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Edinburgh festival



Controlled Falling Project

Udderbelly's Pasture, Edinburgh

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Lyn Gardner

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Teetering horseplay... Controlled Falling Project at Udderbelly's Pasture. Photograph: Colin Hattersley

If you want your circus to come edged with beauty and emotion, then Circa at the Assembly Hall is your best bet. But if you want intelligence, strength and a significant wow factor, then ThisSideUp's experiments in how far you can push the human body is just the ticket. This eye-popping and graceful show comes wrapped in the conceit that mad Professor Archimedes is conducting an experiment into the limits of physicality in his 1930s workshop. He uses both human subjects and tiny figurines to work out the algebra of movement.

Controlled Falling Project

Udderbelly's Pasture

[Show details](#)

Measurements are taken and graphs plotted, as three young men work together to explore the limits of physical endurance, testing not just themselves but also each other with cheerful competitiveness and testosterone-fuelled horseplay. There are consummate displays of Russian bar, dizzying German wheel and some teeterboard action that seems all the more dangerous because of its proximity to the audience. Some of the balancing seems to push the men's bodies beyond endurance, but their muscles don't even twitch.

The idea that life involves taking risks and that you can't completely excise them is neatly demonstrated in a series of feats in which the possibility of failure is always present. At one point the white outline of a fallen figure is chalked on the floor, a reminder of what could happen if the experiments fail. Geometry meets circus in an astonishing moment when teetering chairs and bodies become balanced in a towering, angular formation that appears to defy all the laws of physics.

Perhaps the show is a little lacking in personality, despite its nod towards the professor's comic

persona, but the skill rating rockets in an hour that makes the physically impossible perfectly feasible.

Until 31 August. Box office: 0844 545 8252.

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