

# Shop Front Theatre

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## Perfect as a space for collaborative creation

i did a Theatre Lab residency at Shop Front Theatre which gave me sole access to the space with some supporting funding. Eole, 1.5 years old at the time, took part in the residency with me. It was extraordinary, we just experimented and played without limits. For a long time, Eole's baby graffiti stayed on the window of the shop front theatre. As new creative comers to the city this definitely fed our craving for belonging and our sense of being valued as political subjects. This is such a beautiful memory which encompasses all the feelings and emotions i have with regard to the space, so generously created and shared by Theatre Absolute so artists could transform.

The existence of Theatre Absolute and Shop Front Theatre greatly supported my transition as an artist in the UK and i have had a very tender relationship with the space. In Autumn 2019 after my parental leave, and after coming to the UK, Shop Front Theatre was the first place I went for a cultural activity. i entered this very unusual, but comforting and welcoming, space; watching Amahra Spence perform Utopia as part of *Humanistan*, i realise now that there were lots of faces there who have since become friends and collaborators.

i took part in MiFriendly Cities which used the Shop Front Theatre on a regular basis because it was very homely in feel and so was perfect as a space for collaborative creation. My partner, Eole 9months old, and our dog were always well received and it felt very special to gather as migrants in a cultural space such as Shop Front theatre.

i also have very warm feelings for Theatre Absolute, who supported my practice as a newcomer to Coventry. During the Covid lockdown i wanted to raise some funding for a group of local artists to work together under the banner of In-between-Us and they offered us some money for our research and development and to feed our conversations – so even when Shop Front Theatre was closed, Theatre Absolute managed to send good vibes and support artistic practice.

When i heard the news that the space was closing my heart squeezed.

**melissandre varin**