

# **NRLA**

## **National Review of Live Art 2010**

Even on its thirtieth anniversary, The National Review of Live Art remains provocative

Feature by Gareth K Vile | 01 Feb 2009



NRLA – Iona Kewney

Not so much polarising opinion as creating a broad consensus of equal parts inspiration and frustration, it routinely encourages the debate about the nature of art, shocks through either explicit content or the disrespect for aesthetic convention, unearthing an annual crop of future heroes and villains.

It is no accident that The NRLA emerged in the aftermath of punk. By the time that the music had devolved into imitative three chord thrash with vague revolutionary sentiments, the DIY ethos, the disrespect for authority and dedication to self-expression had moved into performance, where artists sought a freedom from constraints and traditions. Owing something to conceptual art, a little to the theatre and the spirit of contemporary dance, Live Art fuses forms and genres to grapple with the increasing fragmentation of cultural identity.

Even now, Live Art can shock. More importantly, it engages with feelings and experiences that are common but ignored by mainstream theatre. The emphasis on immediacy, on the presence of the artist and authenticity militates against traditional script or choreography. The NRLA is a place where anything can happen, and can succeed or fail.

In giving voice to hidden emotions in a visceral manner, Live Art can be offensive or boring. Yet across the massive programme – some highlights have been picked out here, without doing justice to the scale of the event – the sheer diversity will cover everything from sexual desire through to meditations on that old question – what is art?