

CHARLIE HOOKER

My links through the `80`s to the National Review of Live Art began in 1981 with a choreographed percussion and piano performance at the Midland Group Gallery. In 1983, I produced the *TRANSITIONS* series of performances, involving a string ensemble, percussion, choreography, projected light and luminous imagery. This was organised by the Midland Group and was also performed at Riverside Studios and The Whitechapel Art Gallery. In 1986, I was commissioned by NRLA to install *TWO VEWS*, a sculptural sound installation. All of these works were seen at the time as ground-breaking in that they deliberately crossed performance boundaries between music, theatre, choreography and visual art.

I think my most vivid recollection of these events is the interesting standard of hotel accommodation that was provided. To stretch the budget, it was arranged for Vincent Brown, the pianist I was then collaborating with, and myself to share a hotel room. Arriving back from rehearsals, Vincent threw back the curtains to open the window and was confronted by a breeze-block wall – perhaps an attempt to save on fuel bills as the shared bathroom in the hall had notices all over it about not using too much hot water. At breakfast, through the kitchen door I watched an inch of ash on the end of the cigarette that the old woman vigorously stirring baked beans had dangling from her mouth drop into the pot, adding to the general ambience. There were signed photographs on the wall from touring stars – I remember a portrait of Little & Large, signed ‘Lovely breakfasts, Mrs B – Syd & Eddie’.

During the `80`s, my work was largely performance-based. Although I have again recently performed work at The Bloomberg Space, my last performance during this period was in 1989 in Warsaw. This piece, entitled ‘MATTER OF TIME’, was part of a Fluxus-based festival, curated by Emmett Williams.

During the `90`s, I became more interested in creating environments where the audience became the ‘performer’. An example is ‘WAVE-WALL’, originally commissioned by the James Hockey Gallery, then bought by Arts Council England and installed at the Royal Festival Hall. This piece comprises three giant motorised pendulums, with ‘ghetto-blasters’ as weights, each continually playing a cycle of music which combines as three layers to produce a sound chamber around which the viewer can walk and experience a shifting stereo spread as the audio machines swing through the air. I have created a number of such installations, together with a series of sound and light-emitting public sculptures – notably ‘TWINs’ in Brighton. This sculpture has audio electronics inside which are controlled by sunlight hitting its surfaces so that, when it is in shadow it is silent and as the sun rises and grows brighter, sounds gradually build up.

I was made Professor of Sculpture at the University of Brighton in 2005, where I am Course Leader for the MA in Fine Art. I formed The Spring Group the same year – a group of art, design, music and science-based researchers who produce collaborative interdisciplinary work. I am currently making installations and audio works which are controlled by the radioactive cosmic particles (‘cosmic rays’) that continually bombard the planet. These particles trigger sensitive devices within each work to produce sound and movement in objects and sound systems. ‘TIMELINE’, installed last year at the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research, Bergen, featuring two cosmic ray-triggered bass drums, is a good example. I plan to install a new cosmic ray-controlled work, ‘DETECTOR’, in the Met Office building, Exeter, later this year.

Charlie Hooker – 2008. © the author 2010