I see a fake moon rising

Live Art in the Public Realm

A free online publication about artist and audience development created in response to IBT13: In Between Time Festival, Bristol, 14 to 17 February 2013

Edited by Maddy Costa

Published by Live Art UK and In Between Time

IBT
IN BETWEEN TIME

Live Art UK

Contents

Zierle & Carter, *Living Room Opera* photo: Alan Warren

Introduction

I see a fake moon rising is a publication about audience and artist development created in response to IBT13 (In Between Time 2013), a four-day festival of theatre, Live Art, dance, opera, feasts, talks, parties and public art.

Using IBT13's distinct approaches to programming and artists' development as case studies, this publication considers different strategies for bringing artists and audiences together in highly instrumental ways, particularly through the commissioning of participatory work, the siting of art in the public realm, and the creation of new forms of critical discourses.

I see a fake moon rising features essays, interviews, dialogues and critical reflections by IBT's producers, partners and collaborating artists in response to specific IBT projects and initiatives and on wider issues of artist and audience development.

This publication has been steered and edited by Maddy Costa in her role as Writer in Residence for IBT13. Over the course of the festival, Maddy led a group of five emergent writers through performances and interventions in urban glades, backstreets, docksides, galleries and theatres, and mentored them as they developed their own critical responses to IBT13. A collection of the group's writings can be found on *Dialogue*, a collaborative playspace for those who make, watch and write about theatre developed by Maddy Costa and Jake Orr. www.welcometodialogue.com/ibt-residency.html.

I see a fake moon rising is a free online publication that has been developed as a strategic partnership between IBT and Live Art UK, to profile the contribution of Live Art to the creation of new spaces and sites for art and new forms of audience engagement.

Full programme details for IBT13 can be found on http://ibt13.co.uk/

Lois Keidan, CJ Mitchell, Aaron Wright
Live Art UK

Jo Bannon, *Dead Line*

photo: Paul Blakemore

Why here?

Helen Cole

I remember the night I decided access to the arts was my right.

It was 1987, I was 21, and I had just seen Ian Dury in Jim Cartwright's *Road*. This play was written and performed at the height of Thatcher's Britain, when mass unemployment and deprivation were real for millions of people. Over 25 years later, brilliant though this play was, I don't remember any of the words, or the finer details beyond its stark message. I do remember vividly wandering the stage in promenade, touching the set as the paint crumbled. I stood close to Ian Dury, full of twists and stutters, as he spat real words of revolution in my face. That night I left the theatre angry and determined, and for the first time, I learned why the arts are important. Art can change things. I could change things. That night art changed me.

Over the next few years there were other nights spent in the theatre but, to be honest, most of them were disappointing. The fact is that this call to action is unusual and the kind of theatre that takes place on stages with characters, sets and stories is usually not for me. Yet the immediacy, political urgency and raw aliveness of that event back in 1987 awakened something in me. I didn't have a name for it, so I called it 'theatre', yet I have rarely ever found these qualities in theatres since.

In fact I didn't find it again for another five years, until, in 1992, I walked into a performance by Dogs In Honey, my first Live Art event. I had no idea there was such a thing, or that there were artists out there carving new ways to make and put their ideas before the public. What this experience had in common with the earlier was a realness that made a demand on me as an audience member to commit to my presence, to test my parameters, and make my being there count somehow. From that point on I was determined to seek out more. At the time opportunities did not proliferate quite as they do now, yet even then there were places you could be guaranteed to find live performance that was truly unusual. The greenroom in Manchester, that old, leaky railway arch, now sadly gone. The ICA in London, whose iconic performance space has now been converted into yet another white gallery. The National Review of Live Art in Glasgow, an important gathering, now also gone. I watched Robin Arthur from Forced Entertainment cradling tinned spaghetti as if it were his guts spilling into his hands. A snarling dog herded me into the corner of a black box in Blast Theory's *Stampede*. I witnessed Ron Athey and his collaborators pierce tiny silver bells into their backs and dance a sad, triumphant dance of loss and love.

I have spent much of the past 20 years dedicating my career to producing more of these kinds of unusual artistic experiences, putting them out into the public domain to encourage others into experiencing them, too. Many of these audiences have never before heard the term 'Live Art', or even particularly care what it is called.

Now Live Art and its strategies lie at the heart of In Between Time, the independent, publicly funded organisation I established in 2009. The In Between Time Festival, IBT's most important activity, began in 2001 while I was the producer of the Live Art and dance programme at Arnolfini, Bristol, a position I retained until 2009. To date, the In Between Time Festival has

taken place five times, in 2001, 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2013, exploding out of the single venue in which it was established. The first festival was a modest weekend of approximately 20 art works, which became an important showcase attended by British and international programmers interested in IBT's unusual curatorial mix and artist development programmes. IBT13, our latest festival, presented 50 events, with 100 artists over five days across 17 spaces; these events ranged from intimate one-on-one performances to huge public art works and cross-over club nights.

IBT13 built on over 12 years of work in Bristol, building a core audience, and an ecology of artist and audience development, curatorial research, artist relationships, co-producing partnerships, producer networks and academic study. In Between Time continues to be strongly local and international, based on commissioning and seeking out the most unusual art works for presentation, often for the first time in the UK. It spans theatre, visual arts, film, dance, music, clubs and technology. An In Between Time production may be a large-scale sound-and-light installation in a city graveyard, an iconoclastic performance in a theatre or gallery, or a weekend of site-specific art works created for an audience in the depths of a forest.

A man meticulously paints gold leaf over the darkest corner of a city.
Five women balance on wooden chairs and methodically saw them into small shattered pieces.
Hundreds of solar-powered LED lights flicker in an urban graveyard.
A man tenderly pisses into the mouth of his partner who spits the piss right back.
A woman holds a precarious stack of white china plates as if it were a spinal column.
A man, part ballet dancer, part operatic diva, turns his seductive snarl on the audience as a white ribbon whips the air.
A child glues together the smithereens of a smashed sea shell.
A woman barks like a hysterically angry small dog.
And a fake moon rises over the city.

IBT13 took place at the end of a hard-working year in which our organisation, by then only three years old, became a new National Portfolio client of Arts Council England and developed from one full-time person into a team of four. In the same year we delivered both IBT13 and Up To Nature, a European festival sited in a forest in rural Gloucestershire. In 2012/13, IBT produced 41 artworks including 28 commissions for living rooms, forests, swimming pools, churchyards, shipping containers, theatres, clubs, gig venues and galleries; 21 of these commissions invested in UK artists. The quality of IBT's artistic output is evidenced in exceptional responses from audiences and critics.

Live Art sits at the heart of IBT's philosophy and for IBT13 we set out to create a programme around participation and public space – critical subjects that are the focus of this publication, co-commissioned with Live Art UK and edited by Maddy Costa. All free works contained IBT's signature elements of participation. Audience memories acted as the foundation of *We See Fireworks*, people smashed-up and re-made broken objects in Kate McIntosh's *Worktable* and formed a drop-in orchestra in the Full Moon Orchestra. Cos-players created photographic interventions, community choirs became part of Fiksdal/Langgård/Becker's *Night Tripper*, and young men made a drum chorus in Nic Green's *Fatherland*. We recognize that communication around Live Art may be a barrier to wider public engagement. Words often do not fittingly describe it. Often art works are still being made, coming to fruition for the first time in front of an audience. Emergent or unknown artists have no past reviews or previous practice from which to draw on. For IBT13 we faced all of these unknowns but we wove overarching stories within the programme, inviting

the public in by appealing to their sense of intrigue and imagination. By doing this we were able to create a tangible buzz and a sense of community around IBT, with word-of-mouth and social media acting in our favour.

In Between Time's audience combines local, national and international "professionals" and "real people". We have an exceptionally strong core audience, some of whom have grown up alongside us over time. For IBT13 we had a non-professional audience from as far afield as Australia, the US, Germany, China and Portugal: people who had heard about our festival on the grapevine and came to Bristol to experience IBT for the first time. Audiences and artists came to IBT13 from 26 different countries and across the UK. Over 100 professional delegates, including 30 international producers, attended from 16 countries. Ticket sales grew steadily, until all IBT13 performances sold out well in advance, creating substantial waiting lists for most shows. The overall year averaged a 97% sales rate.

How did we achieve this? IBT's public impact is as influential as many bigger, and better resourced, international festivals. Like other Live Art-led organisations, IBT punches above its weight, delivering ambitious events within limited means. I believe that through the commitment of our small, skilled team of staff and artists, combined with some smart thinking and a lot of elbow grease, we deliver immense returns. As an organisation without a box office, access to data is always difficult, as venues are notorious for not enabling visiting presenters to access their own ticket-buyers' details. Although we did not counter this entirely, Arnolfini, who ran IBT's box office and partnered IBT13, gave us some access to our data prior to and during the festival. We also redeveloped our websites to enable mailing list sign-up and data field capture to be more prominent, enabling us to build and target audiences. We used our own staff to gather email, postcodes and profiles face-to-face. Through this work, our mailing list has more than doubled and we now understand more about our ticket buyers to better communicate in the future.

Locally we work very hard to reach audiences who are often new to Live Art, with a high percentage not professionally involved in the arts. IBT print campaigns reached over 30,000 people, as we extended distribution channels, using a street team to target a range of socio-economic areas door-to-door. We sent print into rural locations and engaged with community groups who would not usually be reached. We created marketing materials that proliferated around the city including billboards, flags and branded shipping containers.

We strategically sited our festival throughout the city. Of 28 commissions, 25 were in public space. This strategy saw us reach more diverse and younger audiences. Un-ticketed public-sited work demonstrated a 50% greater uptake from black and minority ethnic communities and 70% greater uptake from younger audiences. *Fake Moon* by Simon Faithfull took place during rush hour and reached over 7,000 people. My own work, *We See Fireworks,* sat in a disused part of Temple Meads Station, the main access and exit route for numerous visitors to the city, and received over 1,000 visitors. We also programmed non-arts venues and created *Dressage*, a successful performance-based club night at Lakota, which combined performers and DJs, and attracted 1,000 people, 60% of whom were new to Live Art and IBT.

Of course, as IBT's director, my tendency is to focus on our successes. Maddy Costa rightly points out elsewhere in this document that IBT13 did not reach every interested, like-minded Bristol resident. But while there is always room for development, we are exceptionally proud of the

targets we achieved and level to which we established IBT13 in public consciousness and affirmed Live Art as having popular appeal.

Aside from ticket sales and attendance, we surpassed all our targets for website engagement and social media. The IBT home site received 30,515 visits and the festival site 19,622 visits from 102 countries, tripling our targets. This year we also began commissioning audio and film content for digital distribution via our website. Dee Heddon's *Nature Talks and Walks* was downloaded 330 times and listened to all over the world. Over 12,000 people viewed images commissioned from IBT13 and Up To Nature on Facebook.

An IBT press officer helped generate more media coverage than ever before. IBT13 garnered a record 21 positive reviews. We collaborated with Live Art UK to create this publication and the IBT Writers Project, where Maddy Costa, a journalist with The Guardian, covered the festival and mentored a group of young writers from across the UK, who themselves published content online. We also targeted younger audiences via partnerships with Epigram (the Bristol University student magazine) and Crack Magazine, and worked internationally with long-standing Australian publications Real Time and Slovenian art journal Maska.

Despite these very real successes, IBT faces a challenge in the future. Our core investors are Arts Council England and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Other income is generated through European Union funding, co-production, commissioning, touring and ticket sales. The public investment we receive is critical to levering this ever-growing range of additional investment and building our business case. Yet the Arts Council and its funding are once again under threat. In the face of catastrophic cuts it is possible 150 National Portfolio Organisations will be lost in the coming years. IBT, as a new producing organisation, has a fight on its hands.

Arts Council England's mission statement "Great Art For Everyone" sets the ground for the strategic investment of its sadly diminishing finances. These words also encapsulate the responsibilities passed on to anyone that receives arts funding from the public purse, including IBT. Everyone should have access to great art, because art reflects our deepest selves and gives voice to experiences other than our own. It creates empowerment, understanding and community. Art encourages gathering, imagination, independence, action, vision. It asks difficult questions and demands answers, informs, unsettles, inspires, delights.

Live Art sits at the heart of In Between Time because, more than any other strategy, it fulfils these responsibilities. And although Live Art still struggles to get a foothold in a market-driven debate around the arts, I see in its strategies glimmers of hope. Even before the economic crisis hit, Live Art was an outsider smashing apart the usual hierarchies of scale and context. By often being on the outside, it developed its strongest characteristics and potentially its keenest instincts for survival. Live Art is entrepreneurial, self-sufficient, resource-light. It is adaptable, responsive, fleet of foot. It builds strong, loyal, active communities of audiences not scared to agitate or give voice, to oppose, to demand, to change. Live Art is no stranger to difficulty, dealing with uncertainty as part of its lifeblood. Live Art's essence is emergence and in the true definition of the contemporary it is always seeking new places, new forms, new conversations. Seemingly against the odds, Live Art has proliferated, infiltrated, clawed its way into public consciousness.

In Between Time may not survive future funding cuts, but we will continue to create, and fight on: like Ian Dury, spitting words of revolution.

Alex Bradley, *Field Test* photo: Paul Blakemore

I see a fake moon rising: Live Art in the public realm

Maddy Costa

There's safety in buildings. Four walls enclose you. No one can see.
Secrets can be kept, rules broken, blood shed. It's OK. It's private.
But sometimes, privacy feels excluding. Secrets need revealing.
The time comes to reach out, to share, to disrupt, to beguile.
The time comes to step outside.

Look: there, between the trees, in the gap between those buildings. Can you see it? A huge bright disc gleaming against the ink-pool of the sky. It can't be the moon – that's higher up, a crescent beaming silvery laughter at the ingenuity, the longing, the absurdity of humankind. Walk past the buildings, through the trees: here it is now, tantalisingly close. At this proximity, you can see it's nothing more than a balloon, a plain white bubble of helium-inflated silk, tethered by ropes and pulleys, hauled in a slow arc above your head by men dressed in fluorescent work gear. It's prosaic, mechanical, but it's also poetic, the stuff of childhood curiosity and yearning. And as you turn away, looking over your shoulder to glimpse the disc still gleaming between buildings and trees, you know that on cool clear nights in years to come, you will look up at the real moon, remember this man-made duplicate and smile.

Created by Simon Faithfull, *Fake Moon* is a useful place to start thinking about Live Art in the public realm, because it is a particularly charming instance of how a transitory encounter with the unexpected can ignite the imagination, permeate memory and transform impressions of space and place. For the four nights of IBT13 it rose and fell between the trees of College Green, outside the public library, close to a major road junction and the city's cultural centre. But because it wasn't hidden behind closed doors in that cultural centre, it was accessible not simply to people already comfortable within its white cube/black box rooms, a knowledgeable audience who might have arranged to see it specially, but to anyone who happened to be passing in the gloaming: people heading home from work or on their way to meet friends, people shopping in Tesco Metro or out walking the dog. People, in other words, not necessarily intending to engage with a piece of Live Art; people who might ordinarily frown at the words "Live Art", shake their heads and say, no, I don't think so, that's not for me.

This feels important to me, because there was a time, not so very long ago, when I didn't think "Live Art" was for me, either. It was an assumption borne of fear: that any work that either identifies itself or is categorised as Live Art would be too confrontational, too naked, too bloody. A growing dissatisfaction with traditional fourth-wall theatre has cured me of that misapprehension; now I'm happier in the ambiguous places – IBT included – where theatre, Live Art, performance, dance, music, myth, auto/biography and streams of consciousness blur.

There was work at IBT13 that caused an involuntary resurgence of that earlier squeamishness: *Kein Applaus fur Scheisse,* when Victor Riebeek vomits blue liquid over the supine body of Florentina Holzinger before pissing directly into her mouth; *Breathe for Me*, in which Martin O'Brien viscerally enacts his experience of cystic fibrosis. But these works, even if (in the case of *Breathe for Me*) presented free of charge, were not quite public: they took place within the Arnolfini building. Their invitation to a general public was different to that offered by work that infiltrated the city streets, and made its home in unaccustomed places.

Accessible
1: attainable, available, nearby, possible, reachable
2: affable, approachable, cordial, friendly, informal
3: exposed, open, susceptible, vulnerable

Fake Moon was presented in one kind of "accessible" environment; but what was fascinating about IBT13 was the scope of its thinking about the public realm. Over the course of four days I saw pieces staged in a city-centre green space and a domestic house, a churchyard and a disused commercial premises, a circle of trees in the nearby woods and shipping containers set dockside. There was an intriguing tension, even contradiction, at play here: between public and private spaces, between work open to passers-by and that available only to ticket-holders – tensions that challenged many of the assumptions around or expectations conjured up by the idea of accessibility. To see this more clearly, it's worth taking a moment to look in detail at what happened where:

A short walk from Bristol's College Green, where *Fake Moon* traced its arc through the sky, is St Stephen's Churchyard, alongside which is an alleyway that pedestrians use to cut from one main thoroughfare to another. With narrow streets and high buildings enclosing each side of the churchyard, and shadows spooling in the gaps between street-lamps, this was a public space that felt almost private. Here, Alex Bradley's *Field Test* filled the trees with green fairy lights that glowed in the dark like the eyes of a multitude of cats, or watchful sprites; in the air was the abrasive clang of electric guitar, the clatter of metallic percussion, music that creaked and moaned like long-buried bodies stretching in the earth. Passers-by could walk straight past and be surprised momentarily by the lights and the music; or they could allow themselves to enter the churchyard and be stilled. Either way, their journey would be reconfigured, their mental processes disrupted.

An even more private space was created within the woodlands just outside Bristol, by a Norwegian trio of choreographer Ingri Midgard Fiksdal, composer Ingvild Langgård and stage designer Signe Becker. To access it, ticket-holders for *Night Tripper* were transported by coach to a clearing at the wood's edge, then led on foot to a circle of trees. The location of *Night Tripper* is integral to the work: what its makers create is a kind of pagan ritual, with musicians and dancers conjuring spirits out of the earth. This may have taken place in the public realm, but unless some intrepid souls happened to be tramping through the woods at dusk, no one would encounter it except the people who had paid to be there.

Kate McIntosh, with *Worktable*, and Action Hero, with *Extraordinary Rendition*, further blurred the distinction between private space and public realm by placing their pieces in shipping containers in the pedestrianised area directly outside the Arnolfini. Anyone

passing by was welcome to enter and participate (as long as they had the patience to endure a queue) – and that included people who ordinarily wouldn't set foot in the Arnolfini, not even to engage with exactly the same work. Once inside, however, the spaces entered were sealed, isolating participants not only from the city outside but, for some of the time, any sense of community within.

Jo Bannon's *Dead Line* similarly played with notions of inside and outside, private and public, isolation and community. Using several rooms in a disused commercial property, she sent ticket-holders on a journey from solitude in public view (the audience member as shop-window mannequin), to secret communion with a public figure (a telephone conversation with someone who works in the field of death), and finally a quiet space in which to contemplate your own demise while gazing through a window at the world outside. Along the way, *Dead Line* addressed the limits of acceptable emotional behaviour in public, and what convention decrees remains behind closed doors, perhaps even locked within the mind.

For Zierle & Carter's *Living Room Opera*, ticket-holders were taken by coach and on foot to a private home in Clifton, one of the most affluent areas in Bristol. Here, the domestic space was transformed into a public realm, not solely by the intrusion of motley strangers, but by the work's contemplation of homeland, belonging and immigrant experience, bringing voices from across the globe into the intimacy of a kitchen and sitting room.

What people afraid of the words "Live Art" might not immediately see is that each of these pieces, in its own way, and in common with more traditional theatre work, at root seeks to gather disparate and unconnected people in the contemplation of something bigger than themselves: be it our place in nature or the possibility of the supernatural, our relationships with the material world or with society at large, the human need for community, the inescapable fact of death. What people wary of all art, let alone Live Art, might not acknowledge is the nourishment that comes from that gathering and that contemplation: nourishment of self, nourishment of community. Siting this work in the public realm does two things: it allows the art work to coax, perhaps even gently ambush, the reluctant and intimidated; and it subtly modulates the terms of the encounter between art work and audience-member, creating multiple layers of meaning, a savoury richness that would taste very different in a more conventional auditorium.

This was particularly evident with *Worktable*: at its simplest, it's a fun series of tasks that even children can enjoy, in which people are invited to destroy an object, then remake another; but attentive participants might notice the piece's invitation to question ideas around disposable culture, environmentalism and materialism, emotional attachments to inanimate stuff, and the human capacity for unnecessary violence, patience and creativity. In a gallery context, this thematic address might be more direct – but it might also feel more cerebral. Placing *Worktable* in a group of shipping containers is at once a useful metaphorical framework through which to experience the piece, redolent as they are of industry and unrefined labour, and opens up the possibility for casual interactions alongside more probing interpretations. Without that possibility, Live Art risks becoming locked in a self-referential world, meaningful only to the dedicated, not to communities at large.

In an age of austerity, when times are tough and money is tight, our focus must be on culture's economic impact. … All the research shows that culture encourages tourists to visit our country. … This generates tens of billions of pounds each year for the UK economy, not only through tickets and entrance fees, but in thousands of pounds spent in shops, hotels and restaurants. All of which is delivering real economic benefits to local businesses and local communities.
Maria Miller MP, Keynote Arts Speech, 24 April 2013

I understand the desire for evidence-based demonstrations of the economic impact of the arts. Really I do. I appreciate that festivals are an attractive niche within a wider tourist ecology. What troubles me is the negative influence this economic argument has on our recognition of art's wider, less tangible effects – the impact that can't be measured.

It isn't enough for festival programmers – or, for that matter, building programmers or any cultural producer – to address an arts community without reference to the local community; similarly, it isn't enough for these organisations or individuals to make an offer to non-arts enthusiasts: what counts is that people take the offer up. The contradiction here is that while unticketed work in the public realm tends to be the most outward-facing, its audience is the least possible to quantify. In Between Time, on its website, speaks excitedly of IBT13 "hit[ting] new heights in terms of audience, events and profile", and presents some impressive numbers: 3,000 tickets sold, with all shows selling out; 30,000 people experiencing the festival through the free installations, exhibitions and public events; 100 international and national delegates, joining audiences and artists from 26 different countries. I'd like to contrast this with some anecdotal evidence. For instance: a short walk from the IBT13 Festival Hub, a temporary cafe/bar and meeting space on College Green, is the Bristol City Museum, where the information staff knew nothing about IBT13, not even *Fake Moon*, and carried no leaflets for the festival. For instance: I stayed in Stokes Croft, with friends who chose to live in that area because of its non-conformist art scene; they never go to the Arnolfini, because they find it alienating, but do go to the theatre occasionally. Their friends mostly consider themselves arts-friendly, yet none of them had encountered any literature to do with IBT13 before my arrival on the day the festival began, with the possible exception of a story in the local paper about *Fake Moon*. To what extent did IBT13 succeed in occupying the public realm?

The trouble with quantifying success using number crunching and economic impact is that it denies subtlety and negates more complex, meaningful indications of success at an individual level. Perhaps Live Art in the public realm – including much of the work programmed at IBT13 – can achieve most not when it declares itself, but when it surprises people into an engagement they didn't know they wanted. That engagement might not last longer than a minute – but how can we tell what impact that minute has on that person's imagination?

There are some more stories I would like to tell, both in support of and contrary to the enthusiastic statistical analysis of IBT13's success. On the coach returning from *Night Tripper*, I sat next to a young man who trained as a sculptor and now works as a landscape designer. He rarely attends performance work, and bought a ticket because he loved the idea of seeing something in the woods. Quite aside from the influence *Night Tripper* might have on his future sculpting of landscapes, the work created the possibility of a conversation between strangers, a moment of communion to be cherished.

In the queue for *Worktable* I met a young couple who had been walking past the shipping containers and popped in on a whim. Also in the queue was a man with his two children (aged, at a guess, eight and six), here because they had seen *Worktable* included in half-term activity listings. Inside I met a man who had been patiently glueing shards of china together for two-plus hours: he had a peripheral relationship with the arts, and had come along simply for something to do on a Saturday afternoon. He may now recall that experience every time he breaks a mug or chips a plate.

Sitting beneath the glowing trees of *Field Test*, my attention was snagged by the response of three generations of women. The child gazed up at the spectral green lights with quiet, rapt attention. Her mother, who works within the arts, spent a long time querying the information attached to the installation. Her much older friend, a scientist, described it as a calm space for relaxation and reflection. How brilliant, I thought, that *Field Test* was able to provoke and hold in balance these varying generational responses.

The economic argument for the arts reinforces elitism and the anxiety of people who either can't afford to buy tickets or choose not to in the melancholy belief that they won't fit in. Art can be offered to the community as a gift, in the hope not of return, but of inspiring minds, shifting mindsets, fuelling imagination. And it's by placing art in unexpected places, in the streets people use as a matter of course, that this gift can most generously be given.

I suddenly realised I didn't know the derivation of the word 'intimate' and was wondering if it had anything to do with fear – the 'tim' of intimate perhaps being the same as the 'tim' of timid and timorous – so, intimacy as a species of fearlessness. But it didn't feel quite right, and of course it's completely wrong... 'Intimate' is a superlative, just like 'ultimate': ultimate starting with ult, "beyond", so ultimate being the-most-beyond-you-can-go; likewise, then, intimate: as far in as you can be. All the way in.
From an email sent to me by Chris Goode, April 2013

Inside, outside; public, private. Where does one end and the other begin? IBT13 achieved a kind of conjuring trick: the more public-facing its work, the more thoughtfully it communicated its own particular quality of intimacy. That intimacy was felt throughout the more conventionally staged section of the IBT13 performance programme: in Nic Green's *Fatherland*, an extraordinary dance of communion with the audience, her Scottish heritage, and nature itself; in Holzinger and Riebeek's confrontational yet tender enactment of their youth and private relationship; in The Famous Lauren Barri Holstein's projected live video of a Twister lolly protruding from her vagina like an elongated clitoris. By staging these works within theatre or gallery spaces, IBT13 ensured that the intimacy they engendered felt to some degree private and consensual.

What interests me here are the other kinds of intimacy it created by putting work into the public realm. The intimacy of strangers drawn into temporary community, as a group of people are attracted like moths by the light of a white fake moon. Intimacy with nature, as another group of people congregate in woodland at twilight, the sky slowly darkening, the moon slowly brightening, the earth seeming to sing in celebration of our presence. Intimacy with inanimate objects, as you sit taping, glueing, tying broken fragments into a whole. At the heart of IBT13 was a tender recognition of humanity's longing to feel intimacy, and not simply within personal relationships: intimacy with ideas, knowledge,

the earth we inhabit. The more it carved out a private space within the public realm, the more IBT13 inspired feelings of intimacy: with other people, with nature, with death, with unfamiliar experiences – in each case taking us right inside, and helping us not be afraid.

It did this with a fearlessness that belied the risks that accompany putting work into the public realm. The word "risk" is used so often in relation to art that it has begun to feel meaningless; even at IBT13, the risks of the programming weren't immediately evident, because success effectively annulled them. The weather throughout was perfect, crisp and inviting – but IBT13 took place in February: instead of four clear nights with visible stars, we might easily have experienced persistent rain, storms, snow. Under such conditions, *Fake Moon* might have felt more magical but less enticing, *Field Test* might have felt unsafe, and *Night Tripper* would have been rendered all but impossible.

The unpredictability of the weather comprises a quite basic set of risks; more complex are the challenges posed to artists by the public space in which they are working. How do they most effectively speak with and of that space? How do they make the location so key that you can barely imagine the piece working in another venue? How do they use the location to create additional layers of meaning within their work? The evident care taken in positioning *Night Tripper* and *Worktable*, and facing up to the problems these pieces presented, was integral to the success of each work.

There is risk and challenge, too, in the relationship that work in the public realm creates with audiences: does it allow people simply to pass by – and if they do so, without registering or considering the work, has it failed? Or is that accusation of failure again typical of a commodified view of art, in which impact must be obvious and accountable? A piece at IBT13 that I didn't engage with personally was Pete Barrett's *Pave*: for three hours each day, in a secluded corner of Bristol, Barrett painted tiny sections of the ground with gold leaf. Of the many people I spoke to at the festival, almost no one mentioned *Pave* to me. Does that lack of engagement invalidate the work? I would argue not: whether one person witnessed *Pave* or 1,000, the work still contains within it a small act of civil disobedience, a reflection on value, and thoughts on humanity's imprint on the earth – not least, the fragile, glinting imprint Barrett himself leaves in creating it.

Assuming the work demands to some degree that passers-by stop and participate, there is further challenge for the artists in how best to communicate that demand. What degree of intimacy is expected from participants, and what happens if participants resist? What language should be used to express that invitation to audiences? These might be the same questions raised when participatory work is ticketed and performed within venues – but I'd argue that that work is presented with some degree of expectation of attracting a knowledgeable audience, who bring with them a certain degree of comfort with the demands of participation. In the public realm, that expectation is eliminated, heightening the risk of encounter. I'll talk more about Live Art and participation in a later chapter.

Whilst all wildly different, these musicians, dancers, writers and performers felt like they shared something important; a way of considering this landscape and our fraught relationship to it. A longing to do with bodies and time and how we live and how we might live better. And I wonder if that slightly elusive thing that they all shared might be something we could call Live Art. And I wonder if this might be the best kind of home for that thing; undedicated, impermanent, belonging to other people or even

belonging to no one. In fact, no real home at all.
Andy Field, writing about In Between Time's Up To Nature *festival, Exeunt, 8 July 2012.*

I remember the compulsive visits to Tino Sehgal's *These Associations* at Tate Modern, communing with strangers, absorbing its liturgy, more inspiring to me than any church sermon...

and the afternoon holding hands with Lou Brodie, idly wondering if the people we passed in south London thought my child was ours...

the stolen minutes wandering through the back streets of Clapham Junction with Holly Rumble's hand-drawn map for *Hear a Pin Drop Here*, noticing every footstep and engine growl, the clatter of trains, the brush of wind through shrubs and trees...

and the wonderful incongruity of Ellie Harrison's *Rage Receptacle*, perched on the side of a busy pavement in Leeds, inviting passers-by to exorcise some deeply felt fury.

I think of Rajni Shah's *Glorious*, setting up stall in a market close to a theatre, offering a patient, friendly invitation to strangers to write letters to other strangers, to read their letters on stage, to join a growing community bound by a sense of adventure and a love of humanity...

and Chris Goode's *Open House*, another friendly, patient invitation, this time to enter a rehearsal room, to watch a performance be created within a week, to take part, to sing or move or simply be in the surprising space made available.

I think of the work I'm yet to engage with, but hope some day to get the chance: Slung Low's *Knowledge Emporium*, exchanging some fact of existence, no matter how kooky, for sweeties; and Rosana Cade's *Walking, Holding*, another piece inviting strangers to hold hands; and Daniel Bye's *Story Hunt*, an audio tour through a peripheral city, collating its inhabitants' memories.

I think of how all of these things are Live Art, and none of them are.

And how all of them, inside or outside, make their home in the public realm.

And how Live Art, in all its permeability, allows me to transgress boundaries, to break down the walls of theatres, to challenge social constructs in the street, to share with strangers, learn from them and change with them.

I think of art surrounding me, encompassing me, creating experience and explaining it back to me.

And this thought makes me curious and happy.

Fiksdal/Langgård/Becker, *Night Tripper* photo: Oliver Rudkin

Live Art in the Public Realm: A Case Study

From a conversation between Maddy Costa and Johanna Tuukkanen, co-artistic director of ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, which takes place annually in Kuopio, Finland, and is a curatorial partner with IBT on *Up To Nature*.

ANTI began with a need.

There were already well-established arts festivals in Kuopio, but they were staged within the big institutions and were quite traditional. They didn't have a strong connection with the local artists or culture, and I knew from organising a few one- and two-day performing-arts events in the city that artists and audiences were yearning for something new. Something a bit more experimental, and more exciting, that they could participate in.

ANTI began with a desire, to work outside of the established museums, theatres and galleries.

We wanted to activate the city: to really look at the city and think about what we could do in its different spaces. We wanted to engage people into experiencing something, an art installation or a live performance, as part of their everyday lives.

Our concept of public space has always been quite wide: not only the streets, parks, squares and public institutions, but also specific sites such as offices, banks, cafes, shops, even a domestic house. Non-arts spaces, basically; places where you are not usually oriented towards an aesthetic experience.

We always think about how people use these public spaces, and how they move within the city. When you start researching that, you realise people of different ages use very different spaces. For instance, unless you have children or work in a daycare centre, you never go to a daycare centre. We bring attention to these spaces, and try to reach people in the sites where they work, study or spend their leisure time.

Kuopio is a small city with a very strong centre, and most of our work is sited in that centre, rather than in the outlying suburbs. We want the work to be visible, and for people to be able to encounter it by chance, without having to make a special journey. People who see our work talk about it cheering up the everyday: if you always go to work by the same route and something unexpected happens there, or something odd happens in the market square where you shop, it's a surprise that lifts you from the usual. It's a way to see very familiar surroundings, or a very familiar site, from a new angle and a new perspective. Since ANTI began in 2002, we've tried not to use the same sites more than once: we try to engage people in different ways, with different energies.

Quite often when I go to international festivals I feel trapped in a venue. The festival creates a small world for artists and audiences, and although the work can be great and interesting and exciting, it rarely has a relationship to where you are physically. You're

inside a venue and you feel like you could be anywhere. At ANTI, you really get the sense of being in Kuopio. It brings you to places you wouldn't visit as a tourist, and walking between the different sites is a very physical experience.

We have an active audience, or hardcore audience, who know exactly what's happening when and where. But our work is free, so it also attracts people who are not the "usual" cultural audience: a lot of students, unemployed people, and people with social challenges, for whom it's impossible to go and buy a ticket to a performance in one of the big institutions. We hope that people will be encouraged to think about what is allowed in public spaces and what is not, and who is and isn't allowed to do these things. We believe everyone can enjoy art and have great experiences from it, and we want to give that opportunity to everyone. And we hope people who see our work will be encouraged to become culturally more active.

Every year there's lots of criticism about the festival in the local papers.

"What is this shit?"

"Who pays for it?"

It's negative and can be aggressive – but it's great that we irritate people enough to inspire conversations about the role of art in society. It's important to ask questions about what art is, who comes to it, who can do it, and what it's for.

The problem for a festival like us is describing the impact of the work. Where appropriate, we try to estimate the numbers of our audiences; for instance, when work happens in a small building, we calculate how many people enter. But the issue is more complicated than that: hundreds of thousands of people might see a video installation running through the entire festival in the middle of the city, but what indicators are there of its impact on them? It's a challenge cultural researchers all over the world are trying to solve.

But it also excites me that people have amazing, beautiful moments through the festival that we don't know about. I had a conversation with a politician from Helsinki who described three or four experiences he'd had with ANTI, without ever intentionally coming to the festival. For me, ANTI has completely changed the map of Kuopio. The way I walk in the city is layered now, with all these experiences, images and radical encounters.

We hope that when people see and experience work at ANTI, they remember it their whole life.

A special issue of the journal *Maska* devoted to *Up To Nature* was published in March 2013 (Volume 28, Numbers 153-154, 1 March 2013). www.maska.si/

Action Hero, *Extraordinary Rendition* photo: Paul Blakemore

Creating an ecology together: Live Art and artist development

In conversation: Helen Cole, Director of In Between Time, Gemma Paintin of Action Hero and Jo Bannon, independent artist and associate producer for In Between Time. Chaired by Tanuja Amarasuriya, Executive Producer at Theatre Bristol.

Tanuja: What does artist development mean to you?

Helen: I believe artist development is not about producing a single piece of work but a number of works, or even an entire professional career, by developing the networks, resources, knowledge and confidence for an artist and their work to thrive. Unfortunately, artist development is often carried out in a rather paternalistic way. Presenters take on the role of the benefactor. In most cases they bring the resources, they control the context and communication to audiences, and ultimately the platform given to artists, which sets in motion an imbalance in the producer/artist relationship. We should try to recalibrate to create a more balanced relationship and acknowledge that any programme is created in conversation with artist and audience development. We need each other. We are creating an ecology together.

Jo: Maybe a bit belligerently, I view it that I'm responsible for my own artist development. It's my business, I work for myself, and so I need to find the right support to sustain my practice. A lot of the time this is with the help of institutions, and I'm grateful for that support, but I also think an approach which is anchored in independence is the most sustainable way for me to navigate a career in the arts. That means setting up my own programmes to expand my practice, making sure I continually find time for outside influences, go to see stuff, and learn from other artists. Being part of Residence [the Bristol-based artist collective], for instance, is a major way I have had artist development over the years, but outside the limits of a specific scheme or programme. For me there is a strength in this independence and a longevity that doesn't depend on the support of others but instead a mutually beneficial relationship where we both have agency.

The best relationships I have with organisations are with people who support my work on an individual level, where there is a personal relationship and a longer-term investment in me and my work, and where we are both equal and free enough to choose what projects we work on together and which we don't. When I first started making work, I was invited by Helen to become an Arnolfini associate artist, where support was offered on a very basic but vital level. It wasn't about commissioning or necessarily even presenting my work in this early stage, but was a longer-term commitment to seeing where my practice went and knowledge-sharing. It was also about seeing work together and entering into a dialogue about that work. In this way it was a real education into what might be possible, through an association with an institution, yes, but also with the programmer and their curatorial questions and desires, and with the other associate artists.

Gemma: It's interesting to think about the different facets that organisations or other artists might play in the wider landscape. I can think of lots of rubbish examples of fixed

schemes where artists are asked to slot into and complete a certain cycle of development. For instance, I find the model of Scratch as an artist development tool really problematic, because it assumes a linear trajectory of a making process – and a linear upward trajectory to an arts career. As an early career artist, these are often your only opportunities. The idea comes from a good place: mostly from a desire to support a lot of artists and an urge towards a democratisation of that. But the reality is that everyone works differently and has different needs. It needs to be a lot more holistic.

Helen: 'Scratching' has become such a prominent way of working in our sector: some artists use this model really well, if they are making work which is robust enough to stand up to this tight structure. But over a number of years the prevalence of this format has produced one type of work and this type of work has become the only kind of work that is supported. Work that is pleasing to an audience, cheap to produce and present, short, DIY; work that is not going to challenge or unsettle an audience too much but seeks to get the audience voting for it right from the start. Scratch events are, in some cases, the only way an emergent artist gets to show their work in a professional context, so inevitably the rules and restrictions of Scratch affect the kind of work that gets made. That's quite concerning for our sector. How do emergent artists make work that is more complex, challenging, larger-scale, or may not simply please an audience?

Tanuja: It would be good to hear about IBT and the journey it's been on in relation to artist development, given that IBT grew out of an artist development scheme (Breathing Space, at Arnolfini): from wanting to find a way to celebrate a series of commissions that had been developed over a long time and to make that work fresh again for audiences who might have seen them through a few unfinished/work-in-progress stages.

Twelve years later, IBT is now a high-profile international showcase. What is the place of artist development in relation to the kind of festival IBT has grown into? How do you manage the tension between the openness to failure that any true artist development process must have and the robust quality needed to stand up to the scrutiny of promoters and audiences?

Helen: You're right, IBT grew out of the artist development programme I developed at Arnolfini. When I arrived at Arnolfini to run the Live programme in 1998, I soon realized that no local artists were making work there or being given access to the resources of that building. But I knew if I was going to run a programme I would need a core audience and a community of artists around me. I realized pretty quickly that I would need to move the programme away from buying in shows and instead find a way to start a dialogue with the artists living and working in that city.

So I began fundraising to make small platforms and commissions happen; then at a certain point it became obvious that there may be a network of promoters who would be interested in a touring artist development scheme. That became the programme Breathing Space, which ran for three years. It felt like the right time to offer this development opportunity to the local artists I was in conversation with, artists like Uninvited Guests, Kira O'Reilly, Alex Bradley, Tom Marshman, many of whom were at the start of their careers back then, some of whom are still making work now and are very much part of the Bristol community with inter/nationally recognised careers of their own.

Between 1999-2000, we produced eight modest pieces of work, which is a large enough programme in itself to be the start of a small festival. Alongside this programme I invited a number of more established UK artists with whom I was already in dialogue but who were also making new works that were in some way on the periphery of their established practice. Gob Squad were making their first film, Reckless Sleepers were making their first one-to-one, Forced Entertainment wanted to make a durational show. This programme became IBT 2001, the first IBT festival.

Now we are in a different situation: IBT benefits from over a decade of artist development work and a wealth of community. The challenge we face now is where we find and how we support the new emerging artists as, in recent years, there has been a significant loss or reduction of investment in on-going artist development in Bristol, particularly across the interdisciplinary spectrum, resulting in a lack of open platforms and presentation opportunities in the city for the Live Art sector.

As IBT, we're currently trying to figure out a way we can support this need, for artists who may not fit within the bracket of theatre: for early career artists making Live Art or body-based practice or working in more emergent or challenging practices across artforms or for non-theatre spaces; and for later-career artists who are seeking to make work of scale or ambition. We realize that we can't fulfil all of it because we don't have a venue, we don't have a regular programme. We do commission and produce for an internationally recognized biennial festival which demands a commitment to scale and quality.

Jo: I think IBT has an agenda to support and defend a space for a certain kind of work and artist. When we discussed how we would select artists to invite to be associate artists, for instance, it really came down to two things: firstly, an instinctive urge towards artists with whom we have an existing, ongoing and fruitful dialogue; and secondly, towards artists who are either pushing outside of their artform or current practice or pushing for a space or context which doesn't exist in the city, which maybe we could provide for them.

Tanuja: It's interesting that the quality of programme is high up your agendas for what you need for healthy artist development. When I talk to other organisations about their artist development programme, they often talk about the problem of their local artists not coming to see the programme, even if they may be offered free or discounted tickets. But you've got a core audience saying they want this.

Helen: Certainly when IBT produce events we feel this huge wave of support from the artist community in the city. That's really important because having core support behind us makes us brave. They are what sends us out into the forest for *Up To Nature*, or into any new location or artistic adventure, because we have spent over 10 years building our core and we know that people are getting excited alongside us and will share that challenge with us.

Gemma: That's totally demonstrated by IBT13, because the festival sold out – I was begging for tickets from people!

Helen: We did so well this year building impressive audience figures and real enthusiasm from the public, and we worked really hard to achieve this. We attract significant audiences from outside Bristol, nationally and internationally, but we also put a lot of

resources into trying to expand local audiences beyond the core, to reach people we have never reached before. Our job is made harder because less is programmed in the city between our festivals, so there's very little audience established upon which we can build. As a biennial festival, it feels like we have to start afresh to build a new audience locally each and every time.

Jo: Audience development leads into artist development, so if you have an informed audience – and by that I don't mean an arts-educated clique of professionals, I mean an audience that is curious and sees a lot of different types of work and is starting to build a vocabulary for it – then it allows the artists to be more risk-taking in what they do. The audience might not understand it, but they're going to have some relationship with it because they've seen other work. That's harder if it's infrequent. A regular programme keeps innovation going because artists get fed, and also audiences get stimulated and access new work. Without it, the city gets more conservative.

Tanuja: Is Bristol a good city to live in as an artist? Gemma and Jo, you've both been practising in Bristol for a while and it would be interesting to know why, when you have many national and international connections for your work, you still choose Bristol as your home. What makes a place a good home for artists?

Gemma: [Action Hero] moved here from Yorkshire quite randomly, because there seemed to be some stuff happening here. The reason we've stayed is because there's no other city in the UK we would move to; if we moved it would be out of the UK. Bristol has a very supportive and active community of artists and producers, and a lot of artists-led initiatives: there's Residence and Interval and the Cube and the influence of the Bristol City Council-led Capacity Bristol project.

As we tour more and more, we realize that international programmers are also seeing our work in Bristol. At the start of the year we were showing work at PuSH festival in Vancouver; shortly after we were back in Bristol working on our new project, *Extraordinary Rendition*, at IBT, and there were three or four programmers whom I had seen two weeks earlier in Vancouver who were here in my home city. That's a massive deal in terms of the international context: you don't have to go to London if you want those people to see your work, or if you want to see work like that.

Jo: When I moved to Bristol it felt like one of very few places where it might be possible to live and survive as an artist. Partly that's to do with going to Dartington [College of Arts] and Bristol being the next stop on the train, the biggest city on the way. An affordable city to live in. There was also this rumour that you could see exciting work at Arnolfini, that there was this thriving scene – and that you might be able to show your own work at Arnolfini, which at the time was a major home for contemporary performance. That felt like quite a unique offer.

Bristol has benefited massively from people being able to stay here and strong things have grown up around that. Residence keeps me in Bristol because it's a unionising force which is enabling me to continue being an artist. I feel quite impassioned about the continuing and perhaps growing need for support in the city as more artists move here. In my experience, when you graduate you've got about a year of trying in you, and unless

someone extends a hand over that time and says they want to help you do something, then how do you sustain that?

And that's a daily question: can I keep doing this? Can I find a way to make this next project happen? You get more robust as you go along, but how are those graduates getting supported to keep being inventive and exploratory with their practice if their work is slightly outside what's currently supported in the city? It feels like there's a gap.

Gemma: There is a gap: some of that has been taken up by Bristol Old Vic with *Ferment*, where some of the more experimental-theatre end of Live Art is supported, but there's a lot of work that doesn't fit into this remit. And I wonder what happens to that. There's also a gap in the touring circuit for some really important shows which are going around the UK. For instance, Forced Entertainment's show isn't coming anywhere nearer to Bristol than Birmingham. I wonder what UK artists and companies feel about that.

Jo: A key part of artist development is stimulation: seeing work that makes you ambitious, work that is radical and in some way testing the limits of an artform, a performer, the audience. As I tour I see some of that work. I see work that inspires me in Bristol, too, but I don't see quite the same scale or breadth as five or six years ago. And younger artists in the city may not even know that work exists because it's not coming here.

Gemma: The generation of artists that Jo and I are part of – I don't know if we can be called emerging artists any more – are bit more established now, and our work isn't bigger in scale necessarily but perhaps is moving away from a DIY approach. DIY is a useful strategy when you're beginning because it gives you a lot of agency to get on and make your work, but if there's no infrastructure which lets you develop or move beyond that then it limits the scope or imagination of those artists and that work. Without the influence of organisations and institutions who can regularly bring in other work to the city, things can stay really local. Maybe some of that work will never leave Bristol and soon that work all starts to feel the same.

Tanuja: The international dialogue that IBT is so actively networked into is a hugely valuable thing for Bristol: it expands our horizons; it helps the city's artists and audiences better understand the international cultural landscape; and, in terms of artist development, it surely invites artists to aspire to make "world-class" work. And nationally, promoters look towards Bristol as a prolific generator of exciting new performance, which I think must in part be due to Bristol's healthy artist development culture, and the confidence that gives the artists working here to make leaps and take risks with their imagination and practice.

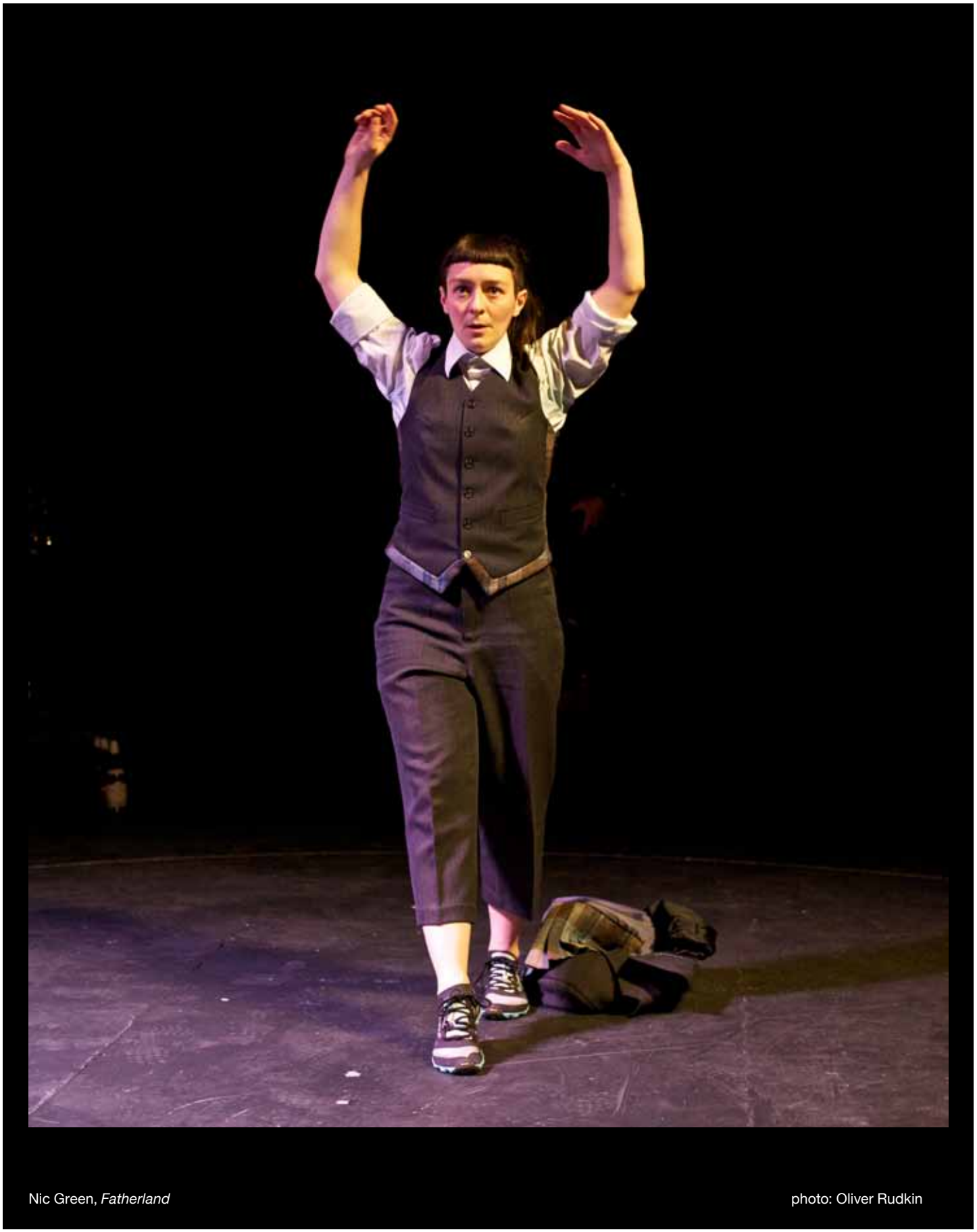
But how do we maintain that healthy culture, especially as ambitions grow? From my perspective at Theatre Bristol, I've noticed an increased pressure on the established resources of things like Arts Council England funding, work-in-progress opportunities, studio and rehearsal space; but I'm more concerned with where the new resources we need to meet growing ambitions might come from – in terms of the partnerships with venues, programmers, funders, audiences, producers. What do we need to do more of (or less of) to keep Bristol the home for producers and artists like you?

Helen: I think you're talking about an ecology in a city. We have some strengths but also some weaknesses and sometimes they are interdependent. For instance, the artist-led movement is strong in Bristol now – but it wasn't necessarily so strong when the venues were more active in terms of programme and artist development. Perhaps there was less of a need for it. The entrepreneurial nature of the artists in Bristol, with their zeal to survive and continue doing what they do, continues even if the resources change or the place where those resources comes from changes.

What's needed now is a regular and strong national and international programme, and more public moments to gather in Bristol. Alongside the two major theatre and performance festivals, IBT and Mayfest, the two major arts institutions have also adopted this festival structure: Arnolfini has *Four Days*, which happens four times a year, and Bristol Old Vic has two *Ferment* fortnights a year. Tobacco Factory does programmes all year round but their remit is very different. This leaves Bristol with no regular, annual, venue-based contemporary theatre, Live Art or performance programme any more. Instead we have a feast-then-famine model. We need a regular Live Art programme in the city again to create the moments to meet, inspire, exchange, encourage, grow.

It's important that artists and audiences regularly get to see unusual exemplary work. A regular programme of Live Art and contemporary performance in the city helps to prove that there is an audience desire for it. It sets a benchmark for others to follow. A regular programme also helps to build a community by encouraging artists to see the work of other artists and to meet each other to discuss and argue and spur each other on. This helps us develop a shared sense of practice and ambition. A sense that anything might be possible.

Tanuja: It's also about audiences taking it into their day-to-day lives, rather than a culture event being an extraordinary experience all the time.



Nic Green, *Fatherland* photo: Oliver Rudkin

Live Art and artist development: a (left-field) case study

Maddy Costa

So powerful and pervasive are the structures of capitalism in our society that it's all too easy to view artist development within a linear framework of expansion or progression from small venues to big, studio spaces to main houses, intimate audiences to mass. Yet for many artists, perhaps especially those working within live- or performance-art practice, ambition isn't expressed simply (or at least not merely) in numbers or dimensions, while the desire for development pushes not just vertically but horizontally and all angles in between. For these artists, ambition reaches beyond individual careers to the art form as a whole. They strive to create the unimagined, push into uncharted territory, risk the new.

Whatever its relationship with mainstream theatre culture, their work needs an audience. Ideally a curious and informed audience, excited by the possibilities of unimagined, uncharted, risky new work. Ideally an audience who respond, not necessarily positively, but with a strength of feeling that attracts further audiences to the work. Ideally an audience who can think hard about what they've seen, contextualise it, analyse it, and reflect it back to the makers, spurring them on in their endeavour.

At the heart of this need is a rich culture of criticism.

As someone who has a freelance day job writing about theatre and music for The Guardian, I would say that, wouldn't I? But I don't think I speak from a place of arrogance. Criticism supports art fundamentally, not simply by promoting it (there's no denying the box-office effect of a five-star rating) but by seeking to engage with it. Critics who endeavour to comprehend the context in which art is made, its aims and processes, its questions and possibilities, its failures and achievements, support that work just as much as institutions who provide rehearsal space and financial resources. In their role of curious, informed and excited audience members, they encourage, even inspire artists to push further, try harder. "Our relations with critics may be strained in a superficial sense, but in a deeper one the relationship is absolutely necessary," wrote Peter Brook in *The Empty Space* (1969). "Like the fish in the ocean, we need one another's devouring talents to perpetuate the sea bed's existence."

In some respects, at the time of writing (summer 2013) we live in a thrilling and fertile time for criticism. The internet has created the opportunity for a proliferation of platforms, from personal blogs to alternative magazines, within which theatre, live- and performance art can be discussed. Yet this is also a moment of surprising stagnation. The practices of mainstream media – the short-form review, the quick response, the star rating, the focus on a limited calendar of events – are surprisingly prevalent, even at blog level. Meanwhile, the opportunities for writers to access those mainstream platforms are small and shrinking, and with them are lost opportunities for interaction with critical readers and senior editors – as vital to a writer's improvement as constant practice.

When we talk about artist development, we also need to talk about critic development.

The writers' programme at IBT13 was terrific – and again, I would say that, having been part of it, but my praise is for the idea, the offer and the opportunity, not for my personal engagement in it. It invited an experienced writer to become resident at the festival, seeing as much work as possible, digesting and responding to it, and communicating about it at an inter/national level. No prescription was made as to how that response might be composed or distributed, however: it was absolutely possible for the Writer in Residence to spend the festival radically rethinking their own practice, attempting new forms of criticism that in some way mirrored or took energy from the forms of the work itself. At the same time, the Writer in Residence was responsible for mentoring a team of emergent writers, who might be encountering live- or performance-art for the first time. Again, this mentoring work could be multi-faceted, ranging from fairly traditional editing of the emergent writers' texts to writing tasks, collaborative responses and discussions.

The intensity of a festival programme, with its rapid-fire timetable of events, tightly clustered into four too-short days, meant that I didn't achieve even a fraction of what I hoped as Writer in Residence, particularly in terms of my own development, as a writer frustrated with the mould of mainstream criticism (300 words plus star rating) and aware of the limitations of my own little-read blog. I hoped to engage the wider community of Bristol in discussion about the work at IBT13 but was too busy watching it to initiate those conversations. I hoped to experiment with different forms of response – analogue as well as digital, poetry as well as prose, visual as well as verbal – but instead fell back with alarming speed into what I know: the neatly formatted review, ultimately published (with star ratings attached) in The Guardian and the online magazine Exeunt. There was and still is so much more I could do in response to IBT13.

Primarily my energies were devoted to the emergent writers team: and here, I think, the IBT13 writing programme came into its own. One reason for this emerges in a snapshot of the five writers' backgrounds:

> Rosemary Wagg: studying for an MA in History of Art at Bristol University, writer and editor for the student newspaper Epigram.
> George Meredith: first year undergraduate studying English and Drama at Bristol University.
> Rasheeda Nalumoso: dramaturg and producer, and member of the Project Boondock artist collective.
> William McCrory: art critic and curator; writer for Urban Times.
> Kate Kelsall: contributor (arts) to the online journal Fourth and Main.

Whereas Rasheeda, for instance, arrived at IBT13 already engaged with live- and performance art, George and Kate came with almost no such experience. For four days, the team was immersed in a wide-ranging programme of challenging work that they may not have been able to see in their own cities outside of a festival context. Seeing more work inevitably expands a writer's understanding of art that is situated outside of the mainstream – and inspires them to expand the vocabulary of their response.

Sometimes that response is confusion, dislike, fear. These are valid: but it is altogether too easy for writers to frame that response within blame. Even senior critics have sometimes been guilty of declaring that a piece of work should not have been funded, or should not have been made. In return, artists are, not unreasonably, liable to dismiss critics as lacking the experience (or intelligence) to understand their work. The antidote to knee-jerk condemnation is dialogue, and the IBT13 writers' programme created a forum for discussion between the six writers and, because we all shared public space, the artists themselves, that allowed us to speak honestly about our reactions to work, confess misgivings or perplexities, and share interpretations without judgment either of each other or the makers. Such a forum felt particularly vital in a festival containing lots of participatory work, where an accumulation of subjective responses can illuminate complexity more effectively than a single reaction.

Additionally, in the relationship between the emergent writers and the Writer in Residence as mentor, the IBT13 writing programme provided exactly the sort of training that people accustomed to self-publishing their work online might find useful but often cannot access: training from an experienced editor able to assess their writing dispassionately, pointing out its superfluous repetitions, faltering rhythms and grammatical mishaps, encouraging all the indications of strong personality and insightful thought. It's as useful to be able to appraise other people's writing in this way as one's own, and so the group very quickly formed a reading circle, swapping writing between each other and sharing thoughts on its style and content. A collection of all the writing we produced together can be found at www.welcometodialogue.com/ibt-residency.html.

The IBT13 writing programme wasn't unique. The Spill Festival of Performance offered a similar opportunity to critic and curator Diana Damian, but stretched over time and geography (2012, Ipswich; 2013, London), allowing her to form more complex relationships with the programmers, the work and the team of emergent writers. Last year, Fierce Festival (Birmingham) created a Press Gang of teenage writers, giving them a six-week training programme and ongoing support. From 2006-8, the Live Art UK network operated the *Writing From Live Art* initiative, through which eight writers were supported over a twelve-month period to become critics of live- and performance art. There is a shared recognition here: of the need to introduce a wider audience to alternative theatrical practices; to encourage critical voices, particularly outside of academia, and writing that is accessible rather than technical; and to encourage a creativity for which there is no room within mainstream media, and that more genuinely reflects the work under discussion. Each programme is individually valuable, but collectively they suggest a model for critical development that is vital to the writing culture.

More than that: it's vital to Live Art as a whole. A vibrant critical culture is a forum for dialogue between artists and audiences. It encourages audiences and inspires understanding. It challenges perceived notions of live- and performance art's impenetrability and isolation within a niche, wherein it addresses only other artists and not society at large. And within it lie some of the only traces that remain of work that is ephemeral.

If we believe in supporting the makers of that work, we should believe in supporting the people who write about it.

Helen Cole, *We See Fireworks* photo: Delia Spatareanu

Prepared to be surprised: Live Art and participation

Maddy Costa

It took me a long time to summon up the courage to engage in participatory work. I feared the intimacy, particularly bodily contact, that might be involved; I feared the potential for exposure; I feared being demanded to perform and falling short not so much of the work's or the maker's expectations but my own. From Adrian Howells to Hide and Seek to Ontroerend Goed, the list of artists and companies whose work I've hardly seen, if at all, is long: avoided because the very idea of it filled me with insurmountable anxiety. All that despite the fact that I perform myself, intermittently, in a dance group; but there I have a safety structure around me, I am part of a collective that rehearses together regularly, and feel that security of numbers and routine practice.

I mention all this because it demonstrates from a personal perspective a growing hunger among audiences for visceral engagement with art, and curiosity about what that might demand and provoke; and a desire to question the extent to which artists creating participatory work need to be aware, and take some care, of audience members who might feel vulnerable and afraid.

Just as IBT13 offered multiple interpretations of what we might mean by "Live Art in the public realm", so too its programme demonstrated that participation is plastic: it adapts to the content and context of the individual work. Again, it's worth looking in detail at how different artists in the IBT13 programme invited participation, and to what purpose:

Staged in a theatre auditorium, Nic Green's *Fatherland* used participation subtly to draw its audience to the heart of the piece: first inviting the men in the room to take the voice of the father who has been absent from Green's life; then by inviting all the audience to contribute to a poetic evocation of the Scottish Highlands, the land of that father, mysteriously embedded in her bones. By the time Green passes bottles of whisky through the auditorium, we have met her in a place beyond presence or absence, material or immaterial: as the peaty drink burns in our throats, we feel we are drinking in the earth, more connected to it and to each other than we were before we came in.

Night Tripper by Fiksdal/Langgård/Becker required no demonstrable participation, but the readying of the mind for engagement began on arrival (by coach) to a clearing in the woods, followed by a walk through a winding, mud-dusty lane, past dead branches and tree stumps, some of which had been dressed in sweatshirts to look eerily human, to another clearing within a circle of trees. From then, the participation that this piece required was that of total concentration on its nuances of sound and movement, allowing oneself to be hypnotised by the moan and drone of violin and harmonium, and the slow circling of the dancers, reaching a point of such mesmerised absorption that when the impassioned call of singers was answered, somewhere in the distance, by a radiant female choir, you could believe that the earth itself was speaking.

Unlike those mass-participation works, Jo Bannon's *Dead Line* is a piece for one individual to engage with at a time. The work consists of three different spaces: a waiting room, a telephone room in which the participant engages in conversation with a specialist on the subject of death, and a contemplation room, where the participant is given the time and space to think for a few moments about the inevitability of death, not least their own. Although the experience is guided, each participant is responsible for choosing how to use that time and space for themselves.

Like *Dead Line*, Kate McIntosh's *Worktable* is enacted by its audience. From the moment you enter its space, you need to make choices: an object from the shelves in the first room; how to destroy it in the second; an object to mend in the third room; where to display your handicraft in the fourth. There are rooms in which you are alone, eradicating any implication of performative action, and rooms in which you are able to operate either alone or with a sense of community, depending on individual taste. The choices you make in each space invite you to reflect on your relationship to objects, on the violence and carelessness of destruction, on waste and recycling, the patience of craft, and use and value.

Whereas *Worktable* asks audiences to be active participants, Action Hero experimented with removing audience agency and enforcing passivity. In one section of their new project-in-development *Extraordinary Rendition* – presented at IBT13 as a work-in-progress – participants were ushered individually into a shipping container, where their hands were bound with a cable tie and head covered in a hessian sack; that person was then subjected to a piercingly loud karaoke performance of a rock song, taken from a list of tracks used by American soldiers in the torture of "enemy combatants". I should confess, with an awareness of irony, that I experienced this piece not actively but passively, through other's descriptions, which I pass on here. At other points in the day, and across the festival, it was possible to join Action Hero in a working rehearsal, and take part in a series of informal discussions about the ideas their piece explores: here, participation was pulled into the very processes of the work.

Coney's *Early Days (of a Better Nation)* was another work-in-progress event that I wasn't able to attend; I mention it for the sake of contrast. In this piece, participants are both performers and audience, working together to create the show at the same time as watching their own and others' contributions to it.

What this list demonstrates is that simplistic assumptions about participation are not useful: it is as possible to participate from the distance of an auditorium seat as it is in the proximity of a one-to-one encounter or a work played by its audience as though it were a live-action computer game. I came to IBT13 having very recently interviewed a theatre director, who talked eloquently of how all performance work thrives on the "participation of the imagination." The audience member who looks, listens, empathises and believes is participating – and reaps the reward of a stronger and more meaningful engagement with the work.

This was certainly true of *Night Tripper*; although I know from eavesdropping on other audience-members' responses that not everyone engaged with it equally, and that those who were more aware of the cold seeping through their skin than of the ritual being enacted missed its emotional resonance. My own, slightly deflated response to Simon

Faithfull's *Fake Moon* when seen at close quarters – roughly: "Is that it?" – was an early warning to me of how much IBT13 required of my imagination. Apply a little poetic vision, and its light was as beautiful and mysterious as that beaming in from space. Without it, *Fake Moon* was nothing more than a big white balloon.

There is a question here, about the extent to which the participation of the audience is assumed, rather than an explicit component of the work. Perhaps *Night Tripper* did not resonate equally around its congregated circle because the work communicated its need for audience investment too subtly, at a supernatural frequency that was too easy to miss or ignore. By contrast, *Fatherland* made explicit its need for audiences to become vocal presences in the piece, rather than simply sit in their seats and absorb. In doing so, it transformed from one person's reflection on the influence of place and parentage, to a collective contemplation of these ideas; from a piece about an absent relation, to a piece creating present relationships.

But that would seem to suggest that audiences need to be reminded again and again of their role as participants in Live Art. This melancholy notion inspired a blog piece Action Hero posted on their website last year, from which I'd like to quote at length, because it articulates that reminder with admirable clarity:

> I trained as an actor originally. Back then we were told by our tutors that there is no such thing as a bad audience. If they are not reacting how you would like, if they are quiet or not very receptive, it's your fault and it's your responsibility. This is very helpful advice if you're a performer. It's really important to take responsibility for the performance and do your best to make sure you are connecting with the audience on any given night. But it's not true. There IS such a thing as a bad audience. We (Action Hero) like to think of our audiences as collaborators. Each night we work with you to make something happen. Sometimes it's not as successful as other times. Sometimes that is because we have not kept our side of the bargain in the collaboration and sometimes it's because you have not kept your side of the bargain in the collaboration (sometimes it's both). Don't get me wrong, ultimately, we have much more of a responsibility and you've paid to be here so we don't expect you to do much work. We'll promise to do the bulk of it. But there are a few things you can do as an audience member to make sure you are a good collaborator and help make the performance work best. …
> Be generous, be open minded, be prepared to be surprised. Be awake. Be here because you want to be here. If you are coming because you think you have to or because you think it's good for you to go to the theatre or because someone told you you should come but actually you don't like the sound of it or you're expecting not to like it, then either be prepared to be surprised or just don't come. …
> Always remember this. I am a person, in the room with you and I am doing something. Watch it. Then have a drink.
> Action Hero blog, March 3, 2012

Action Hero's argument here arises from a wider cultural problem: the persistent, corrosive, only partially stereotypical notion that theatre is a cerebral art form, somewhat aloof from the mindless pleasure offered by live music, the escapism of cinema, the comfort of television. Live/performance art doesn't sidestep this problem by defining itself

as separate from mainstream theatre culture: if anything, this simply gives rise to another persistent, corrosive, only partially stereotypical notion, that Live Art directs its attention to other artists, not a general public, a viewpoint exaggerated by the fact that Live Art is rarely discussed in accessible media, little reviewed by mainstream critics, and critiqued mostly within an academic context. (I address this issue further in the Live Art and artist development case study on criticism.)

In its most negative aspect, Action Hero's blog gives the impression that jaded audiences, in shifting from traditional theatre to Live Art in search of exciting, visceral experiences, sometimes bring their bad habits with them. Look at it more positively, however, and their blog exemplifies a growing understanding that audiences are interested in participating not only in work but around and beyond it, too. It's an obvious point, but the internet enables a communication of process, a sharing of ideas and a direct conversation between artists and audiences that wasn't previously so easy to offer. The audience member who participates in the frustrations as well as pleasures of process, the slow and patient task of making work, and the thinking behind that work, arrives at it already engaged and ready not to begin but to continue their participation.

Whether speaking to an informed audience member or the curious individual who has perhaps stumbled upon a piece of Live Art situated in the public realm, language is a delicate issue. Blogs are an inherently colloquial and accessible form; yet as a reader of criticism of Live Art, I'm frequently struck by how even blog-writers adopt a technical language that distances rather than embraces, focusing on intellect at the expense or exclusion of emotion, speaking coolly of work achieving affect and not of what that affect entails. This problem felt very live to me during IBT13, because of the framing of Alex Bradley's piece *Field Test*, an installation of lights and sounds in a churchyard in central Bristol. A sign, hanging from a tree at the centre of this enclave, offered the following information:

> *Field Test* is a solar-powered installation that begins at sunset. An explosion of the Humphrey Visual Field Test used by opthalmologists to examine peripheral vision, *Field Test* uses speakers, LED lights, steel guitar and nightfall to entice you into a 'test' of your senses.

Over the course of the weekend, both within the churchyard and beyond, I had several conversations with people puzzled by that reference to the Humphrey Visual Field Test. People who don't wear glasses had no idea how the work imitated the peripheral vision test that is standard to every eye examination. But as someone who does wear glasses, I was also perplexed – because the lights didn't flicker or move through the twilit space in the way that I was led to expect. The feeling was widespread that the language used to describe *Field Test* blocked people's participation, rather than fuelled it.

It's possible that work situated in public spaces connects best when less is given in explanation rather than more, a thought supported by the scarcity of literature directly accompanying Kate McIntosh's *Worktable*. This piece offered almost no information or explanation about its content or what one's participation in it might entail. Instructions were given simply, on a need to know basis; there was no attempt to impose an interpretation; nor did the work require its participants to evaluate or share thoughts at

the end of their journey. This decision simply to open the door to the artwork and allow each participant to navigate it as they chose (within certain gently prescribed boundaries) meant that children and adults, people with a strong engagement with the arts and people with none, were able to engage with it equally. A similar care was taken to avoid placing participants in the role of performer, with the balance between time spent alone with the work and time spent with others perfectly judged.

The word "care" here is important, and becomes fraught in participatory work that asks its audience to walk a tightrope between surprise and shock, the pleasure of surrendering control and the horror of feeling unsafe. To what extent should artists confront their participants, and to what extent attempt to anticipate and alleviate extreme responses rooted in psychological particularities such as phobia or past experience of trauma? This thorny question particularly occupied one of the emergent writers at IBT13 following his encounter with Action Hero's *Extraordinary Rendition*; again, I'd like to quote at some length from his response, because it indicates how high the stakes can be for audience members who participate in Live Art:

> [*Extraordinary Rendition*] centres around songs used for torture of 'enemy combatants'. I know this now, but I sauntered down to the Arnolfini oblivious to this fact. So what followed was of the greatest surprise.
> Waiting in the queue I had an indication of what was to come. A guy emerged from the container visibly shaken, and when asked if he was scared, replied: 'I wasn't scared because I know the limits of IBT.'
> Ushered into the container, wrists bound together, hood placed on head, the aesthetic projected and feeling experienced is Guantanamoesque. The music starts and it's *A Bullet in Your Head.* The sensation felt verged on panic, followed by a strong impulse to resist the experience, to shirk off the cable ties, to remove the hood and leave. I acquiesce. 'Just ride it out,' I tell myself, and try with vague success to do some yoga exercises.
> The profound claustrophobia subsides, maybe because I'm breathing properly again. The song performed by an unknown and unseen individual runs its course, emerging disgruntled the hood is removed, as my cable tie is cut I'm visible to passers-by, a woman exclaims, '**** me!'.
> Why as a Live Art collective would you create such a scenario and why would you endure it as a participant? Retrospectively the unanswerable questions become: What kept me there? Was this a pedagogical experience or a political lesson? Did I just momentarily experience (albeit with the certainty of a swift exit) what forgotten prisoners experience for months or years? Do you stay because you think you might be putting yourself in the shoes of somebody else? Or do we simply crumble when our hands are tied and our vision removed?
> William McCrory, *Can Art Produce Artificial Hells?,* Urban Times, 4 March 2013.

It's worth stressing again that *Extraordinary Rendition* was a work-in-progress; Action Hero were testing out ideas. Following discussion with Gemma Paintin of Action Hero, I've also come to understand that the experience described here focuses on a small aspect of their work during IBT13: her fuller account is fascinating for the number of questions it raises about participation, agency and consent (an edited version can be found at the end of this essay). One thing William McCrory misses was the invitation to watch open rehearsals

and engage in dialogue with Action Hero about the project; arguably, such an invitation offers the audience member far greater agency than work that is prescriptive about the parameters within which people can and cannot participate.

But McCrory's response, albeit partial, feels valuable to me because it connects back to my once overwhelming anxieties regarding participation. I'm interested in how Live Art communicates encouragement to participate – but also how it recognises the need to warn against it. Should challenging work come with a warning or disclaimer? Ask consent to proceed? If so, how might that diminish its impact?

I wonder, too, about the extent to which Live Art needs to recognise its participants not as a collective audience but as individuals, each carrying their own burden of problems and peculiarities. Jo Bannon did this thoughtfully with *Dead Line*: in the room where the telephone conversation with a specialist on death takes place, she was clear that the work was not a substitute for bereavement counselling, and gave contact details for support organisations including the Samaritans and Bereavement Advice Centre. The specialist is reached via a series of questions that guides each participant towards a conversation that might most effectively and sensitively open up his/her particular anxieties around death. It's also clear from the beginning that the participant can leave at any point: like *Worktable*, *Dead Line* doesn't break if its "audience" decide not to take part. Something about this flexibility, this anticipation and acceptance of the vicissitudes of individual natures, gently augmented the humanity of each work.

But perhaps here I betray myself. Perhaps I unconsciously reveal that my tastes as a participant veer towards the contemplative and solicitous, work that invites me to collaborate without forcing me to perform, work that recognises without judgment or exposure my foibles and failings. Every few months I realise I'm braver, more ready to be challenged, provoked, frightened and shocked. And it is artists who work with rigour and curiosity, pushing at boundaries, asking questions about how we engage with each other and with art, and how we understand our inner selves, who make me so.

*

I sent this essay to Gemma Paintin of Action Hero because I didn't want to be so irresponsible as to write about a work I hadn't engaged with personally, particularly not a work-in-progress, without at least some discussion with its makers. What follows is an edited version of her response:

> James [Stenhouse] and I spent a lot of time beforehand talking about the importance of consent, and that's because we were dealing with something that was about being denied agency (of the most brutal kind: ie, being a prisoner who is tortured), and so we knew we needed to ask the participants to consent to giving up their own agency for the length of a song as a collaborative experiment where the audience member is the co-collaborator.
>
> I think it's helpful for me to lay out how the experience was structured for each participant, because it throws a different (and perhaps more complex) light on the whole discussion.

This one event was one of a series of experiments we did over the weekend. Between 11am and 6pm each day we were in open rehearsal, and the door was open for people to wander in and see what we were up to. We had an open lunch between 12-1:30pm, and between 3-5pm each day we scheduled "Karaoke Interrogation". It was announced at Arnolfini box office and was listed on our blackboard, as was all the other stuff. I'd say we saw about 30 people in the Karaoke Interrogation over the 3 days, and people queued up to be interrogated. The steward gave them some information and people generally asked a lot of questions about what we were doing. There was a list of songs that was handed down the queue, and each participant could choose their song.

When they reached me, I told them why the songs were on this list. They told me which song they wanted to have sung to them and I told Ian, who was behind the curtain. I then explained in detail what would happen. I told them I would hood them, cuff them and take them into the container. Ian, the karaoke singer, would sing the song to them, and afterwards I would bring them out. I asked them if that was OK, and if they wanted to do it. Nobody said no, but some people asked not to be cuffed or not to be hooded, or to have the curtain open. I then led them into the space, and the experience played out. If the person had requested it, I stayed in the space with them. Afterwards, I led them out. Some people found it very intense, some found it upsetting, some danced in their handcuffs, some headbanged, some sang along. There was lots of conversation in the line about what it was like, what we were experimenting with, etc.

I totally understand that William found it disconcerting, so did lots of people. But a key point for me is that there was a warning and a disclaimer: we said on the blackboard it was unsuitable for under-18s, I personally spoke with each person as they came in and told them exactly what would happen to them. I explicitly asked for their permission to hood and cuff them, and to play the music to them. The participants author their own experience by choosing their own song (as well as Rage Against the Machine, there was also Britney Spears, or Bruce Springsteen, or Sesame Street, for example). We decided that nothing about this explanatory part would be performative, it would be gentle, private and safe. They would be able to say no, or ask for the experience to be tailored. We would not trick anyone. So you're right, it was high stakes, but we explicitly invited the audience to enter into a contract in which they would surrender their liberty to us for three minutes, and they agreed.

The average member of the public had a million questions: they wanted to know what/where/why/who and I think they were curious enough to have known what they were getting themselves into, and generally engaged in the process beyond this one experiment (ie, coming in to discuss our research or eat with us, talk about the politics, etc). In a way, that casual stumble-upon-it viewer is the ultimate in participation: ask a load of questions, be genuinely interested, be up for the experience, be engaged. I wonder if there is something very "present" about that way of encountering the work that can get lost in the treadmill of festival-going among a "professional audience" (artists and critics included). Someone thinking, "I have to go and see this Action Hero thing before the other show I've got to see in 15

minutes," might be less attentive to all the signifiers around them that tell you what kind of experience this will be.

It raises the issue about how much you can mitigate against an audience member having an experience you tried hard not to give. All the things William describes are what we were interested in, I wanted to give someone that feeling, but crucially I wanted it to be framed within a context of informed consent and an understanding of what it might mean to re-enact something that is happening to people in foreign countries in our name, what it might mean to knowingly put yourself through that. But maybe all that prep gets lost in the visceral-ness of it, and people just feel upset. All the questions you are asking are ones I am asking too, and I think I was asking them with that experiment.

Kate McIntosh, *Worktable* photo: Paul Blakemore

Live Art and Participation: A Case Study on Kate McIntosh's *Worktable*

From a conversation between Maddy Costa and Kate McIntosh

Most of my work to date has been very performative, based on the live presence of the performer on a stage and a lot of direct communication with the audience. But I've also made video work and installations – and it was while watching people move through one of my video installations that I became impressed by the way people organised themselves within that space, moving at their own tempos and making their own choices about how long to spend with each projection and which angle to view it from. It was such a different dynamic from a performance: in which you try to hold people's attention, to really direct it; then maybe you let it go for a while so people aren't being asked to attend in such specific ways, and then you focus them back again... By contrast, the video installation seemed to offer a space in which the audience organised their attention as they wished – this struck me and felt good.

Worktable began with the idea that there would be no performer and no audience: it would be about people negotiating for themselves how they moved through the work. In the classical theatre set-up I've always found the contract with the audience fascinating: it's very codified, and in some ways very clear how to participate as an audience. In that context I find it important to acknowledge that this is a game we play, and a game we know really well. Sometimes the performers choose to bend the rules, but we know immediately when they're doing that.

When I started making *Worktable*, suddenly the game was not clear. There was no contract. I realised the visitors didn't know what they were heading into, or what the offer was, or what was expected of them.

I thought a lot about language - the kind of information I would give and in what order. On the one hand, I was trying to indicate clearly what the game was in *Worktable*, to shape people's expectations in a way that they could understand and orientate themselves. At the same time, I was trying to make an offer that didn't oblige people to participate in "the" correct way, or to behave well, or even to follow the instructions if they didn't want to. I'm not an easy participator myself: now and then I find myself sitting in a theatre being asked to participate, and while I can feel people around me surging to give the correct answer, I resist. I want to ask them: what's wrong with you? Why are you so keen? But then I ask: what's wrong with me? Why don't I join in?

I guess as an audience member I'm not always in a rush to make things "work" for the performance I'm watching. And I'm really sensitive to situations when a performance imposes assumptions about who I am, or what my relation is to something. So with participation, the moment I feel that the performance is asking me into something, but not really thinking well about what the invitation might mean to me (or to other people), I want to ask why it's allowed to make those assumptions and why I'm meant to be obedient.

To aid autonomy in *Worktable*, I did a lot of thinking about when each visitor would be visible to other people in their actions and when they wouldn't. It felt very important to me not to be witnessed in the "workroom" in which you break the objects: for some people, to do that is quite taboo, and for others it might feel quite exhibitionist. It felt right to me that you would be on your own there, unselfconscious, and not obliged to perform for others; whereas in the "repair room", it felt right to be with people again, because there's another dynamic and your curiosity about what other people are doing feeds your own process. I think it's easier to take for granted how all those weird social things function in a theatre: I couldn't take them for granted here.

Although of course I wanted *Worktable* to provoke several of layers of possible meaning and experience, I tried to avoid imposing these: I hoped the piece would give space for different (and possibly opposing) interpretations according to visitors' own sensitivities. One strategy for this was to make the instructions very practical and somewhat neutral – they define the visitors' actions firstly as "work" rather than "creativity". I also wanted that each person's internal process of decision-making would be the point of *Worktable*, rather than anything more tangibly outcome-oriented. I find the culture of accounting and quantification worrisome, and I liked the idea that Worktable would be slightly mysterious in this sense. Visitors are never documented as they are doing it, and although the objects get documented they're never attached to the people who made them. So in some sense, there's no way for me to know what really happens inside the installation unless people choose to tell it.

Worktable was made for a Masters project and was never intended for a specific location. It's been presented in an abandoned factory, an empty family house, in old offices, and it feels quite different in each of these contexts. Each time it picks up interesting inflections about what is work, what is domesticity, what is a domestic object. Although I really treasure the theatre space and the very particular game we play there, I'm curious about what other games are possible in other spaces. Some of my future research will be more interested in what that shift of location brings.

One of the things I liked about the way it was presented in Bristol was that it wasn't clearly housed inside an art context, because it was outdoors in a public space and so available. It was installed in a series of shipping containers, and there was something rather sterile about that environment, too: it was for everyone, and also not for anyone in particular, I quite liked that. I also liked that the name and titling on the outside were very discreet – which meant I think a lot of people came in out of curiosity, and did it, and perhaps never read more context about who made it or why.

Pete Barrett, *Pave*

photo: Paul Blakemore

Postscript: Live Art and the stuff of life

Maddy Costa

This document has taken me weeks to compile because it's really bloody hard to write about Live Art.

It's hard to write about it because I'm still not sure what it is.

I know what theatre is to me. Theatre is the way I inhabit the world and interact with other people. Theatre is the way I think about our relationships with each other and how we can create better social systems. Theatre is the way I understand myself and others, and what makes us who we are, and what makes us live and feel and think this way.

Those things are also Live Art.

In Helen Cole's *We See Fireworks*, disembodied voices talk about their encounters with Live Art. You enter a pitch-dark room, intermittently lit by the soft, golden glow of filament bulbs, and listen as one person after another describes something they saw in a traditional theatre building or in a gallery, in a disused warehouse or a subway, at a party or from their bedroom window: something so remarkable, so outlandish, so extraneous to everyday life, that in the moment of witnessing it some aspect of human existence was sharply, thrillingly illuminated. Their lives or personalities weren't demonstrably changed by these encounters, but their appreciation and understanding of life were.

I sat in this room, a person who would once have been terrified of its darkness, and let each voice conjure up a vision that felt like a dream. My mind swam with pictures: a woman with no arms, a man with taps in his elbows, a gang of youths dancing, a naked parade, a dying hummingbird, a motorcycle crash, angels' wings. Some of the people were describing encounters with unimaginable extremes of experience; some of them were alert to the incidental beauty in the everyday that is far too easy to miss. Their stories were full not only of images but of ideas: thoughts on isolation and community, ephemerality and memory, wonder and fear, control and abandonment, survival and death. All the fundamentals of existence.

We need art to help us make sense of life, I thought. We need art to reach outside the meagre parameters of capitalist existence, the barbed-wire fences of money and consumerism. We need art to expand our imaginations and say everything we're afraid to say.

I sat in that room, in a disused building to the side of Temple Meads Station in Bristol, on my first afternoon of IBT13, and felt as though I were breathing in a manifesto for art's essential place in the world.

I hope this document serves as a manifesto, too. For bravery on the part of producers, programmers, funders, artists and audiences. For dialogue between them. For public subsidy to support them. For art that permeates every corner of our cities and villages and forests, merging with the everyday, inviting participation from everyone, children and pensioners, art-lovers and sceptics. For everything Live Art is, and everything it might be.

Biographies

Editor

Maddy Costa is a writer, crafter, dreamer and mother of two, based in London. She has been writing about theatre and music for The Guardian since 2000, and in 2011 began a blog, *States of Deliquescence*. Since 2011 she has been critic in residence with Chris Goode and Company, documenting its processes and performed work. In 2012 she began collaborating with Jake Orr on *Dialogue*, an ongoing project that invites theatre-makers, critics and audiences to rethink their relationships with each other. During 2013, she has been working with the production company Fuel on a research project, *New Theatre in Your Neighbourhood*, advocating a new engagement between audiences and touring work.
http://statesofdeliquescence.blogspot.co.uk/
http://www.welcometodialogue.com/
https://newtheatreiyn.wordpress.com/

Partners

In Between Time is an international company producing extraordinary artworks and the biennial In Between Time Festival (Bristol, England). In Between Time encourages artists and audiences to think, to dream, to do things they have not yet imagined. Established in 2001, it is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England and is supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation through a Breakthrough Grant awarded to Helen Cole. In Between Time Festival is now one of the UK's most significant events in which to experience genre-defying international performance and unusual contemporary artwork. IBT champions new curatorial models, spilling out in to the city through fireworks in warehouses, invisible choirs in forests, fireflies in urban glades and operas in living rooms.
www.inbetweentime.co.uk

Live Art UK is a national network of 22 venues, festivals and facilitators who are engaged with all aspects of the development of the Live Art sector across the UK. The network works together to create new models and partnerships for the promotion of Live Art and aims to provide a representative voice.

Current members of Live Art UK are The Arches, Arnolfini, Artsadmin, BAC, The Basement, the Bluecoat, Cambridge Junction, Chapter Arts Centre, Chelsea Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre, Compass Live Art, Fierce Festival, Forest Fringe, Hatch, hÅb, home live art, In Between Time, LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre), Live Art Development Agency, Live at LICA,]performance s p a c e [and Wunderbar. The network is coordinated by the Live Art Development Agency.
www.liveartuk.org

Contributors

Tanuja Amarasuriya is a theatre director and producer. She is Co-Artistic Director of Sleepdogs and Co-Executive Producer of Theatre Bristol, a collective of producers whose role is to work with artists, producers, venues and others to enable the best live performance to be made and experienced in Bristol. Theatre Bristol's central ethos is that when you share stuff, everyone gets better; and their activity focuses on sharing good information, culturing strong networks, being open, offering bespoke artist and producer support and development, encouraging independent and alternative thinking, and testing out new models of working that can help artists make inspiring, transformative art for the world.
www.theatrebristol.net
www.sleepdogs.org

Jo Bannon is a Bristol-based artist making Live Art and performance. She has presented work in the UK and Europe at The Barbican, SPILL Festival, BAC, IBT Festival, PAD Mainz & Schwankhalle. Jo is an In Between Time Associate Artist and founder member of Residence. She also works as a dramaturg and producer of performance and Live Art. Jo's work is concerned with human exchange and encounter, and explores how our physical bodies experience the world around us and how this sensory experience can or cannot be conveyed. As a result, her work often manifests as intimate encounters designed for single or small audiences alongside staged theatre work and installations.
www.jobannon.co.uk

Helen Cole is Artistic Director for In Between Time. In her role as producer, Live Art and Dance at Arnolfini between 1997 and 2009, she developed the first In Between Time Festival in 2001 as an international biennial of Live Art and contemporary performance practices. In 2009, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation awarded Helen a Breakthrough Award for Exceptional Cultural Entrepreneurs and she left Arnolfini to establish In Between Time as an independent organisation. Helen is the artist/curator of the live memory project, *We See Fireworks*, commissioned by SPILL Festival and now touring internationally. Helen also mentors artists and emerging producers, and works as a writer and curator, and sits on commissioning and selection panels nationally and internationally.
www.inbetweentime.co.uk

Kate McIntosh is an artist working across the boundaries of performance, video and installation. From New Zealand and originally trained in dance, she has performed internationally since 1995. Her work has toured extensively and includes the solo performances *All Natural* (2004), *Loose Promise* (2007) and *All Ears* (2013), and larger works *Dark Matter* (2009) and *Untried Untested* (2012). Her installation and video work includes *De-Placed* (2008, with Eva Meyer-Keller) and the participatory installation *Worktable* (2011). She was a founding member of the Belgian performance collective and punk-rock band Poni, and she holds an MRes in Performance and Creative Research from the University of Roehampton (UK). She is a founding member of SPIN: the artist-run production and research platform based in Brussels.
www.spinspin.be

Gemma Paintin is an artist living in Bristol. She makes performance as one half of Action Hero, whose work regularly tours through the UK, Europe and beyond. She is also a long-standing member of Residence, a collective of theatre-makers and live artists in Bristol who share space and resources to support their practices. Current obsessions (art and non-art related) include artist-led advocacy, global peer-to-peer support networks, ice hockey, narrative structures of blockbuster movies and military air displays.
www.actionhero.org.uk

Johanna Tuukkanen is the co-founder and co-artistic director of ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival. ANTI Festival is an international contemporary arts festival presenting site-specific works made for public spaces. ANTI Festival presents live, sonic, visual and text-based art from today's most exciting and innovative artists in the Finnish town of Kuopio. Free of charge, ANTI Festival is a meeting place for artists and audiences fascinated by how art shapes and responds to the places and spaces of everyday life. The concept of ANTI is unique in the Finnish and international art scene. Tuukkanen directs her own production company, Live Umbrella. She studied at the European Dance Development Center in Arnhem, the Netherlands, between 1993-1997, and has worked as a choreographer, performer, director, curator and lecturer internationally. Recently, she completed her MA in Cultural Policy at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.
www.antifestival.com

Credits

I see a fake moon rising
Edited by Maddy Costa.
Published by Live Art UK and In Between Time, 2013.
Designed by David Caines.

The publishers wish to thank Maddy Costa, all the contributors. Melanie Jame Wolf, and the IBT13 Writers Team: Rosemary Wagg, George Meredith, Rasheeda Nalumoso, William McCrory and Kate Kelsall.

Cover image: Simon Faithfull, *Fake Moon*. Photo: Paul Blakemore.

IBT13 was produced by In Between Time in collaboration with Arnolfini, supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Arts Council England, Theatre Bristol, University of Bristol, Bristol City Council, Bristol Temple Quarter Commissions & Crack Magazine.

Live Art UK is supported by Arts Council England through the Live Art Development Agency's National Portfolio Organisation funding.