

Marking the Journey – Relationships and Moments

In 2001, I entered The Arches in Glasgow, to witness my first National Review of Live Art (NRLA). As a 2nd year BA Contemporary Theatre Practice student, I had some knowledge of the festival, but no idea that I would leave five days later so affected by the work and conversations I was to have. Performances such as Kira O'Reilly's *Succour* (which was to become the subject of my dissertation), my reflection on it and other such provocative works, marked the start of my inspiring and continuing relationship with the NRLA.

Over the past seven years the NRLA has played a huge role in enabling and sustaining my creative growth as a young artist; through its Winter School programme, the stimulating discussions, the networking opportunities, but most of all through the continued support of my own work as I moved from platform to 'one-year-on' to commissioned artist. Opportunities for this kind of progression is not something the established arts sector offers to young artists, and although it is an idea that is now being recognised by various agencies it's what Nikki Milican has been doing for decades.

In 2003, I was selected as a platform artist to perform my solo work *Lifedrawing*. Artists performing that year included Stelarc and Bobby Baker, two giants in performance art whose work for me at that time resided in books and videos. I boldly invited Stelarc to watch *Lifedrawing* and later we talked in the bar about our work. This marked a memorable moment for me, the essence of the festival; a space where artists from different generations, countries and backgrounds can talk, support and provoke each other.

It was when performing *Lifedrawing* at the NRLA that Robert Ayers invited me to perform it alongside his own work and that of Marie Cool in Switzerland and whilst in Switzerland, I found myself entangled in another memorable moment; an angry drunken Swiss woman who had seen my work was angered by my piece in which (amongst other things) I dissected a supermarket chicken. She said, 'You are typical of the British woman,' and challenged me 'in these times of war where is your substance, where is your blood?' Ironically, I had been suffering from amenorrhoea* for a few years and the idea of my own lack of blood equaling my own lack of substance gnawed away and became the starting point for my next solo work, *Missing Things*, which I performed the following year as a 'one year on' artist.

Missing Things became a seven-hour durational work; although my initial information to Nikki described it as a thirty-minute 'end on' performance. One of the most remarkable things I found about Nikki was her unfazed attitude to my last minute changes of the work. Her support and accommodation of a developing work demonstrates a real understanding and knowledge of the artist's journey and process.

In 2006 I was invited to NRLA, as a commissioned artist and I created *In A Moment* a one-to-one performance, which explored fragile and temporary moments of human connection and the idea of life as a liminal state, a transient moment between two recognised and defined ways of being - birth and death. During *In A Moment* I shared thirty moments with thirty people.

In A Moment mirrored my journey through, and evolving relationship with the NRLA. It's been a journey filled with remarkable moments, where feelings, questions and images evoked by the work bleed out of the spaces into the bar, queues and toilets, and the moments of connection that occur between works and people, are sometimes fleeting and confusing, but most often profound and life affirming.

- **amenorrhœa**, is the absence of a menstrual period in a woman of reproductive age