

It mainly happens in Taxis.

'So what do you do, love?'

Pause.

Deliberation.

Will I tell the truth or will I lie?

The lie usually comes if it's a ride back from the airport or Gatwick Express and I am suffering from jet lag, dying to get home, or if its been a long day and we are stuck in traffic on Oxford street and the meter is the only thing moving and I'm sure there is a better route... In those scenarios:

'I'm a dentist.'

A dentist makes people go quiet. Suddenly silent. A desire to keep the mouth as closed as possible. Just in case I spot cavities, receding gums, something worse...

But if the truth will out and I hear myself say 'I'm an artist'

then there is nowhere to hide.

'O really! You don't say! Fancy that! How interesting!'

I nod. Pause.

'How interesting.'

Pause.

'So you mean painting, etching?'

'Er, not exactly, more like performance,'

'Oh really, how interesting. Like an actor? Have you been on telly?'

'Well not exactly an actor, no, I mean I do perform but I do other things too...'

'Oh really! How interesting! Like what?'

'Well, I make installations...'

'What?'

'Um, I make films, videos...'

Oh, how interesting! Anything I might have seen...? Anyone famous in them? I had... oh what's her name... that one from The Good Life in my in my cab last week. Not the posh one the other one...'

'Really, how interesting...'

At the National Review of Live Art no explanations are necessary - the buildings themselves, whether the Arches or the Tramway, cavernous, malleable, buildings that are open to all possibilities, open to an extraordinary range of work. Within this time, this space, this known and unknown territory, come the startling voices of new artists, the pleasure in seeing work by long favourite UK and international artists, the artists and art that resist definitions and refuses strict categorization.

We know who we are, why we are here.

For years I have come to the NRLA to perform, give talks, bring MA students, teach Winter School and simply as an audience member to saturate in the vast range and diversity of the work.

Helen Paris, Curious