

Lorraine Whelan / Christopher Mahon



Christopher Mahon, *You Can't Un-See Something*, 2016; basalt, quartz, dimensions variable. Installation view, Lambert Puppet Theatre, Monkstown, Dublin. Photography Caroline Campbell.

Christopher Mahon's *You Can't Un-See Something* at the Lambert Puppet Theatre.

I had never been to the Lambert Puppet Theatre in Monkstown, but I had been teased by the little I knew of this artist and his event. Christopher Mahon is a sculptor, choreographer and dancer and somehow this event was going to combine his practices. I didn't know what to expect but the prospect of this unknown piqued my curiosity.

In the packed, darkened theatre a droning otherworldly sound signalled the start of the event. A spotlight focused on an elegant woman, moving slowly across the stage holding what appeared to be a stone mask close to her face. In a reverent ritual she placed the mask on a plinth. The light went out, a spotlight appeared somewhere else in the theatre where the action was repeated: another, identical woman (actually a twin), a mask, a plinth. This happened for a third time.

Sudden silence announced the end of the performance and the audience was invited to view the masks on their plinths. They were indeed stone, beautifully and impossibly carved. One could not help but wonder how the dancers held these weighty masks so effortlessly as they moved through the theatre space.

The evening provided a ritualistic glimpse into another world. The choreography was precise and elegant, the dancers' movements were understated but exact. The sculpted masks hovered between the ancient and contemporary – timeless and, again, exact. The dancers were the living embodiment of the inanimate

stone.

Afterwards, this event lingered in my mind as an invocation inspiring awe. Through his use of sound, movement and sculpted stone, Christopher Mahon successfully combined seemingly disparate practices to create an entirely satisfying sensorial experience.

Lorraine Whelan is an artist and writer based in Bray, Co. Wicklow.

You Can't Un-See Something, an event by artist and ARC researcher Christopher Mahon, was the culmination of two years of research. It took place at the Lambert Puppet Theatre in Monkstown on 20 April 2016. The event featured Hannah Callan and Tatiana Rowen, in a performance of choreographed sculpture.