

<http://utopiaparkway.wordpress.com/2011/11/28/friends-this-is-not-our-time-the-art-of-speech-turned-upside-down-by-tim-etchells-kate-mcintosh/>

'Friends, this is NOT our time': the art of speech turned upside down by Tim Etchells & Kate McIntosh ('Although we fell short')



Would I vote for her? That's the question I was asking myself, as I was leaving the theatre (Kaaitheater Studio's, Brussels). Yes I would. Which was a strange answer, considering the fact that for the previous fifty minutes Kate McIntosh had been giving a speech that basically went nowhere at all. Or just one of the things that *Although we fell short* (written & directed by Tim Etchells) made me realize: strange how, if a politician has charisma, it doesn't really matter what he or she is saying. *Although we fell short* premiered during *Spoken world*, a festival focusing on 'the powers of speech' (through December 12).

'The road ahead will be too long and our climb will be too steep and our destination will be too far away. We probably will not get there in one year or in a decade or even in a century, and in fact to be frank I have never been more certain than I am tonight that we will not reach our destination at all.'

Picture an actress saying this. Not in despair, but using a really convincing tone. As if what she is saying is actually a positive thing. Something to root for and to look forward to. The strange and unsettling thing is: you would tend to go for the positive vibe and you would almost forget that what she is telling you is actually quite depressing.

That's the kind of game Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment) enjoys playing with *Although we fell short*, a text focusing on the mechanics of public speaking. He has written a new speech using fragments of speeches by lots of other people (Kruschev, Obama, McCain, Thatcher, Blair, Pol Pot...). Along the way he has done some other things too, such as inverting the sense of sentences (*Friends, this is our time* suddenly becomes *Friends, this is not our time*), or making the contrast between how McIntosh is saying it and what she is saying really big (at several moments she is talking complete gibberish in a really convincing way).

Sure, we all know that a good speech always relies on tricks, so in a sense *Although we fell short* tells you nothing you didn't already know. And don't expect this performance to take unexpected turns. After ten minutes or so you've heard and seen everything there is to be heard or seen. But for two reasons *Although we fell short* never becomes tiresome: the well-written/constructed text and the way Kate McIntosh performs it. As the perfect speaker. Charismatic, and in total control of every aspect of her voice, of every word she utters and every move she makes. Funny, clever and disquieting.