



a different class

Contact's new production *White Trash* asks some daring questions about the British class system

"Most theatre bores me silly, and I don't go very often," laughs Richard Gregory, artistic director of Manchester company Quarantine. "When I set

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Quarantine up, I had to ask myself why I felt that theatre was important. I have no interest in theatre that could be better made as film or television."

Quarantine make theatre characterised by a spirit of invention, combined with 'a quiet commitment to creating intimate contact with reality'. Which means... what, exactly? "We try to make theatre that addresses vital social, political and philosophical concerns yet obeys no fixed rules about how theatre should be made or what form it should take," Gregory explains, before adding, "A piece of theatre by Quarantine has deliberate raw edges - a sense of possibility rather than finality."

Latest work *White Trash* affirms this, in that it has no characters, no fictional narrative and no conventional dramatic structure. Which is not to say it doesn't actively engage the audience - there's no choice when the performers begin by sitting amongst us. This seven-strong group then play an endless game of pool, and out of the banality of their game and their relationships we gain a sense of who they are. True stories arc out of nothing and fade back into the game. This ordinariness is interrupted by bursts of colour, movement and music. Ultimately, *White Trash* looks at modern working class identity now, daring to ask the question: what does it mean to be young, white, working class and British?

The performers are all young men from Salford and Manchester who were recruited through a series of workshops in local areas such as Wythenshawe, Denton and Newton Heath - areas of Greater Manchester often damned with the prescriptive label of 'white trash'. So it's that old chestnut, 'masculinity in crisis', eh?

"Well, the rules for all of us - male and female - about how we shape and define our identity are ever-changing but under particular pressure right now," says Gregory, "as we measure ourselves against celebrities and unimaginably affluent and powerful figures whose lives are so immediately accessible (yet achingly distant) to us through the media. But scratch below the surface - as we've been trying to do in rehearsal - and you find the same fundamental human desires for love, satisfaction, meaning and purpose that we've all had since year dot."

White Trash, Contact, 11-20 March

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