

Luvvies

Phil Mellows

We're coming to the end of the third week in May and there's a stirring among the inhabitants of Brighton, a familiar buzz: "The Festival's nearly over and I haven't been to anything yet."

It's spoken with an odd mixture of guilt and pride. All these glittering treasures on our doorstep and we can't be bothered to pick them up. Because we're Brighton, that's why.

I'm not just thinking of the Festival proper, the grown-up one. Everyone one knows that's just for the DFLs (the Down From Londons) and you have to book up, like, last century to get into anything and we're far too spontaneous for that. It applies to the beloved Fringe, too. We're suspicious. If it's any good why is there always somebody's mate in it?

"Throw a brick in Brighton and you'll hit an actor," a friend once said to me. I was indeed looking for an actor at the time (which is a whole other story) but I didn't attempt this dubious casting method. It's probably only going to be of any use if you're doing a zombie film. And in the end somebody came up with a mate. And this Artists' Houses thing. It has to be a thinly-disguised excuse to nose around in other people's front rooms, an honourable pursuit, no doubt, but you don't need art to do it. You just pretend you're house-hunting.

In any case, if it was worth seeing it would be in a proper gallery. One with a shop you have to walk through when you leave and buy a postcard of a painting you never even noticed was in the exhibition. That's art.

But I have a confession. This festival I saw three things. Pinter's *The Lover*, which was performed in someone's front room, another excuse for a nose (nice wallpaper, by the way), Beckett's *Endgame*, which I went to because, of course, there was a mate in it, and Brian Eno's kaleidoscope pictures at the Fabrica, which was free. It's a record. Probably for anyone who actually lives in Brighton. I'm getting on the phone to the McWhirter twins right now.

Plug: my reviews of *The Lover* and *Endgame* can be found at www.philmellows.com