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(To boldly go where no clown has gone before)



Mump & Smoot, aka Michael Kennard and John Turner

Mump & Smoot reside on the planet Ummo, worship their clown god Ummo, and speak their own brand of gibberish - Ummonian. Their work is funny, disturbing, "enormously disquieting, spectacularly funny show," Max Wyman - Vancouver Province



Converstaion in Ummonian

Michael Kennard and John Turner met in 1986 in Second City workshops. As a duo they discovered they had a good connection, especially when doing gibberish exercises. When hearing about the extraordinary visionary clown work of Richard Pochinki, they enrolled in his workshops and on Friday the 13th of May, 1988, Mump & Smoot were born in their first show "Jump the Gun."

Their joint credo later became "Enjoy the process of living." Their resulting work developed from their joint passion about human values, dreaming, magic and spirituality all with a dusting of human fears.

Mump & Smoot have had enormous success in Canada and have done a stint "Off Broadway" in New York City.

Their mission is to contribute to Canadian Clown Theatre and through creative explorations expand its current parameters (...to boldly go where no clown has gone before...) For more information visit their website at: www.mumpandsmoot.com

**Excerpts from an Interview with John Turner
by Shobi Dobi**

From John Turner "Smoot"

"I did actually no clowning before I met Richard Pochinko. My partner Michael Kennard had done quite a bit of clown work, and he actually talked me into taking the Baby Clown Workshop with him. I loved the workshop, but I was not very good at it. Of course, with this kind of workshop, we are not to make those kinds of judgements. Right? I loved the color work, and I loved wearing masks. It really blew open what I perceived the clown to be - it was an atom bomb type of explosion. I've been creative in music and arts my whole life and studied a lot and performed some. And it *just jazzed me entirely - the enormous creative distance you travel in Baby Clown. It blew me away. The worlds we created were so wonderful. I suddenly saw clowning as unlimited. I went from not seeing Clown as an art at all, to seeing it as an unlimited art form in a short few weeks. However, it wasn't really until our second tour (almost 3 years later) that I started admitting I was a clown. By then I couldn't say I was doing anything else but clowning.*

"With the success of Mump and Smoot, it wasn't so much the Baby Clown workshop that I wanted to teach. I was interested in the process of going from Baby Clown to professionally performing as a clown - a theater clown. Baby Clown doesn't have anything to do with that. Baby Clown is a beginning, an opening. Our second show was booked "Off Broadway," so our work had progressed quite quickly. The workshop I wanted to teach was from "Baby to Stage." However, as Richard [Pochinko] had died in 1989, there was no one teaching Baby Clown workshops in the Toronto area, so there were few to work with.

“So I realized I needed to generate students. I was actually very intimidated about teaching Baby Clown. Why? As much as I latched onto the style, and we became very quickly successful at it, it’s pretty involved work. It’s pretty deep and sometimes harrowing work for the teacher as much as the students. It’s a big responsibility. I was intimidated out of respect for the work.

“I got together with Fiona Griffiths, who had apprenticed with Richard and was our Mump and Smoot movement coach, and went through all her notes that she had for Baby Clown. Mike and Karen Hines had notes also. So between these sources, we pretty much had it covered. Richard had trained many people at that point to teach Baby Clown. He had also made it clear that Mike, Karen and I were to carry on the work as well.

“So I taught my first class of eight and just loved it! Loved it! Loved it! The workshops just evolved from there. Whenever we had down time with the shows, I would teach.”



Mump and Smoot in sleeping bags in “Flux”

Breaking People Out of Their Glass Jar Creative Prisons

[How did Richard arrive at this technique?]

“Richard had a vision or a dream that he was flying over the Earth and all the people were in glass jars which represented creative prisons. It came to Richard in this dream that his mission or destiny is to try to break people out of their glass jars. I think Richard had a mission -- a destiny to help people break out of their creative prisons, and he used primarily mask and clown to do this. I think ultimately that chaotic, free, wild dream state, and clown logic world was a perfect place for Richard to go in terms of breaking people out of the glass jar prisons. It’s such an insane crazy world, the world of the clowns, and the simplest thing to the most complex thing. from the wildest thing to the most mundane thing. It covers the whole spectrum and it keeps switching itself at the drop of a hat. It’s a great form for creative development.

Basking in an Emotions Rainbow

[Watching the work of students] “It’s breath taking and it’s heart wrenching and it’s fulfilling and it’s satisfying, And sometimes there is anxiety and I get nervous for them, but I love that all dearly. If you spend two weeks focusing intensely on freeing the impulse and on free movement - that incredible image river that we all have inside - it’s so breath taking, the power that comes into the room. You feel it right away when you walk into the room with the walls covered with paintings and masks and the bizarre world of costumes and hats. It’s like basking in an emotions rainbow. I’ve never had a bad group in the 40 some odd times I’ve taught this workshop.”

[Can you speak to the importance of innocence in this work.]

“Richard stressed innocence quite a bit. I think it was about returning to the original impulse (pure impulse) the time in our lives when we deal without editor. The clown needs to have access to everything. The problem with our editor is, we need it. We can’t tolerate our impulses without our editor, especially in big cities. But we get into too much control and cut off all the options that could be open to us. So by returning to the innocence of each mask, there is a sense of birth - a sense of wonder and newness about seeing the world. Innocence is about being in the pre-editor phase of impulse work. You practice listening to that first impulse. It’s “follow the impulse.” It’s not “follow the second impulse” or the third or denying all the impulses until you come up with an intellectually acceptable action or idea. It’s just “follow the impulse.” There is a sense of laughter and play in the innocence of the child. The glee and the joy that can accompany childhood is a great starting place for the clown.”

Creation of the Three Dimensional Creative Play Ground.

“The mask gives a sort of structure to this world. The six masks of Baby Clown are representative of specific directions. Each of the masks is a point in the compass - the directions and the above and below are dimensions. These dimensions represent the three-dimensional creative play ground.. What you generate is, if you think of the creative self as a globe, then you realize that the masks represent points on the surface and the better you know your masks, the brighter the light – the stronger the guide posts. And each light illuminates all the area inbetween – North Northeast etc. The Self is in the center - the clown bounces around between the masks and the Self. So if you think of all the positions that are possible in a sphere that’s how many masks you have access to - infinity.”

Thanks to John Turner for my experience, this article and his abundant enthusiasm and generous interview. –Shobi

Check ou a video of Mump and Smoot’s “Café” <http://www.youtube.com/user/mumpandsmoot#p/u/3/3VqPM7GyjYg>