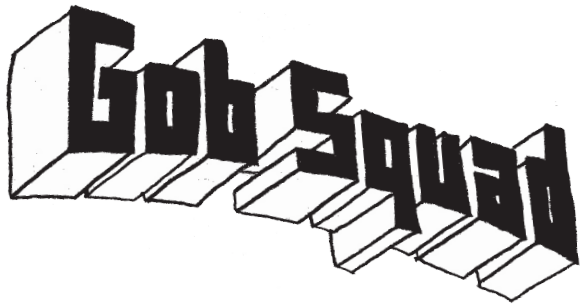


ROOM SERVICE

HELP ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT



PRESS PACK
ENGLISH/DEUTSCH



About the group

"This feels like one of the most impossible, beautiful, courageous and epic theatrical experiences you can imagine" The Guardian

Gob Squad is a seven headed monster, an **arts collective** with seven bosses. Gob Squad has a schizophrenic identity and a multiple split personality: hermaphrodite, binational and bilingual, both a patchwork family and a social utopia. Gob Squad have been devising, directing and performing together **since 1994**, working where **theatre meets art, media and real life**.

For over 20 years, Gob Squad have been searching for **new ways to combine media and performance**, producing stage shows, video installations, radio plays, interactive live films and urban interventions. The use of audio and video technology plays a prominent role in their work, with the result that **alienated forms of intimacy** have become a central theme. They try to scratch beneath the shiny, pixelated surface of the 21st century, seeking out the dark corners and hidden desires of contemporary culture.

Always on the hunt for beauty amidst the mundane, they place their work at the heart of **urban life**: in houses, shops, underground stations, car parks, hotels or directly on the street, as well as in theatres and galleries. **Everyday life and magic, banality and idealism, reality and entertainment** are all set on a collision course and the unpredictable results are captured on video.

Motivated by a desire to elevate the everyday and empower audience members to step beyond their traditional role as passive spectators, Gob Squad set up often absurdly **utopian scenarios** where meaningful collective experience and genuine **encounters involving passers-by and audience members** are suddenly possible. Audiences seem to like the feeling that anything might happen during an evening with Gob Squad. They might be asked to dance, sing or even kiss one of the performers. They might play guitar in a band, play the part of a lover or liberator in a semi-improvised film, or be asked to explain the complexities of the world to an unknown future. Or they might just simply be asked to sit and bear witness to the organised chaos unfolding on stage before them.

Gob Squad was founded in **1994**, whilst its members were still at Nottingham Trent and Giessen universities. **Berlin** has been the group's creative home since 1999. **Core members** are Johanna Freiburg, Sean Patten, Sharon Smith, Berit Stumpf, Sarah Thom, Bastian Trost and Simon Will. Other artists are invited to collaborate on particular projects. The group is managed by Eva Hartmann.

Gob Squad's international reputation has grown steadily since coming to prominence at documenta X in 1997. Their productions have been shown on all the continents apart from Antarctica where projects such as SUPER NIGHT SHOT (2003), GOB SQUAD'S KITCHEN (2007, winner of New York's Drama Desk Award), SAVING THE WORLD (2008, winner of the Goethe Preis at the Impulse Festival), BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES (2011, selected for Germany's Theatertreffen) and WESTERN SOCIETY (2013) have received wide acclaim.



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About the show

Before Western Society, before Gob Squad's Kitchen, before Super Night Shot there was Room Service (2003), where Gob Squad's blend of improvisation, video and audience interaction created a rarely seen work, pondering the loneliness at the heart of consumer society.

Room Service is a live interactive film lasting the duration of a nights sleep. Two women, two men in four identical bedrooms of one hotel – alone. Comfortably embedded in the luxurious world of room service, in the knowledge that nearly everything can be ordered, the performers turn into prisoners of their own desires. Everything they need is delivered to their doors. But will that make them sleep?

Free to do what they want (any old time) they play games with themselves in the isolation of their rooms. They kill time in cold baths or by finding comfort in the solace of the hotel mini bar. Flipping from hysterical self-amusement to introverted self-observation, they create different personas and tell the stories of their life.

The audience watches a live feed of the events on four video monitors in a conference room of the same hotel, turning the intimacy of the private rooms into a stage. The apparent privacy of the performers is occasionally broken by their conscious gaze into the camera – showing that they are very aware of the audience's presence. And it's this assurance which helps them make it through the night.

A telephone is the only direct link between the single performers and the audience's community. When it rings, will you answer?

Credits

Concept

Gob Squad

Devised by

Johanna Freiburg
Sean Patten
Elyce Semene
Berit Stumpf
Sarah Thom
Bastian Trost
Simon Will

Sound design

Sebastian Bark
Jeff McGrory

Video

Miles Chalcraft
Leif Alexis

Production Management

Eva Hartmann

Production Assistant

Sofie-Louise Thörner-Andersen

Technical Management

Torsten Schwarzbach

Gob Squad Management

Eva Hartmann

Touring Management

Mat Hand

World Premiere

24.01.2003
InterCity Hotel Hamburg
in cooperation with Kampnagel Hamburg.

Duration: 5 hours

Gob Squad is regularly funded within the Konzeptförderung programme 2015 - 2018 by the Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa Berlin.

Room Service is coproduced by Gob Squad, Kampnagel Hamburg and Podewil Berlin. With financial assistance from Kulturbehörde der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur Berlin and Fonds Darstellende Künste e.V. Bonn.



PRESS QUOTES

ON GOB SQUAD:

Gob Squad has always felt similar to a gang – and watching it, you want to sign up and join in.

THE STAGE

This feels like one of the most impossible, beautiful, courageous and epic theatrical experiences you can imagine.

THE GUARDIAN

Gob Squad virgins, please stop reading now, and go get your tickets!

TIME OUT NEW YORK (on WESTERN SOCIETY)

ON ROOM SERVICE:

“Hugely imaginative, strange and remarkably funny, Room Service checks into more than a hotel: it has the keys to a whole dreamy realm of secret desires and needs. Big Brother directed by Andy Warhol”

The Sunday Times

“A comic, cleverly filmed meditation on who we become when we are alone... chaotic, delightful, extremely daring... one of the most idiosyncratic productions I’ve seen.”

Time Out

“Lob gilt den vier von Gob Squad. Für Spontanität, Einfallsreichtum, Witz und Improvisationsgenie. Mit ihnen würde man sich gerne wieder im Holiday Inn einquartieren.”

Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung

“Gob Squad ist eine der wenigen Gruppen, die wirkliche “Pop-Theater” machen. Sie lassen sich auf die Stimmungen und Themen der Gegenwart ein. Gob Squad setzen da an, wo der gut gelaunte Zustand der Dauer-Jugend Falten bekommt.”

taz Hamburg



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Gob Squad: The unruly Anglo-German theatre collective still evolving after 25 years

THE STAGE
Jul 3, 2018

The Anglo-German theatre collective considers itself 'a bit like a blob' – 'morphing' to meet its members' needs. Founder member Sarah Thom tells Matt True-man how the company has grown together over 25 years

The Japanese art of flower arranging, ikebana, features heavily in Gob Squad's latest show. Throughout *Creation (Pictures for Dorian)*, flowers are serenely slotted into place under a heat lamp. As an art form, ikebana elevates the act of arranging over the final arrangement, and it celebrates the plant's life cycle – growth and decay – over the pristine beauty of blooms at their peak. As the performance plays out, petals wrinkle and wilt.

Gob Squad's seven members have grown up together, over 25 years, but age has hardly withered them. The iconoclastic Anglo-German collective has built up a body of rambunctious performances unlike anyone else's – and is still going strong.

Creation, a careful meditation on ageing, art and visibility, which premiered at Brighton Festival, felt like Gob Squad's most mature work to date, but it still showed the silly side that has set the collective apart. En route, it has sent signals into outer space with *Calling Laika*, incited insurrection from the Institute of Contemporary Arts in *Revolution Now* and taken to the streets with camcorders and superhero capes to capture every single thing in existence for *Saving the World*.

Gob Squad has always felt similar to a gang – and watching it, you want to sign up and join in. But behind the buccaneering playfulness, there's always insight and

purpose. From its early site-specific shows to its own brand of real-time films, splicing the best bits of theatre and live TV, Gob Squad's work has consistently pushed performance. Its shows stretch their limits and expand horizons, whether riffing off classics, such as *War and Peace* or *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, or teaching robots to talk, such as in *My Square Lady*. But, for founder member Sarah Thom, it all adds up to something bigger: **"Just being Gob Squad, that's our greatest work. Some have come, some have gone, but we've managed 25 years. It's a piece in itself."**

Like ikebana, Gob Squad is an ongoing act: unfolding, evolving, undergoing growth and decay. It's more than its shows – more, even, than its members. Gob Squad is a process – perhaps a way of life. **It functions as a collective, completely and utterly. It doesn't just create work collaboratively, the team members run their lives and their company in the same way.** Touring dates, pay packets, funding applications – all of it comes from communal decisions.

"There really is no boss," Thom stresses. "It's a struggle, but we believe in the politics of that. You're constantly in process, negotiating things, working everything out so it's completely fair and egalitarian. We're all one – a bit like a blob. We can't exist without each other, but each of us is absolutely replaceable. Gob Squad would go on without any one of us."

It's not easy being Gob Squad. In fact, Thom reckons theirs is "the most inefficient way of working ever", but the benefits outweigh the hassle. "Everything takes longer, but it does mean that, at the end, everybody owns it." And nobody gets left behind, either – the company "morphs" to meet its members' needs and fit their lives. It has shifted to accommodate relationships, babies and illnesses – people

always come first. "There's no institution to defer or submit to. Everything's open to debate, everything's up for grabs. It's what has held us together all this time," she says.

Gob Squad grew out of Nottingham Trent University. Its founder members – four of which remain – met on its Creative Arts course, an inter-disciplinary programme rooted in collaborative practice that criss-crossed from video to visual arts. An exchange scheme with Giessen University gave the company its Anglo-German core: Berit Stumpf and Johanna Freiburg clicked with Thom and Sean Patten. They still do: "There was a kindred spirit. We just got on – that's the most important thing."

For the last 20 years, Gob Squad has been based in Berlin – the funding's much better, commissions matched by the state – but it has retained relationships with theatres in the UK. "The UK is so important to us, way more than people realise," says Thom. They still "feel very at home here", but homecomings are getting harder. "Funding's less available given the size we are now. Our shows practically have to fit into suitcases to tour."

Having begun making site-specific work, taking over houses, offices and a furniture shop floor to subvert everyday spaces, Gob Squad began taking "baby steps" towards theatres at the end of the 1990s. For its first foray on to the stage, *Close Enough to Kiss*, it built a mirrored box to block the audience out. "Theatre's about the act of looking," Thom explains, "not just telling stories. We wanted to ask questions about the stage as a space."

Effectively, it treated theatres the same as any other site, toying with their configurations and conventions. The show *Safe* likened theatregoing to travel: ticket checks, stewardess ushers, a pilot MC. *Creation (Pictures for Dorian)* is all about "frames within frames". Similar to Wilde's

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novel, it examines the triangular relationship of art, artists and audience.

On stage, however, Gob Squad found itself constrained by the need to stick to the script. Since *Safe*, it has created structures, then improvised as it goes. “**Rules, risk, reality, rhythm**” – that’s the Gob Squad playbook. “Without them, something’s missing: the element of not quite knowing where you are. **We create a space where we’re able to be alive and to be ourselves** – and that is fun. It’s always at risk of being dropped and that makes it so much more exciting.”

If Gob Squad shows are alive, they’re also electric – literally as well as figuratively. Video is often at the heart of its work, the camera adding to and emphasising the quality of being live. *Room Service* plonks four lonely souls in separate hotel rooms for a night with only a camera for company. *Super Night Shot*, which it is doing for the National Theatre of Scotland this summer, sends four performers on to the streets to shoot a blockbuster film. One’s the hero, another the villain; one casts extras, another scouts locations. Their four feeds are mixed live.

This, perhaps, has been Gob Squad’s most pioneering front – not just in terms of performance, but in relation to society. Since the members of Gob Squad first picked up their VHS camcorders, cameras have become ubiquitous. Anyone can be a social media star. “When we first started using it, lots of people had home video cameras, so it felt quite universal, quite a DIY aesthetic,” Thom says. It proved liberating, freeing Gob Squad from ‘stageyness’ and participants from inhibition. “As soon as you’ve got a camera, you’re not crazy. You can ask people quite full-on questions in the street and they’ll answer.” In today’s camera-centric world, it can go one of two ways: either

people are cautious, wary of protecting their image online, or they’re comfortable – too comfortable.

That might explain Gob Squad’s retreat to the stage of late, and to those classic texts. Practically, it’s useful. Thom says: “Source material brings us all back to one point, as we go off on our seven different tangents.” But there’s politics too: about looking back, about remaking, engaging with the past. “You’re always standing on the shoulders of giants,” adds Thom. History, like Gob Squad, art and ikebana, is a process.

Matt Trueman

Five Facts about Gob Squad

1. Gob Squad started in 1994. Its members wanted a way to get into Glastonbury for free.
2. Gob Squad has toured every continent but Antarctica.
3. Among the unusual spaces Gob Squad has performed in are the Steffi Graf tennis stadium in Berlin and a bingo hall in West Bromwich, UK.
4. Gob Squad’s smallest production was *To@ster*, which involved two performers, 10 toasters and 1,000 slices of bread. The biggest, *My Square Lady*, involved a 40-piece orchestra, a choir of 35 children, 30 technicians, seven opera singers, seven scientists and a robot called Myon.
5. Performing *Super Night Shot* in Rio, Gob Squad faced arrest. The show ends with performers running through the streets in pants – illegal in Brazil. They bought bikinis and swimsuits, which are fine.



PHOTO: GARRETT DAVIS/CAPTURE IMAGING

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THE SUNDAY TIMES
June 19, 2005

“Check in for a bumpy night”

Four actors frolic in hotel rooms for six hours. It's lucky that Room Service is as funny as it is strange, says Victoria Segal

A man in a hotel room is staging an orgy. Never mind that he is the only person there — he's quite happy playing the roles of all the squealing, grunting participants, male or female. The people in the three neighbouring rooms take a break from their activities — putting on their clothes, collecting toenails and hairs from previous occupants of their room, practising exercises from magazines — to listen, expressing curiosity, revulsion or plain old lust. You know what they are up to because each “guest” is shown on one of four television screens lined up in the bar of London's Great Eastern Hotel, where the audience are watching them listen in. An electronic peepshow. Voyeurs watching voyeurs.

This is Room Service, an “intimate durational experience” by the experimental Anglo-German collective Gob Squad that can last up to six hours. The audience, who are fortunately free to come and go as they please, also play a part in the odd developments of the evening. A hotel phone squats on a desk in front of the screens, and from time to time the actors will ring down to order not a roast beef sandwich with crinkle-cut crisps, but a round of Truth or Dare — or maybe a darker, less formalised game. In the vacuum-packed perfection of the luxury hotel room, Gob Squad argue, you have everything you need to live, sure, but you have also left your life behind. You have the power to order, consume, relax, but you are also incapacitated, at the mercy of the hotel machine. What happens

next? On paper, it all sounds like the kind of thing that passes for fun only if you and your asymmetric haircut live in a Berlin warehouse conversion with a transvestite DJ and an artist who does something with fruit. Yet while Room Service might bear the multimedia, site-specific tokens of pretension, it's a remarkably funny, engaging piece that exploits the space of its hotel setting with guile and wit.

For the first hour, we hear the actors' overlapping speech and watch their bizarre behaviour. It's enigmatic, almost hypnotic, Big Brother directed by Andy Warhol.

Suddenly, and with brazen incongruity, the theme tune to Friends kicks in. hilariously, each one stops whatever weirdness they are involved in and starts grinning and miming for the camera as their names flash up on the screens beneath them. Then comes the show's desperate yet inviting subtitle: Help Me Make It Through the Night.

Dislocation and alienation might be well-worn themes, but Gob Squad make them seem as fresh as newly changed linen, largely thanks to the four charismatic actors on the screens. Sean Patten is the brash fantasist who shows the audience around his room, telling them that the safe is a microwave and the air-conditioning vent a magic postal system; Johanna Freiburg appears as the “beautiful but boring” blank canvas, as deadpan and still as Edie Sedgwick; Bastian Trost is the uptight control freak the camera adores, a man who dresses up as the hotel cleaner and imagines her sucking his toothbrush to detect the brand of toothpaste he uses; Berit Stumpf acts as a lonely, slightly unhinged woman obsessively remembering past lovers and examining her mattress for the stains she sees as “signs of life”. Occasionally, music breaks out and they all mime along, poignantly united by I Want to Break Free, Creep or All by Myself.

So compelling are the performers that the audience interaction is possibly a gimmick too far. When they call down to the bar for Truth or Dare, they have too much faith in their audience. It might sound wild and free-form to rely on the whims of your audience, but, ultimately, it just means some idiot calling out for nudity. Bastian is finally made to shave his beard into a handlebar moustache. When the performers seize control again, however, the spell returns, as Johanna stuffs a whole packet of Very Berry chewing gum in her mouth, or Berit calls up a young man from the audience to waltz with her in her darkened room, disguised as her ex-lover. When he arrives, however, you see he is wearing the mask of a demon.

Hugely imaginative, strange and funny, Room Service checks into more than a hotel: it has the keys to a whole dreamy realm of secret desires and needs. The last thing you see as you head into the night is the audience dancing to house music from Johanna's radio as Berit, dressed as a cat, claws the sheets on her bed. You're almost drawn back, until tiredness kicks in and you yearn for a Do Not Disturb sign of your own. Then you think of the demon and the cat mask and a blank-faced girl chewing gum, and think: too late for that.

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Rooms to view

Rachel Halliburton is transfixed by Gob Squad's 'Room Service'

The fly on the wall is a much more sophisticated insect than it was five years ago. Then, it was happy with any old series of 'Big Brother'; but now even this has to provide the most tabloid-worthy specimens to win its attention. Perhaps that's no surprise, given that in recent months the fly has been able to watch city slickers fighting for Sir Alan Sugar's approval in 'The Apprentice', Jamie Oliver waging war against the Turkey Twizzler in 'Jamie's School Dinners' and five men searching for their spiritual side in 'The Monastery'. Now, on top of all this, the Anglo-German company Gob Squad is giving it a chance to stretch its wings and attend the theatre for a five-hour marathon.

Those wanting to participate in this reality-TV-meets-theatre experience must first go to the Great Eastern Hotel next to Liverpool Street. Once there, they'll be directed to a conference room, which contains four television screens arranged side by side. All four screens will broadcast live images from different rooms within the hotel. As with reality TV, the audience members can spy on the individual lives unfolding in those rooms – with the catch that at any moment they might have to participate.

It is this aspect of audience participation that brings a true

frisson to this extremely unusual production. When I went to see 'Room Service' in Nottingham, a 'phone was in the conference room's centre, and every time it rang people looked at it as if it were a dangerous animal. At first, stakes were minimal – whoever answered the 'phone might be involved in a game of Truth or Dare with any one of the people we were watching. But as the night advanced, demands became more challenging – one character

'An actor faked an orgy involving ten men, seven women and a dog.'

wanted six members of the audience to party in her room, while another wanted a possible companion for life to join her on her bed for an introductory packet of crisps.

Simon Will, one of the four performers and co-directors, confesses that Gob Squad has been amazed by how the show has changed with each audience. In Nottingham, as part of Truth or Dare, he was asked to strip – yet in Germany, he revealed, the dare was often 'for us to tidy our rooms' while in Croatia 'it was very sexy. Women would 'phone and say "I will service you if you'll service me".' Live sex isn't part of the deal in 'Room Service', but saucy material's there for anyone that

way inclined. At one point, we watched astounded as an actor faked an orgy involving ten men, seven women and a dog.

As the fake orgy demonstrates, however, the main appeal of 'Room Service' is nothing to do with sex, and everything to do with wittily subverting ideas about reality culture. Gob Squad – an artists' collective – has been playing provocative games with theatre and technology since 1994. Although the show thrives on the audience element, it is all meticulously planned, so the effect is less of unedited C4 footage than of 'Big Brother' meets Robert Altman. Because the characters are isolated in their hotel rooms, 'Room Service' emerges as a comic, cleverly filmed meditation on who we become when we are alone.

It's an extremely daring structure for a production, not least because – it strikes me – our interest in others is based fundamentally on the way they construct a relationship with the outside world. In the absence of this relationship, how can you hold a stranger's interest for one hour, let alone five? Gob Squad's answer has been to give each character a defining eccentricity: so, for instance, Elysse is an obsessive compulsive who picks up stray hairs and labels them with celebrities' names; Simon is a narcissist with a fetish for changing shirts; Sarah is a lonely woman worrying about death; and

Bastian is a man who occasionally fakes orgies. A DJ, who Will describes as 'the hidden performer', provides a soundtrack which glues the production together, so that every half hour the entire cast leaps up and performs anything from Bryan Ferry's update of Elvis's 'Help Me Make It Through the Night' to the theme tune from 'Friends'.

The company stipulates that the audience is free to participate in any way they want – they can either sit there for the whole five hours (alcohol and snacks are provided) or come and go as they please. What's impressive is that, while there's no great plot, the inventiveness and humour stay consistently high. This is one of the most idiosyncratic productions I've seen, a chaotic yet delightful mix of oddities and the occasional profundity. Thankfully, for this critic, it was no great hardship to make it through the night.

'Room Service' opens at the Great Eastern Hotel on Friday 10. See Fringe listings.

rachelhalliburton@timeout.com

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DIE WELT
27.01.03

Schlaflos in Altona
Im InterCity-Hotel wird nächtelang Theater gemacht

Er spricht auch englisch, als sei er im Schatten der Freiheitsstatue zum Manne gereift. Und Zuschauer Heiko traut sich als Erster, zum Hörer zu greifen, als das Telefon so unbarmherzig klingelt, wie sonst nur der GEZ-Mann an der Haustür. Zuvor haben wir 90 Minuten lang dem selbstverlorenen Treiben von vier Hotelgästen zugesehen: Sean (Patten), Elyce (Semenec), Simon (Will) und der deutschsprachigen Berit (Stumpf). Sean ist der Held, eine Mischung aus Helge Schneider, Christoph Schlingensief und Fritz Haberlandt. Das Nichtstun beherrscht er perfekt. Die drei anderen haben ihre Neurosen ebenfalls ausgefeilt.

Wie die vier durch eine schlaflose Nacht im IC-Hotel von Altona kommen und mit ihnen die Zuschauer und die Heikos dieser mobil-globalen Welt, das zeigt die Uraufführung "Room Service - Help Me Make It Through The Night" der deutsch-englischen Theatergruppe "Gob Squad" auf vier Monitoren.

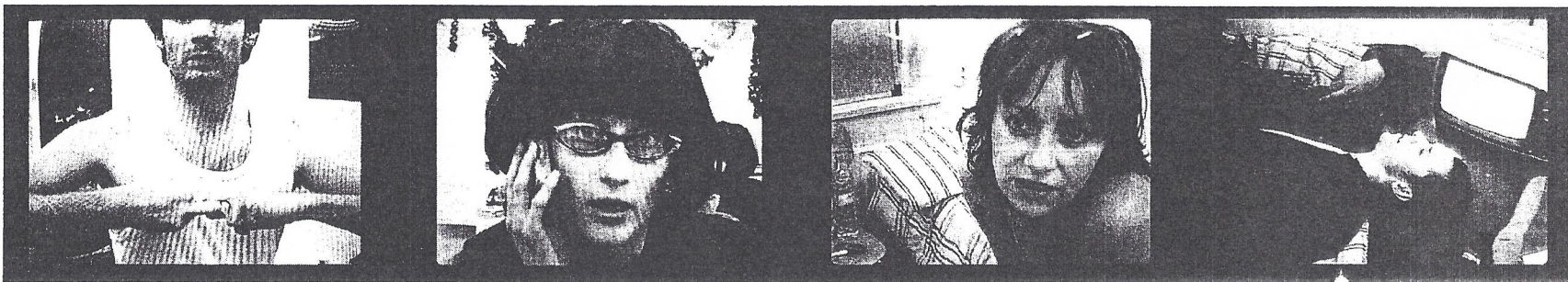
Schweigend verfolgen die Zuschauer das Quartett, bis sie via Telefon interaktiviert werden und sich beim Spielchen "Wahrheit oder Pflicht" gemeinsam mit den Schauspielern die kommenden vier Stunden vertreiben dürfen. Da wird Simon von Heiko unter die Dusche gebeten, was seiner Kleidung ganz und gar nicht bekommt. Berit und Dennis tanzen einfach im Hotelzimmer miteinander. Der Konferenzraum versprüht dazu den Charme eines Führungsseminars gesponsert by the Arbeitsamt, da helfen keine Kuschelkissen, Kerzen und Matratzen. Zu viele Karrieren versickerten in diesem blauen Teppichboden, noch bevor sie begannen.

Der Ort, vom Veranstalter Kampnagel ausgesucht, könnte nicht besser gewählt sein, denn nur an wenigen Orten fühlt man sich so wunderbar allein gelassen wie hier. Und wer die still dahinglimmende Zigarettenkippe vorm Eingang des IC-Hotels entdeckte, und sensible Zeitgenossen taten das gewiss, der konnte bereits zu früher Nachtstunde in tiefe Melancholie verfallen. Oder die Nacht mit Heiko and his friends durchmachen.

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TAZ HAMBURG
24.01.2003



Von der Einsamkeit des Künstlers jenseits der Bühne: Gob Squad spart keine Facette dieses merkwürdigen Zustands aus und lässt sich auch noch dabei beobachten FOTO: KAMPNAGEL

Fun-Gesellschaft, backstage

Jemandem zusehen, der sich selbst unterhält: Die aus Kampnagel-Auftritten bekannte Performance-Gruppe Gob Squad leuchtet mit „Room Service – Help Me Make it Through the Night“ im InterCity Hotel Altona die Melancholie des Glamour aus

von NIKOLA DURIC

Die Zuschauer sitzen im Konferenzraum eines Hotels. Vor ihnen vier Türme von Fernsehern, auf denen vier Performer zu sehen sind. Sie sind nicht weit weg, verteilt auf vier Hotelzimmer im selben Gebäude. Dies ist die Ausgangssituation des neuen Stücks der britisch-deutschen Live-Art-Gruppe Gob Squad, die vor einiger Zeit ihren Hauptsitz von Nottingham nach Berlin verlegt hat. Ihr neuer Abend, oder genauer gesagt ihre neue Nacht *Room Service – Help Me Make it Through the Night* findet jetzt im InterCity Hotel Hamburg am Bahnhof Altona statt.

Langsam verfestigt sich die Ästhetik von Gob Squad zu einer Mischung aus Kunst, Theater

und medialer Vermittlung. Ihre neue Arbeit nennt Simon Will, seit drei Jahren festes Mitglied der Gruppe, eine „realtime soap“. Auf die Frage, ob sie nicht auch an *Big Brother* erinnert, antwortet Will: „Ja natürlich, *Big Brother* ist in seinen guten Momenten auch Theater. Staged reality is big theatre.“

Im Grunde ist das aktuelle Stück *Room Service* die Fortsetzung des Gob Squad-Klassikers *What are you looking at?*. In diesem Stück schlossen sich Gob Squad in eine verspiegelte Glasbox ein. Die Performer konnten nur sich selbst sehen, während die Zuschauer um den Raum herum gingen und verschiedene Formen von Gesellschaftspartys beobachten konnten. *Room Service* fängt dort an, wo die Party aufhört: Wenn die Protagonisten

sich alleine in ihre Hotelzimmer zurückziehen. Mit Blicken in die Kamera im Raum machen dort die Mitglieder von Gob Squad klar, dass sie sich der Beobachtung bewusst sind. Die Zuschauer im Konferenzraum entwickeln sich so von Voyeuren zu Mitspielern. Zuerst beobachten sie die Performer dabei, wie sie mit der plötzlichen Einsamkeit zu kämpfen haben und sie mit Hilfe der Minibar zu bekämpfen versuchen.

Room Service handelt davon, wie es ist, jemandem zuzusehen, der sich selbst unterhält. Wenn die Leere unerträglich wird, greifen die Zimmerbewohner zum Telefon und rufen im Konferenzraum an. Daraus entwickelt sich eine interaktive Ereignisstruktur, die von nun an die ganze Nacht durchzieht. Die Zuschauer

werden zu Gesprächspartnern, zu Freunden. Sie feiern den Namenstag eines Performers, stellen Fragen, lassen sich erlogene Geschichten erzählen oder beteiligen sich an Telefonspielen. Biographien werden live erfunden und wieder verworfen.

Wenn der Abend fortgeschritten ist, fangen Gob Squad an, sich umzuziehen, als ob sie erneut in die Nacht hinaus gehen wollten. Sie bleiben aber in ihren Hotelräumen, nerven den Zimmerservice und freuen sich über die Besuche und die Stilberatung der Beobachter.

Gob Squad ist eine der wenigen Gruppen, die tatsächlich „Pop-Theater“ macht. Sie unterlegen nicht einfach klassische Theaterstücke mit zeitgenössischen Charts oder verpflanzen die Handlung in einen Techno-

Club. Gob Squad lassen sich vielmehr wirklich auf die Stimmungen und Themen der Gegenwart ein. Dabei beleuchten sie häufig die dunkle Seite des Alltags, nicht den Glamour adrenalingeladener Konzerte und Partynächte. Sie untersuchen eher die stillen und traurigen Momente, den Backstage-Raum der glitzernden Welt. Häufig beobachten und zeigen Gob Squad den Moment des Rückzugs, den Augenblick der Erschöpfung. Sie beschreiben die schwindende Kraft, die eine Fit for Fun-Diktatur nach sich zieht. Gob Squad setzen da an, wo der gut gelaunte Zustand der Dauer-Jugend Falten bekommt.

24.-26.+31. Januar sowie 1.+2. Februar, jeweils 22 Uhr, InterCity Hotel Hamburg, Paul-Neumann-Platz 17/Bahnhof Altona

ROOM SERVICE

HELP ME MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT ★★★★★

Der Rhythmus der Nacht:
Gob Squad bei zeitraum_ex!t in Mannheim

Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung

28.09.2004

Mannheim liegt im wilden Westen. Seine Stadtlandschaft gleicht der Prärie, die voller Wunder ist. Diese sind von nun an alljährlich im September zu bestaunen. Dank sei zeitraum_ex!t, dem Büro heimischer Kunstvermittler für Festivals mit der besonderen Fragestellung. In diesem Jahr ging es um "Zu Hause", denn ohne Wohnung kommt man um. So wurde man zum Zeugen der Agonie, als im Holiday Inn Mannheim City-Center die Gruppe Squad zu ihrer Performance-Nacht lud. Ihr Thema für die nächsten fünf Stunden: "Room Service - help me make it through the night". Squad sind übrigens Sean Patten, Berit Stumpf, Elyce Semeneć und Bastian Trost. Man kommt aus Berlin, man kommt aus Nottingham, man hält seit zehn Jahren zusammen und man arbeitet im Kollektiv ohne Regisseur. Das Hotelzimmer ist das Gegenteil von der eigenen Wohnung, von einem Zuhause. Es ähnelt ihm zunächst scheinbar und ist dann doch etwas ganz anderes: Versorgung und Anonymität. Tagsüber ist man unterwegs, nachts wird es nur noch schrecklich. Das gilt auch (vielleicht besonders) für Künstler. Was machen die vier im Holiday Inn? Ganz einfach, nichts, sie langweilen sich auf ihren Zimmern, sie sind allein, sie haben keinen Kontakt zueinander, sie probieren ihre Klamotten durch, sie machen dumme gymnastische Übungen, sie tanzen vor dem Fernseher, es wird alles immer sinnloser. Die Lösung ist das Telefon. "Ruf mich an" schreien sie unisono.

Und als sie dann verzweifelt selbst den Hörer in die Hand nehmen und lostippen, klingelt es bei denjenigen Leuten, die sich in einer Lounge des Holiday Inn zusammengefunden haben, um bei Kuschelpolstern auf vier Bildschirmen mit den vieren darauf vor sich zu starren und sich dabei auch bald langweilen würden. Wenn nicht ein Spiel gespielt wird. Das Spiel heißt offiziell "Wahrheit oder Pflicht", inoffiziell aber eher "Tu was, unterhalte mich, rette mich, erlöse mich". Denn es hilft keine Hauszeitschrift, nicht das Betrachten der Grafiken über dem Bett, auch nicht das TV-Programm und auch keine Bibel in der Schublade, die gibt es nämlich im Holiday Inn gar nicht, wie einer der vier herausfand.

Man muss Aufgaben finden, um am Leben zu bleiben: Schnell zur Rezeption laufen und ein paar Äpfel holen (Sport ist Mord, auch im Hotel) oder, schon besser, einem im Publikum drei Euro schenken, einer von dem man glaubt, dass er es am meisten nötig hat. Und das war dann der Einstieg für ein Medienspektakel, das keine Form ausließ, die TV-Beichte, die Soap, die Kriminalgeschichte, die Satire um das schnelle Geld, vor allem aber das Dudelprogramm der Musiksender. Alles im Rhythmus der Nacht. Das ging sehr lange, so an die fünf Stunden, war aber das Gegenteil von Langeweile. Darum muß ab jetzt nur noch gelobt werden. Das Lob gilt den vier von Gob Squad. Für Spontaneität, Einfallsreichtum, Witz und Improvisationsgenie. Performances machen auch andere, aber nicht wie sie. Mit ihnen würde man sich gerne wieder im Holiday Inn einquartieren. Sie helfen durch die Mannheimer Prärie-Nacht.

Franz Schneider

