

Two Minds with a Single Thought, February 2016



Two Minds with a Single Thought took place in conjunction with the UCC Theatre Department's Valentine's Day celebration at Corcadorca's Theatre Development Centre in the Triskel Arts Centre in Cork, Ireland in 2016. In this performance – again collaborating with Margot Fox – we deepened our imperceptible communication techniques for the simulation of thought transference. And again – in contrast to most stage performances of mentalism – we elected to foreground the theatrical elements of the performance.

In *Two Minds with a Single Thought*, we began to consciously explore concepts of postmodernism and hyperreality – as we played with notions of celebrity, shallowness, and pop-culture – adopting an ironic but joyful (Warhol-esque?) tone and aesthetic. This approach was further reflected in our staging, in which our Ikea chair stood atop a circular platform depicting the Presidential Seal of the United States. A mirrored black velvet backdrop with red curtains further evoked the feel of the oval office. The 1973 song *Only You* by the Platters played just prior to the performance.

In terms of costuming, our conceptual approach was to look like a train-wreck of a 1960s prom date. Maggie wore a green bell-shaped dress and leopard print pumps. I wore a powder blue vintage tuxedo with a leopard print pocket square and green carnation as an homage to Irish author and playwright Oscar Wilde. Although assertions have been made attempting to link the green

carnation to homosexuality, there is evidence to the contrary.¹ In a most likely apocryphal, but often repeated story,² when asked by a friend what the flower represented Wilde replied, ‘Nothing whatever, but that is just what nobody will guess.’³ What is perhaps most striking about the green carnation, is that it is artificially created; it does not exist naturally. This ambiguity serves to make the green carnation particularly symbolic of the liminal.

In this performance, I sported a real pencil moustache, which as previously noted, carries both masculine and effeminate connotations. This was a significant upgrade for me, since in previous performances I had simply drawn on my moustache with a permanent marker. I realize that it is hardly ground-breaking to grow a moustache for a performance, however, this act was deeply symbolic for me, and represented a shift away from the hyper-theatricality of *Meet the Deans*.

By consciously evoking previous eras with our performance, certain complications – particularly regarding gender roles and identities – were inevitable. Yet, although we evoked the 1950s and 1960s, the show was not a period piece *per se*. Rather, it was a retro pastiche which flirted with, rather than replicated, the past. This playful approach allowed us to examine, critique, and subvert – as well as have fun with – traditional gender roles in performances of telepathy and second sight.

Works Cited:

Beckson, Karl. ‘Oscar Wilde and the Green Carnation.’ *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*. Vol. 43. No. 4. 2000. pp. 387-397. Print

Holland, Merlin. ‘The 10 most popular misconceptions about Oscar Wilde.’ *The Guardian*. 7 May 2003. Print.

Robertson, W. Graham. *Life Was Worth Living*. Harper Brothers. 1931. Print.

¹ Holland, Merlin. ‘The 10 most popular misconceptions about Oscar Wilde.’ *The Guardian*. 7 May 2003.

² Robertson, W. Graham. *Life Was Worth Living*. 1931.

³ Beckson, Karl. ‘Oscar Wilde and the Green Carnation.’ *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*. Vol. 43. No. 4. 2000. pp. 387-397.