



[Smoke and Mirrors](#) at [HOME](#)

Presented by The Ricochet Project

Reviewed by [Stephen Bowler](#) April 2016

The blurb for this event says ‘circus’ and ‘acrobatics’, and that’s what you get – a physical show with a backing track but not a word spoken by the pair who bend, balance, twist and dangle in ever more improbable ways. There is a hint of mime and some deft balletic moves but most of all they are a circus act, executing a series of entanglements and suspensions that seem genuinely risky.

The show is an hour long. It begins with hints of the office and ends on something similar. In between they take off most of their clothes – ‘suits of capitalism’ apparently – and give ‘an intimate acrobatic performance’ that is undeniably bold.



What does it mean? I've no idea. Of course, it doesn't have to. That's the privilege of art. But at the same time there is always a charge, an intellectual static that is here fed by the office theme, as a nod toward narrative that is most explicitly articulated in soundtrack quotes from Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, about how we 'think too much and feel too little.'

Thus framed, *Smoke and Mirrors* claims are highly contemporary. 'Feeling' is preferred to 'thinking' in all sorts of ways today and the notion of 'embodied experience' is highly fashionable in academic circles, especially 'gender studies'. The body exerts no less magnetic a force within the culture, which accounts for the popularity of a topless lady and a very bendy chap on ropes and an easy association with themes like embodiment.

Maybe it was ever thus. But the offer of ever-more explicit, physical, corporeal representations is – to my way of thinking – perhaps not the most creative feature of the art of our time. But then, you may ‘feel’ otherwise!