

## National Review of Live Art: 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Publication

I make it to the front of the queue and am ushered, with two other people, through the door into the large, dark arched space. Here, I am welcomed by a young woman and beckoned to follow her. She leads me to a small domed tent. I crouch down and slip through the wee opening, following my guide into the tiny sanctuary that opens around us. I huddle inside the space, intimately close with my new companion. She starts to let me a story, fragments of an adventure and reaches into a suitcase to take out an object. She presents me with a small gift, a hansom to mark the moment we have shared. I leave with a small white flower made of sugar icing resting in the palm of my hand.

I am reminded of the kindness of strangers...

... of fleeting trysts.

Throughout the rest of the day, as I reach into my pocket and feel the flower, still pliable but beginning to harden to the air, I am reminded of the moment shared.

This is just one memory of my experience of the National Review of Live Art in 2005, within the dark underbelly of the Arches in Glasgow. It is the kind of moment that I seek out at the NRLA; moments of serenity and beauty. While much attention can focus on the bold, risk-taking work that attracts controversy and shouts for a reaction, I find that I am often drawn to the moments of quietness and work which delights through subtleties. The tent piece was programmed as part of the Elevator strand at NRLA, which promotes and supports the work of emerging artists. The three woman collective, Breathe, made a strong impression on me with this work, *Counting Corners*....

intent

intense

in tents

Another image seared on my memory from that edition of the NRLA is Lone Twin's provocation – *Sledgehammer Songs*– presented just outside the Arches' entrance, beneath the railway bridge known locally as the Helenian's Umbrella. The maverick

outpourings and actions of the Lone Twins, merging with the Saturday afternoon antics of Argyle Street.

In 2006, with NRLA's move to the Tramway, daylight burst into the NRLA experience and the outside became an important part of the canvas. A constant throughout that year's edition was the large screen in the Hidden Garden projecting Pernille Spence's short film, *I look up... I look down*, into the venue, and inviting us to let go and tumble too. One of the works which made an incredibly strong impression on me that year was Geraldine Pilgim's instillation piece *Seaside*. Tucked in one corner of the massive Tramway 2 exhibition space, this work replicated a seaside guest house, being flooded from the inside-out. Wonderfully evocative, I am transported back to a family in Blackpool in the mid-1970s.

And, this is the wonder of the National Review of Live Art. It picks you up, birls you round, reaches deep into your soul and consistently challenges your experiences.....

*'As for the community of artists, those who can be clear about supporting the arts, not as a means to some other end but as ends in themselves; those who can shape and support in response to the gift economy that lies at the heart of the practice; those who have the wit and the power and vision to build beyond their own day: for artists, those will be the good ancestors of the generations of practitioner that will follow when we are gone.'*

The Gift, by Lewis Hyde (p.299; Canongate)

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