1001 Beds

Johnson, Glen, Miller, Tim

Published by University of Wisconsin Press

Johnson, Glen and Tim Miller.
1001 Beds: Performances, Essays, and Travels.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/8633.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/8633

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=295283
This lighthearted piece was performed at a 1986 benefit for a new floor at PS 122—the need for the floor deriving partly from Tim Miller’s creative act of amateur arson described here. “Floor It!” conveys the heady early days at the performance venue founded by Miller and three colleagues. Written in the headlong lowercase style he affected in many early writings, its hectic pace anticipates humorous passages in his later performance works. The burning newspapers described here were an element of Paint Yrself Red/Me & Mayakovsky (1980). The quoted inscription comes from a stained-glass window at PS 122, originally a school in the immigrant neighborhood of Manhattan’s Lower East Side. The ketchup vandalism was aimed at the set of a feminist play about waitressing. Miller no longer recalls the “rolling rock” reference—perhaps beer, perhaps literal rocks in a performance, perhaps both.

here we are on the floor. i’m going to tell you a few things about this floor for whose benefit we are gathered here tonight. i know a lot about this floor. a lot of my life has taken place on this floor. along these boards from one side to the other. tongue in groove. year after year.
there’s a place on this floor over there by that person with the hat or whatever on where I burned a big hole in the floor when I was young or so it seemed in the fall of 1980. I was burning up Russian newspapers just me and them crammed in a foot locker in a performance I was doing. It was one of the first performances anyone had ever done here on this floor. I burnt off some of my hair and those burning papers snuck down and took a hunk out of this floor underneath my feet. Then two weeks later I burned another hole in the floor right over there by the pillar but that’s another story. I don’t mean to sound nostalgic. I mean, really, being the person who put the only big burns in this floor is no great shakes.

And then there was the morning in 1982 I walked in at 7 am and saw that someone had broken in here and had busted thirty-five ketchup bottles all over the floor and it looked like the Sharon Tate murders. I stepped in glass and saw long hand prints dragged along the floor and walls and the whole place stank like the dried dark red scummy stuff around the mouth of a ketchup bottle. It looked like some weird ritual death cult had been here and that something weirder yet was gonna happen. And in fact later that day a big dog fell out of a truck as it turned the corner and it broke its neck while I sat there eating my yogurt and later that week I got poison ivy. It looked like the end of the world but we cleaned it up. Scraped it up. Swept it up.

And there’s a trillion other things I remember about this floor. Like having sex over here and over there and by the pillar and gee can I borrow the keys to the space. The people changed over the years and that’s how it goes. Once doing it over there by the window we realized someone was watching us but that was all right it’s a performance space and the beat goes on and fights and food. And rehearsals and a million performances rolling rocks shin splints and these are the things that floors are made of. I can remember one boiling night in the summer of 1982 on Tuesday night when people come here to dance around. There was a huge classic NYC summer thunderstorm and we turned out all the lights and opened all the windows and the
lightning lit up the jumping and running and the wind blew sheets of rain clear thru the twenty-two windows you can’t see right now but they’re there. it felt like king lear or the flying dutchman except warm and it blew us around the space between 9th and 10th and the corner of 1st. and it seemed like the whole world or maybe the lower east side or at least right here was going to blow up and get carried away out over the east river and back to the old world of all the eastern european kids who sat here in 1894. everything going back to where it started. things poking out from below like all those corpses and gross stuff at the end of poltergeist till everything got wiped clean and everybody got blown home. back to where they came from wherever that is. maybe right here. like the inscription says: EVERY WAKING HOUR WE WEAVE / WHETHER WE WILL OR NO / EVERY TRIVIAL ACT OR DEED / INTO THE WARP MUST GO. but none of that happened and the floor just got wetter and wetter. and we realized the floor was getting warped and that we better shut the windows. so we squeezed out the clothes and got the mops. turned on the lights. slipping and sliding. year after year. tongue in groove.