

The End of a Zero

A performance that will take the form of a jazz funeral as found in the traditions of New Orleans and parts of the American south.

This project will directly follow on from a recently completed performance at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, 2008. A single intertitle taken from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* simply stating 'Suddenly...' was taken as a starting point; new scores were composed and a processional performance was devised based on the sections of the film adjacent to the given intertitle. The performance dealt with exploration of the cinematic through adaptation as well as tapping into the historical significance of the particular film in question as a form of visual research.

As an idea *The End of a Zero* began with the conflation of two chance products of research:

The first is a found photograph of a downed Japanese fighter plane during WWII. Cropped to having the appearance of 16:9 widescreen on its side; the photograph depicts the moment the fighter was hit and lost power. Providing the namesake for this performance the image is completed with the caption *The end of a Zero*. The meaning of this phrase proved elusive for sometime. After months of contemplation and through a refusal to properly decipher it with more research the caption eventually became associated with Barthes' interest in the relationship between photography and death; the *Zero* in the caption becoming his 'moment', the death of which is recorded by photography.

The second is a short, randomly recorded radio sample taken from Ecuadorian station HCJB. Complete with analogue static the radio clip depicts what sounds to be a funeral dirge.

Often reserved for eminent musicians, the jazz funeral is a hybrid tradition that finds its roots both in African spiritual rites and European (particularly French and Spanish) customs and music. It takes the form of a musical procession through the streets usually beginning at the home of the deceased. Though structure can differ from funeral to funeral, a similar arrangement is generally followed.

From Wikipedia:

A typical jazz funeral begins with a march by the family, friends, and a brass band from the home, funeral home or church to the cemetery. Throughout the march, the band plays somber dirges and hymns. A change in the tenor of the ceremony takes place, after either the deceased is buried, or the hearse leaves the procession and members of the procession say their final good bye and they "cut the body loose". After this the music becomes more upbeat, often starting with a hymn or spiritual number played in a swinging fashion, then going into popular hot tunes. There is raucous music and cathartic dancing where onlookers join in to celebrate the life of the deceased.

The End of a Zero will take the jazz funeral an organisation principle. It will emulate the traditional stages as outlined above however the start and end points will be determined according to site. The performance will have a composition scored for it taking the radio sample as a basis. The score will be performed by a group of musicians who will lead the procession. The performance will be interspersed (most likely between each musical shift) with projections of intertitles taken directly from silent movies.

The End of a Zero will be meditation on Cinema and silence, death and duration, photography and muteness as well as music and emotional state.

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The end of a Zero

*A Japanese fighter
plunges to death
during the battle
of Midway*