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Featuring Alistair Harkness on film, plus visual art, classical music, theatre and CD reviews, arts news, columns and features

MUSIC

SHADOWED SPACES
VARIOUS LOCATIONS,
EDINBURGH

★★★★★

THE latest project by Arika, the team behind Scotland's Instal and Kill Your Timid Notion festivals, is a walking tour of "overlooked, bypassed and unconsidered nooks and crannies" in six towns and cities, soundtracked by improvised music and a talk by "geographer and map theoretician" Denis Wood. For the Edinburgh leg, Wood delivered his potted history of psychogeography from the derelict platform of Abbeyhill railway station - one of few places in Edinburgh not spied on by CCTV, as he pointed out, and a place of refuge in more ways than one. It is a beautiful spot, overgrown to the point where you have to stoop and push aside branches to follow the disused track to its buffers, almost lost among the greenery. Waiting there was Tamio Shiraishi, who made his sax squeal and cackle like a bird. As an audience of around 50 people milled around in the bushes, listening in thoughtful, even reverential silence, a flock of seagulls gathered above, squawking counter-melodies.

From there, taxis took us to a tiny space behind the Exchange building on Grove Street. It was a provocative contrast. It's easy to romanticise cities' neglected nooks, Arika seemed to be saying, but they can be frightening places too. As we filed into the claustrophobic space, broken glass and God knows what else crunching underfoot, Sean Meehan and Ikuro Takahashi echoed the noises we'd just made ourselves by scratching, patting and pounding a snare drum apiece.

Shadowed Spaces wanted to inspire us to explore the hidden landscapes on our doorsteps, but - in Edinburgh, at least - it seemed equally determined to remind us how uncomfortable and potentially dangerous they are. Thanks for that.

ANDREW EATON