

Andrew Poppy and Julia Bardsley

We've been working together for 20 years now, making a hybrid work of visual and sonic form. It has many different coloured wrappers: theatre, concert performance, opera, live art, installation, film. In the last 8 years or so Nikki Milican and NRLA have given us a place in which to present our work. This is a relationship rooted in directness, honesty, trust and respect – rare and cherished qualities.

The world of NRLA is a vital context and is the result of nurturing of a very particular soil. Nikki has been singular in providing not just a platform for our work and the work of countless others but in generating a dialogue about and a forum for work that falls outside mainstream definitions and acceptance; awkward and idiosyncratic work, uncomfortable and sublime work, asymmetrical and ambiguous work.

With the annual programming of performance events within the NRLA and its related festivals, Nikki has not only pioneered the name Live Art and fought for its continued funding but she has developed a dialogue with other, more traditional performance practices, notably contemporary dance and certain kinds of theatre. There is a particular insight and commitment at work here. Understanding and accepting the extreme juxtapositions of today's cultural experience - a world where low and high culture merge, where polished concept and grubby actions sit together. This sensibility allows a very particular creative impulse to grow.

We saw this most specifically a few years ago when we ran a week of workshops for the NRLA Winter School. Dividing the day between sonic work in the morning and visual work in the afternoon, we were struck by the openness, enthusiasm and engagement of the students. We were also struck by the sheer diversity of backgrounds and routes that had led them onto this workshop. Some were locals & some had come from outside Glasgow and the UK. Some had been drawn to performance via show time and musicals; and some had come specifically to be involved in this very particular UK live art/performance scene. We were amazed and delighted by this mix. It was unlike anything we had seen or experienced. And the work they produced was just fantastic.

The cross-referencing of works and artists over the years is astonishing. For the last 30 years, the people of Glasgow have been very fortunate to be exposed to the range and diversity of live experience that the NRLA offers. The festival atmosphere of NRLA is legendary. The town crier/MC calling the odds for every show. The late bar and sense of occasion, facilitated by the all day ticket, bring with it the rock'n' roll mythology that is in itself a work of performance. Nikki Milican is the Michael Eavis of Live Art.

The significance of a serious festival director, who puts the work and artists at the centre, is not to be underestimated. And the shaping of this cultural sector by Nikki Milican is significant.

We would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to Nikki & the NRLA.

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