

## Review

# Surging emotions in stylish guilt trip

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***EMBRACE: GUILT FRAME* Richard Wherrett Studio, Sydney Theatre, February 27 Until March 9**

The first visible Sydney Theatre Company venture under the leadership of Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton is a bold venture of movement without words for Wharf 2LOUD. It is a great start.

Tess de Quincey and Peter Snow are, literally, framed. You see only the head and shoulders of these two performers - occasionally a hand - within the gilt frame of an old portrait. Ironically, hiding their bodies simply leaves them more exposed - as performers.

The guilt of the title is a clue. The two faces in front of you, scarcely moving, are plunging through a sea of emotions. There are tears, moments of remembered joy, desire, revulsion, concern, love, hate and shades of all these in transition.

Snow looks like everybody's favourite uncle. He has a wonderful face that reads like a book, his experience of life on call as he works through his emotions. De Quincey has sharper features under her cockatoo tuft of bleached hair sprouting from a wide headband - but she, too, exhibits vulnerability as the reverse of bitterness.

They work in the Body Weather technique which grew from Japan's *butoh* style of dance, with its almost unbelievably slow way of moving - like grass growing - and stylised representation of emotion. Yet, as fascinating as it is to observe the technical side, they go beyond it, drawing you into an intense 40 minutes of observation and response that is powered by the metronome sound of Michael Toisuta's *Homage to Ligeti*.

The most distinctive impact for me is the way Snow and de Quincey convey their separateness. Here are two characters who give every impression of shared lives, now inhabiting a confined physical space but utterly in their own worlds of surging emotions that refer to each other without connecting. It is something to see - and feel.

This is one of the *embrace* series of works by De Quincey Co in Australia and India. Along with the embrace of different cultures and disciplines is the invitation to discuss the current show with the performers over refreshments offered at the end of the performance. And they talk well, too.