

# WE NEED TO TALK

about Live Art

negotiated transient  
friendship a naked human figure

space thick with words

terror, fear,  
the beast

Wednesday, 6 Feb 2008

site-specific

entertaining kitsch

violence ♀  
the beauty of flesh  
and bone

freedom, coercion,  
subversion

captured dance

you are incredibly happy

like a fakir

examine the brown body  
conflicts, injustices, and inequities

Writers for *We Need to Talk about Live Art* are: Tim Attack, Rachel Lois Clapham, Mary Paterson and Theron Schmidt.

We're here to spark debate and stimulate conversation. Each writer's opinions are personal, unfiltered, unspun and not necessarily shared by the group.

Disagree? Leave your comments at the front desk, contact us at [www.writingfromliveart.co.uk](http://www.writingfromliveart.co.uk), or come talk to us at the NRLA.

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## Sparking Debate. Stimulating Conversation. Supporting Artists. Taking Live Art Seriously.

*We Need to Talk about Live Art* is a daily, flash publication printed about NRLA events and for NRLA readers. *We Need to Talk about Live Art* writers will respond to work during each day of the National Review, and publish it the day after. We are not affiliated with the National Review of Live Art, but we're here to start conversations and support the work shown.

You can find our publications every day, at the Tramway Arts Centre, from 1pm onwards. Today we're printing interviews with three Elevator artists, two of whom have work on today and one who is showing work tomorrow.

We want to hear from other people seeing the work at NRLA. Do you disagree with us? Have we missed something out? Fill out a comments card and leave it at the front desk of the Tramway, contact us online at [www.writingfromliveart.co.uk](http://www.writingfromliveart.co.uk), or meet us -- we'll announce some times once we get our heads round the programme!

### Elevator Interview – Caroline Smith

Caroline Smith's piece, **SPANK**, will be shown today in T2 Theatre, 20.00 – 20.30

#### Tell me a bit about the piece you're representing. What are you trying to do with it?

I'm performing **SPANK**. It follows the journeys of two women (played by me - one on screen, one live) as they reveal stories from public and private sources, set apart by two centuries. It investigates notions of 'faction' and what is filtered out historically, within a highly personal theme of trauma and the female body.

I guess I'm trying to stage something - states - that are within me. [Marina] Abramovic talks about staging fear and pain, or expressing externally what is unmentionable or abhorrent inside: there's definitely that going on. I also

am aiming to show the instability of truth and the complicity of people's actions/trauma concealed or partially visible in media or in public archives.

#### What does it mean for you for your work to be categorised as 'live art'?

I often call myself a 'writer/performer' - the label does what it says on the tin. I do think there are traditionally big distinctions between say theatre, live art, writing - the biggest is in terms of process and the way of making work as opposed to the space where that work is shown. The way that I come to writing for the page (cyber or hard copy) is very different to the way I write for performance: sometimes, more and more now, there's little in the way of a script, worked through drafts on the page; it's more playing with props, looking at archives,

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interviews or devising.

In the same way, I'm less interested in 'acting' and its mechanisms than I am in 'performing'. But the distinctions are all blurring, and those hybrids and the potential of that excites me. Working live to me is the most political space to be working in. So for my work to be within that category, is no bad thing - though I personally don't like categories. I write/perform/teach - these are the activities I'm involved with.

**How long have you been working on this piece? Did you create it for NRLA 08 or have you presented it before?**

Since 06. But a major difference with live art as opposed to making theatre and acting is that I can't do repetition. Rehearsing **SPANK** for the NRLA has been a matter of working through material and new/old ideas as opposed to getting it all practised and right. I bring what's going on with me into that particular showing of **SPANK**. It changes each time. I worked for two years with the same screen image - and that's weird, because, obviously the body, the hair and the face changes within a 12-16 month period. So we re-filmed. I performed the piece at the Albany Studios in London in December last year for an Intimacy live arts programme conceived by Goldsmiths and Laban. I worked intensively with director Susannah Hart, who's with Station House Opera and I was really excited about the direction she brought to **SPANK**. Real clarity and she visually pared it down. Fewer props, more meaning.

I am very interested in queer space/narrative - so for NRLA certain things are brought back in from its beginnings in 06 and some elements are re-interpreted. As you will see - recent events have

put me (temporarily) in a wheelchair. I made the decision to still perform at NRLA because I bring to the work what I'm going through: physically/emotionally. In that sense **SPANK** is always on-going; it's like a signature.

**What does it mean to you to be an 'Elevator Artist'?**

It's really brilliant and significant. I think the NRLA as a pressure point and barometer of things that are going on in live art is so important - it's internationally recognised and very well respected. Arts Council cuts have meant a lot of innovative spaces/organisations are under threat: Drill Hall/Queer Up North to name two. NRLA has to carry on with the platform.

Being an Elevator artist really means that I can perform the work, see back-to-back live work, get stimulated, get excited, get debating - and carry on and develop my own practice. It's a fantastic opportunity. I'm on crutches and the surgeons were a bit iffy about me going, so there will be no high kick dancing or twirling in the show (!) - but there was no way I wasn't going.

**Which artists are you planning to see while you're here?**

As many as I can see - and the painkillers allow! I'm excited particularly about Julia Bardsley. Really excited by her. Uninvited Guests, Clod Ensemble, certainly. Marcia Farquhar. But really - the idea of going and seeing back-to-back live art is unmissable.

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## Elevator Interview – Katherine Hymers

Katherine Hymers' piece, **You and Me and Nothing**, will be shown today in the Project Room, 17.00 – 22.30

### Tell me a bit about the piece you're representing. What are you trying to do with it?

I am showing **You and Me and Nothing** at the National Review of Live Art. It is a one to one piece, which is quiet and has a sense of intimacy about it. I don't want to talk too much about my ideas behind the work, because I want people to have an experience without me imposing my ideas upon them. It is a simple piece of work, and very much about the relationship between the person coming into contact with the work and myself. I am very much in the work, and the shared experience of the work essentially forms the work, even though someone coming into contact with it might have a very different experience to mine.

### What does it mean for you for your work to be categorised as 'live art'?

I think by having the work categorised as 'live art' there is recognition of the way in which I am working, the strategies that I adopt within my practice and the dialogue and critical framework that surround such strategies. **You and Me and Nothing** has the possibilities for me to react and respond to someone coming into contact with the work, therefore the work is constantly in process. **You and Me and Nothing** has experience and presence at its core, so although I may have ideas about the work prior to showing it, it is the responsive nature of the work that one might categorise as live.

### How long have you been working on this piece? Did you create it for NRLA 08 or have you presented it before?

I have not presented **You and Me and Nothing** before as a one to one piece. I did show a similar piece of work in London in May 2007, but I think by changing the format of how one comes into contact with the work the dynamic of the work changes significantly. I expect it will be a very different experience for me as an artist, as well as for anyone who sees the work.

### What does it mean to you to be an 'Elevator Artist'?

This is my first time at the National Review of Live Art, and as an emerging artist, it is a fantastic opportunity that offers me the space to show this work to an audience who have potentially not seen my work before. I'm being offered a platform through which to show my work, and potentially gain valuable critical feedback, so it is a way of pushing the work forward, continuing to develop my practice as an artist. It provides the context in which to take a risk. From what I've heard, the National Review of Live Art is a great place to see and talk about what work is going on, so I'm very much looking forward to being part of that environment.

### Which artists are you planning to see while you're here?

I don't think there are any I don't want to see. I think I am going to have to plan my time so I can make the most of everything that's going on. I have heard many things about many of the other artists, and some are new to me but I'd like to see Helena Hunter, Kim Simons, Julia Bardsley and Kris Verdonck among others.

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## Elevator Interview – Augusto Corrieri

Augusto Corrieri's piece, **Quartet (for Anna Akhmatova)**, will be shown tomorrow in the T2 Theatre, 16.10 – 16.40

### Tell me a bit about the piece you're presenting. What are you trying to do with it?

This is very much a theatre performance, or a performance about theatre, and spectacle. By that I mean that it is constructed so as to focus the spectator's attention on the conditions that underlie performance in general: what makes it possible, how it comes about. Because I am working with theatre as an age old institution, what makes performance possible in this case (and at the same time what constrains it) is the system of lights, curtains, of "on" and "off" spaces, the separation of stage and auditorium, etc: there are deeply problematic ways of seeing (the stage) which are still at the basis of performance today, and which I think say a lot about how we view and interact with the world in general.

### What does it mean for you for your work to be categorised as 'live art'?

I may be wrong, but I don't see live art as being a category in the same way that dance, theatre, cabaret, etc could be seen as categories. I think live art is more about a certain approach to performance work, which draws a lot on the 20th century avant-garde and performance art. I feel very close to this kind of work and its evolving tradition.

Otherwise, I think live art is a terribly ambiguous word, very misleading for both artists and the public: live art is not a "thing", it's rather an umbrella term for an approach... which needs to be defined each time, we can't just take for

granted what it means, once and for all.

### How long have you been working on this piece? Did you create it for NRLA 08 or have you presented it before?

This solo piece, entitled **Quartet (for Anna Akhmatova)**, began in early 2006, and was developed throughout the whole of that year; so it has very much had a life before being presented at NRLA 08... it's also constantly changing. In 2007 I made its sequel, **Quartet #2**: it is exactly the same as the first version, but it is performed by Donna Shilling, not by myself...

### What does it mean to you to be an 'Elevator Artist'?

I hope this is a chance for some people to connect to the work: people who may find some personal spark in there... this is really important for me, to know that there may be some people who are understanding the work, that it "makes sense" in some way, which perhaps needn't be wholly explained; it's also important to meet people who can articulate something about the work, perhaps through reference to other theoretical ideas... things I hadn't thought about.

### Which artists are you planning to see while you're here?

There are a few people, of a similar age to mine, that I am keen to see, like Search Party. Mostly though, looking at the programme I don't recognise any names... which is perhaps the best way to meet new work.

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