer and audience at times as a friend of mine who accompanied me to see [Negative Space](#) expressed frustration with its lack of any narrative structure. I can understand why this would be frustrating; her background is in traditional theatre which is often satisfyingly resolving but as someone who comes from a visual arts background, I viewed [Negative Space](#) as response to a confined space free from narrative. I'm not sure if this is even relevant, but I think it helped in my understanding of it not as theatre, but as performance art?

It was interesting to find out that the company director Mole Wetherell began his theatre career in set design, which is echoed in the intense interactions between the set and the performers. It is of course obvious after this is revealed that the performance is a reaction to the space, and the set is the star of the show. When probed on the context of [Negative Space](#) Mole suggests that if he were to tell an audience his intentions, that intention can be the only interpretation of the work. Which in turn, and in honour of Schrödinger, left our minds thinking of infinite responses to [Negative Space](#) which, maybe to the relief of the company, left the interpretation forever open to an audience.

After the surprising realisation that the majority of the company are British in the post show talk, I felt the work flows well with the themes and structures of our fellow theatre makers on the continent. It oozes European flair, and a refusal to abide by the traditional structure of language, theatre and audience expectation. In the absence of more European minded theatre making maybe we will be surprised by shiny new Manchester theatre festival [Week 53 at The Lowry](#), which promises to showcase a more experimental side of theatre and performance that is very much needed in the UK, and more specifically, Manchester.

Overall I enjoyed the performance, but maybe felt the energy was slightly tarnished by the performer's consciousness of other performers. The dangerous elements of hammer bashing and chair throwing was dulled which, if pushed, may have elevated the piece to a much more exciting level. In a post show talk, company members reminisced on their work in progress performance, in which they suggested that they scared the audience (!) with their energy and in response felt like they had to be more controlled in their actions. I was disappointed to hear this, and thought maybe a lack of control was what it needed. But in spite of this, I really enjoyed the vibrancy of movement that fused comedy and performance – a fairly hard combination to balance well.

A really interesting show that was a joy to watch, and provided a great think piece in the pub afterwards.

**[Negative Space](#) runs until March 3rd at Contact.**