



Monday, June 9, 1997

**Performance**

Tokyo Ghetto, CCA, Glasgow

**Mary Brennan**

ONE element that seems to run, consistently, through the work of Tokyo-based mavericks Gekidan Kaitaisha is that of "invisibility". Of how, for instance, in an affluent and apparently civilised society there can be all kinds of inhumanity, degradation, and injustice that is never openly recognised - ergo: it does not exist. A piece like *Tokyo Ghetto* confronts and unsettles that blinkered complacency.

It opens with a woman being slapped. Leaning, without protest, against the back wall, she accepts a rapid battery of blows on her bare back from a man in a suit. We don't know why. He plays her flesh like a tomtom, and as he strikes, her white flesh reddens and purples until the blood threatens to burst through . . . But it's theatre, isn't it? So we stay silent and don't intervene. Would we, do we, intervene in real life? And if it's happening behind closed doors, (thankfully) how can we be expected to know?

And still the slapping continued . . . made suddenly even more distressing by some chance, outside images. Through the unshuttered windows of the space I caught sight of real people, real lives across the street. A man smoking, a young girl clambering into bed, all unaware of the brutality being enacted across the way.

The contrast was graphic, an unwitting but powerful reinforcement of everything that followed. Images of casual, dismissive callousness, juxtaposed with projected text and snippets of newsreel, built into a bleak, vehement approach against the prejudices of consumerist societies which act as if certain categories - women, animals, cripples, refugees - can be erased from the picture. Blisteringly uncomfortable, extreme but sadly wise in its understanding of hypocrisy and self interest.