

Live Art in Scotland: Jason E. Bowman

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Jason E. Bowman (JB): I was raised on the Ayrshire coast in Scotland. I left there at seventeen to do a BA at what was then Crewe and Alsager College of Higher Education. We can maybe return to that, but I had been involved in amateur dramatics on the west coast of Scotland and was seeking a drama/theatre/performance degree. I was unsure what the distinctions between them were at that age, but I ended up at Crewe and Alsager, which was quite an experimental training under the directorship of Steve Purcell who later went on to be Dean at York St John. I share a genealogy with certain other artists of my generation like Phil Collins. Channel 4, [for both of us at least], was possibly one of the most important entry points for me. The advent of Channel 4 when you live in the type of environment that I was raised in, was just like, wow okay so there is all of this other stuff there that exists in the world and there are so many other ways of approaching things. Channel 4 at that point very early on was broadcasting lectures by Lacan very late at night. There were new forms of youth television that we had never seen before. Max Headroom was there and there was just this incredible sort of mashup of stuff and new forms of filmmaking and attention being paid, maybe more particularly, to dance on screen than performance. I think for me personally, that was a significant departure point. I then ended up at Crewe and Alsager in a combined study degree of drama and English but was taught there by some people you may think of as more formalist theatre makers like Tony Jones; Ian Brown, who was head of [the course] at that time there but [was seconded to the Cork

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Inquiry] and never returned; people like Rickki Tarascus, a theatre practitioner who was collaborating with Steve at that time; [Rivka] Ruben was there; Optik Performance [under the directorship of Barry Edwards] was partly based there; and Alsager Arts Centre was also on that circuit of touring theatre companies at that time. During that time, I remember seeing *Let the Water Run its Course* by Forced Entertainment, which was super early in their manifestation of work, probably show number three or something. I also saw work by feminist collectives like Monstrous Regiment, and work by the Good Company. I think I remember seeing Gloria there also, so Neil Bartlett and Annie Griffin. I might even have seen the 1984 company around that time. I was studying there from 1985–1988. That had a really deep influence as a theatre student, particularly one who is studying in an environment that is not a metropolitan city, though it is in proximity to Manchester. I think also within that framework, there was an understanding that there were kinships with programmes or courses in other institutions across the country whether that be Exeter, Dartington, Lancaster, other parts of Manchester. I think there was a pollination or an understanding of these kinships with other training programmes. Those manifested themselves in terms of personal contacts much later, through things like the National Review of Live Art platforms [across the UK organised by Nikki Milican et al.] So, there was a whole set of exposure [in my training] to a whole variety of theatre practices extending into what later became live art, but with way less consideration of fine art-based performance. It was very much visual theatre and post-dramatic theatre.

Stephen Greer (SG): Were you being asked, or required [laughs], to make performance during that degree training?

JB: Yes, absolutely, and that ranged from interpretation of texts, from acting classes to directing classes to devising classes. I think the devising class was called course three or something within the programme and that was very much managed by Steve who pushed towards what I guess we could loosely [term] visual theatre, so not necessarily text driven. We were taught performance skills, stage management skills, organisational skills, the whole gamut really. You weren't necessarily being trained as a performer. Lots of my fellow students were people who had possibly failed to get into drama schools and ended up doing theatre degrees instead, many of whom went on to do postgraduate acting training and lots

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of whom like me gravitated towards live art performance and then back through to fine art practices.

SG: So, this training which is maybe what would now be called training in becoming a theatre maker or performance maker in the broader sense. What brought you back to Glasgow? Was it back towards family or work?

JB: It certainly wasn't family. I graduated in 1988 and returned to Scotland in 1989 with four people that I'd studied with, with the intent to establish some form of performance company. Those included Julie Rogers who later went on to found Theatre Babel; a guy called Mike Hodgen who is now an actor based in Australia; a woman called Tina Kinsey who I don't really have any contact with anymore, but I believe is still in Glasgow and occasionally working with performance; and a woman called Allison Galbraith who I'm not in touch with but is a storyteller working in the Scottish tradition. I think we were conscious that you could produce performance, and new forms of performance as we understood it then, in regional cities and that you didn't necessarily have to gravitate to London. Of course, at that time in 1989, Glasgow was about to become European City of Culture and I think that was a key driving force within it, both because there was a possibility of funding, but also there was the possibility of exposure and for continued learning of what was happening in the discipline and medium itself. It was also small enough to hopefully produce communities of practice and secondly, cheap.

SG: I'm conscious that around that time there's a whole number of artist-led spaces, particularly galleries which are emerging or coming together. I'm trying to think which year Transmission opened in, that would have been 1987. Were you part of that ecology?

JB: Well, I was certainly a member of Transmission. I think I only ever showed work at Transmission itself maybe twice. For me as a graduate not from Glasgow School of Art, I was operating in that period in the late eighties and nineties initially as somebody who wasn't central to that narrative. There was quite a lot of drive both by artists and the art school itself to really embed itself in the production of a narrative and a narrative recreated or reproduced by things like the Generation exhibition (2014) as an initiative. I personally felt that there was a little bit of a barrier for people who had not studied at GSA even though I

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later went on to teach there quite a lot. I think there were other initiatives around at that time which were also relevant, such as Hutcheson Street Gallery, which was formally called 101, I think. It showed works which we now describe as having a performativity to them, they were within that framework, and there was also installation-based work. I was conscious of the Fringe Gallery in Castlemilk and had a relationship with it. Although I didn't produce any exhibitions there, I curated stuff and engaged with it. Cathy Wilkes – and I can't remember the time period for this, Stephen, sorry – was running a gallery called Wilkes Gallery out of her flat in Anderston in the Dalriada building. I remember encountering the first live performances that I saw by Sue Tompkins there. I remember very clearly seeing an amazing performance work by the Irish artist Heather Allen at Transmission departing from a Virginia Woolf text. I also remember seeing Wilkes performing a work with a moth in Transmission, but they were also coming from the tradition or discipline of performance making in a fine art tradition.

SG: Okay. You said you'd come to Glasgow with a few other people with the possibility of creating a company and starting to make your own work. Did that pan out, or did other opportunities present themselves when you arrived?

JB: It didn't really pan out. I think we worked together on two different projects. Julie Rogers and I worked on a project that was shown perhaps very strangely [at The Maclaurin Art Gallery] in Ayr and was commissioned by the guy who was directing at that time, who was called Michael. Julie and I worked on a durational installation for that space, and I think I made a work called *The Encyclopaedia of Owl Pellets* for the NRLA shortly after graduating, but that involved multiples of those people. Tina Kinsey was performing in it, and Michael Hodgen, and I was alongside some other people. Julie wasn't involved in it. I think that we realised after [the NRLA] that we had quite different things that we wanted to achieve. I think Julie was pretty committed by that point to working as a text interpreter, as an actor deriving from script as opposed to devised, collaborative work. I think some of us got quite fed up with being broke as well. We were all living together which produced some different tensions. I think even by 1990, the structure had collapsed there.

SG: That would've been the NRLA at the Third Eye as it was then.

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JB: Yes, probably.

SG: Do you have any strong memories? Do you remember the NRLA around that time?

JB: I remember various iterations of the NRLA and later actually Nikki asked me to invigilate a video show of NRLA documentation and I think I saw almost all documentation over the three weeks invigilating that show that existed at that time. I think 1990 might have been my first experience of the NRLA. I didn't experience it at Serpentine when it was there, and I didn't experience it at the Midland Group [in Nottingham] either, so I experienced the Glasgow iterations and some of the regional platforms. I think I made work for the Manchester platform. The Green Room would've been under the directorship of Bush Hartshorn, who I later went on to do work with and he commissioned new work from me in 1997 for an organisation that was then called de Beweeging, 'the movement', in Antwerp alongside one Palestinian artist and the rest were Belgian performers or dancemakers and Felix Ruckert, a German choreographer.

SG: Do you have an impression of the kind of work that was being presented there at that point? I've obviously got copies of the programmes and have spoken to other people who presented there, and one thing that has come up has been knowing that I think it was a platform discussion event that seemed to be dominated by discussion about practice or theatre tradition from a visual art, fine art tradition. I'm wary of applying that frame too heavily when I'm thinking about work, or indeed applying it at all, but was that something that was of concern?

JB: I think it genuinely was of concern. I think that in fairness to Nikki Milican, Nikki was absolutely willing to accept both of those areas and to put them into contact discursively with each other and their practitioners. I remember seeing work by people like Allison Inkpen which was an installation with pressure cookers and ice through to people like Alan [Maclean]'s production of Ratman in the Rain that I think was maybe coming from more of a theatre dynamic, through to inter-disciplinary collectives. I'm not sure if this is the same year, the Bow Gamelan Ensemble was really clearly made up of fine artists, but fine artists who were working in sound art etcetera. I think there were definitely conversations about that, and I think if I remember accurately, I remember quite a lot of conversations with

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Gillian Dyson around that time. Gillian [had studied] at the Slade and then had moved to Devon, and she was involved in a collective called Performance Southwest at that time which included herself, Tim Brennan, Sally Morgan, and Sally Tallant. I remember them being quite concerned with the fine art tradition around performance, so yes, it was a definite conversation that was running at that time.

SG: Maybe we'll come to talk about this. I've spent the last few days in the library tracking down, in the quite gloriously boring but essential materialist way, the changing structures of Scottish Arts Council panels. There's this moment where, as you may well know, there was an area called Combined Arts and then that disappears, and it becomes Creative Arts or Performing Arts. I think there is something really revealing about that structural change. But maybe before we get into that, I'm just thinking, not to stick to a linear timeline for the sake of it, but I'm also aware of that period of 1989–90, we've got things like the Garden Festival and I think the Festival of Plagiarism was 1989 or 1990, which was originating from Stewart Home.

JB: Sadly Isabel Vasseur, who was involved in the visual arts around the Garden Festival, died about two weeks ago. The Garden Festival had a set of people in residence. There was a theatre company called Theatre Raskolnikov, which was co-directed by two people including Laura Marney the Scottish fiction writer, and as far as I recall was in residence throughout the whole of the Garden Festival. There was also a Bristol-based outfit that did quite a lot of street-based performance. They're called the [Natural Theatre] Company, I think. They tour the world quite a lot with maybe five or six performers dressed in particular outfits. Anyway, I think there were other things happening. Like you said, the Festival of Plagiarism via Stewart Home, which had connectivities I guess to the early phases of Variant with Malcolm Dickson, which kind of had some quasi-anarchistic tendencies. I think that's the first time that I met Ken Gill from The Basement Group during the Festival of Plagiarism. Again, I think it was primarily within a visual art situation with a psycho-geographic framework. Winter School was quite active at that point, which was an experimental architecture platform that occasionally dealt with things like critical spatiality in performances, psycho-geographies at times. There was quite a wide discourse co-operating simultaneously given the scale of the city. I remember meeting the visual artist Janie Nicoll at the Dolphin Arts Centre where I then went on to do a very short course in 8mm

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filmmaking and met quite a few visual artists within that arena, although I remember Janie really clearly because our paths crossed a lot more. I think there were other projects like the Gorbals Arts Project which are often fundamentally overlooked, under the directorship at that time by a guy called Sam Knight maybe? I remember meeting Josefina Cupido the experimental drummer who was in residence in the Gorbals Arts Project. At that time the Gorbals Arts Project were also engaging with some live art activities, as was Giant Productions under the directorship of Phyllis Steele. I remember my first encounters with the work of Roland Miller were not within the NRLA, it was within the work that he was doing with young people via Giant Productions. I think there were quite a lot of different organisations and platforms across the city that were engaging with what you'd now refer to as live art.

SG: Where's your practice in that context? What's the kind of work you're making or moving to work?

JB: I'll need to fact check this.

SG: [Laughs].

JB: I think by 1991 I had become an arts educationalist for an organisation called Sense Scotland, which was a residential education centre called Overbridge for young deafblind people with additional disabilities. I started there as a shift worker in order to make some money and you could do night shifts which meant I could do other stuff during the day. It was there that I first met Cathy Wilkes who later I co-curated alongside Rachel Bradley in 2005 for the official representation of contemporary art from Scotland at the Venice Biennale. Cathy Wilkes was also working there as were a series of other artists, including Pierre Turton who is, as far I'm aware, now quite an influential arts therapist in Scotland. I then started to be much more exposed to questions of community arts practice and started to try and integrate some of our students. Tramway agreed to do a project with our students and an artist in residence who was a woman called Lizzie Coleman who was a Dartington graduate and therefore we knew quite a lot of the same people. She's now based in Frankfurt in Germany. We started to make what you could loosely call earth works in rubble that was then surrounding Tramway. I left Overbridge after maybe two years in

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that role and joined your department, or the MPhil in Media and Cultural Studies as it then was in The John Logie Baird Centre for Cultural Studies between the University of Glasgow and the University of Strathclyde, which brought me into contact with people including Dee Heddon and Jen Harvie who were students when I was there, and Leslie K. Hill was a student when I was there and we actually made work together for a few years. Whilst doing those studies I moved towards working more within a community art and disability-oriented way because what I had become interested in and am returning to in terms of research is what we may call social aesthetics and the facilitative and permissiveness of a social aesthetic as opposed to a very clear institutionally legitimised set of aesthetics. I was interested in sensory impairments and what that would mean aesthetically, but also in terms of presenteeism. That began to really influence what I was doing around that time. I was also working for Project Ability at that time. I remember showing quite early video work of mine in a Project Ability show and Nicola [White] who had moved from Tramway and was then curating at CCA asked me to reshoot for World AIDS Day at CCA. It was a very short, text-based video that was on a monitor on the ground. It was in the entrance area of CCA so there seemed to be this pollination between these spaces. I never for a moment imagined that Nicky went to see exhibitions at Project Ability, but she did. I think that her doing that allowed me to think that maybe that isolation, or whatever I had felt around access to more formal institutions within the city was more possible.

SG: Was it also around this period that you were starting to become involved as a teacher at GSA or was that later on? At what point did you come into contact with David Harding for example?

JB: I've never asked David about this, but David somehow got my contact details, I don't know who from because I wasn't particularly friends with anybody who was teaching in the Environmental Art department at that time, although David's son Ninian had been studying the same course as me as Crewe and Alsager. I got a phone call from David asking if I could come and do some teaching as a VT in GSA in that department. I did a lot of VT-ing work in that department for about ten years. I never had a full time or formal contract, but I was there maybe two, sometimes three or four times a year doing tutorials. It was David who taught me how to teach in a way. That's the thing that I would say about it. I was exposed to a lot of different forms of practices within the student body at GSA, meaning that it was

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possible to have a discursive notion of practice. I think in year two of the BA students had to navigate and negotiate a site and my own work had started to gravitate towards site-specificity which resulted in commissions with *Its Queer Up North* where I made an installation on the side of a building powered by light that was coming from a power station but on the canal that James Anderton had exposed men cruising with light from small boats. This moved into installation and site-specific work, which was also the case with the work that I did with Bush Hartshorn in Antwerp. I was still occasionally producing live pieces. They were mediated with other forms, so I did a performance around the death of Kurt Cobain at the ICA with a large projection of Kurt from MTV. I was going to say re-enact, but that's not really what I mean because I know that it's really complex. The Amherst address by JFK with the Zapruder film playing behind me for Hull Time Based Arts.

SG: It's interesting hearing the mention of the ICA there knowing that there were staff at what was then the CCA, and people were moving back and forth between those and other institutions; between the ICA and Hull Time Based Arts and the CCA and Third Eye.

JB: Yes, and Lancaster and Exeter. I think that was one of the extraordinary things really about that late-Thatcher era and its shadow after they got rid of her was this incredible infrastructure that existed that was able to commission and cross-pollinate. There were people in Nottingham, that was another hub. I remember being commissioned as the first artist in residence for Contemporary Archives which was a sub-species of the Now festival which had originally been under the direction of David Metcalfe and then later Andrew Caley Chetty, who I later went on to work with in other projects. There was an incredible sense of cross-pollination of people and infrastructure. Retrospectively, it was great as a young person and a developing practitioner and deeply pedagogical. This is one of the things that I always say to Nikki [Milican] that as far as I'm concerned, Nikki really provided a massive educational platform for performance makers in Scotland, incredible levels of access. I think being able to see things like the Steve Shill trilogy and to recognise that practice is durational in itself and how you could encounter this, how cultural producing is both supporting the new and sustaining the existing, and also allowing us to understand durationalities of a career. Incredible. I think she was less dedicated to talks, platforms, public programmes, the type of things that curatorially developed later. One of the things that I think exists at the crux of the debate that you were asking about previously about

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performance art versus live art is the difference, and I'm not so engaged in the literature anymore, between the concept of the cultural producer and the curator that sits within this dynamic. I don't think that's interrogated sufficiently. I think they're quite different forms of working. I think that I really became very aware through that body of work, and Mark Waddell later, about commissioning procedures. I've almost always only ever worked through commission and still I only work through commissioning. I don't make stuff otherwise; I don't do stuff otherwise. It's almost entirely commissions driven. I think that notion of commissioning new work really sits within that era of NRLA and understanding that those were possibilities.

SG: Where does something like the notion of an artist residency sit in that? Does that become a kind of vehicle for commissioning, or are we talking about a different kind of space for working?

JB: Okay, so when I left college, I wasn't particularly wedded to the apartment art scenario. I think that I had always been concerned to understand how what I might be doing would interface with societal concerns and challenges. I've never been somebody who is particularly interested in the residency as a notion of respite, but rather instead of restlessness with key questions like this concept that appears later via Lippard of parachuting in, which I don't think I can subscribe to, that everything has to be embedded in particular ways. I've done a significant number of residencies within commissions and quite often I would try and navigate the commission to be twofold: a residency and a commission of work. That was the case with both Hull Time Based Arts and with Contemporary Archives in Nottingham. Those were both bodies of work that came out of commissioned residencies and I've gone on to do that in other places too. I did that whilst interrogating the history of the docks in Antwerp in relationship to gentrification and the shifting of rural communities. I never for example did the Goat Island school, even though that sort of thing is amazing because I think that there was a truly international access in Glasgow around that time. Retrospectively of course, we can look at it from the prism of cosmopolitanism or transnationalism and think why would you have a season of work from Spain, but that body of work that Nikki put on of work from Spain was just like oh my god, I can't believe that I didn't know that any of this stuff was happening. To then find out from the artists within it that Spain had no true public funding structure, that its infrastructure itself was very

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regional in terms of municipalities. It was extraordinary to gain access to that stuff, as was the work that Mark Waddell did around Chicago Oh Chicago in understanding what happening in American politics at that time, or the things that Lois [Keidan] and Catherine [Ugwu] were doing at the ICA around Los Angeles. We were seeing way less work at that time from particular diasporic communities than we may see now. I think live art as the situation was incorporating artists from different diasporic backgrounds more than possibly institutional frameworks. I think there was an internationalism. I think that Glasgow is also understood to be engaging in politics that were shared between a Reagan and Thatcherite era. I remember seeing all of the NEA4 perform in Glasgow at the Mitchell Theatre, or at Third Eye Centre/CCA whichever it was at that time period. I definitely remember seeing Holly Hughes perform at the Mitchell Theatre.

SG: I think it was part of a touring show which was at the Mitchell as part of Mayfest. I think it was programmed as part of Mayfest.

JB: I think it isn't necessarily discussed that much that those types of things were being commissioned and shown within Mayfest. Di Robson who was one of the first directors of Mayfest is a really old friend of mine who lives round the corner. She was responsible for the development of Tramway around the Mahabharata projects as part of Mayfest. She had been the producer of Monstrous Regiment. I think there is a body of people maybe within this Glasgow Miracle project that are evicted from these types of narratives.

SG: I re-read a piece recently from 1997 by Adele Patrick talking about a tradition of remembering the achievements of men. She says in the exclusion of women, it's women artists of colour who have especially suffered from that tradition. It's been interesting to read that and think about its relationship to some of the policy stuff or position papers that came out of the early nineties, like Lois Keidan's work talking about what the landscape of live art could or should be and how live art might be a more expansive frame than performance art.

JB: Yes, I think that is so true. I'm old enough to remember the point where, as a man, to access the women's library you had to make a particular appointment to go there. It wasn't an exclusionary or secessionist space necessarily, but it was very carefully navigating itself as

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a space for women. There was definitely material held there that I wanted to access that wasn't available elsewhere and that they were actively collecting even then. That would've been 1991/92 and that was important to me. There were works by black practitioners being shown in Scotland that I think were really important. I remember clearly Nicky [White's] work with Maud Sulter. I remember Gran Fury coming, I remember Simon Watney being available to people in terms of queer sort of practices also in terms of marginalised people. I remember the advent of the women's drumming collective, [She Bang]. I think there was also a pollination with dance that I probably can't speak to that well necessarily, but I remember people like Ruby Worth being around who was also ex-Dartington, but I think by then was living firstly in Glasgow and then in Findhorn. Lindsay [...] I'll come back to that, Steve, but I remember him making work in Glasgow.

SG: Lindsay John, will it be?

JB: Yes, the work that he was doing around the fountain in the park around that time and the work that Dance Base was doing. Of course, New Moves was there. I remember seeing seasons of work from Canada and French Canada, Québécois art coming through Nikki's programme at that time too. Work that was coming out of Belgian choreographers. There was no sort of work that I was really aware of that wasn't diasporic coming from either African regions, the Levant, and I don't remember seeing much work coming from what we would now call the global south, even though I think the literature around those things was also just starting to build because when I was studying in 1985 I think I can remember things like Stefan Brecht's book on Robert Wilson just being published and it was the first kind of monographic publication that you could encounter for that work. The first publications on Pina Bausch were only available in German and I remember translating that publication as a student. I'd done German Higher. I remember the first publication coming out around that time on The Ontological Hysterical Theatre, so publishing was only really starting to take account of some of that stuff very early in performance studies, but also very early in the publication of queer theory. I think my access to queer theory really did take place within your department because there were lots of us in there. There was me, there was Dee, there was Leslie K. Hill who was coming from an American context, Jennifer Harvie was coming from a Canadian context, Christie Carson was in that department at that time completing her PhD which was looking at La Plage. There was a guy doing a PhD on

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Australian film who was also queer. Alastair [Cameron] was there at that time. I think there was a significant queer body of thinkers and practitioners. All of those people went on to produce work, well Jen went on to make theatre herself whilst being a performance theorist, Lesley too, myself, Dee less so. I think that's where that really began. Annette Kuhn was teaching there at that time and I remember doing classes on melodrama and film. Stuff was building around us, there was the Thatcher thing, the HIV and AIDS scenario, and significant homophobia, including within Scotland itself.

SG: I came to Scotland at the end of the nineties at the moment of the infamous bus campaign, Brian Souter, of which I still have quite vivid memories. The other sort of space that I'm conscious of in this ecology is the Arches and I don't know whether that was a space that you hung out in much, or saw work there? There was quite a different programme of work there maybe through that period than at Tramway or at the CCA.

JB: Yes, I did. Of course, Nikki also moved the NRLA to the Arches at one point, but yes, I do remember seeing experimental theatre at the Arches. I also think the Arches was very important in terms of club nights. What Gavin Butt later terms trash performance. The first time I ever saw Minty was at a club night within the Arches. I remember really partying quite hard with Pamela Sneed, the black American queer poet. It was maybe a little bit less on my radar than some of these other spaces, but I was moving in and out of Scotland all the time at that point. I was making work in lots of other spaces, so I think I was in Antwerp for four months, I was in Nottingham for six months, I think I was in Hull for three to four months. I was moving in and out of these other arenas and so I wasn't just in Scotland.

SG: It's interesting you should mention Pamela Sneed. Her name came up for me yesterday. That's probably why she was in Glasgow, it was for part of the season at I think it would've been Third Eye or maybe it was the early years at CCA, and it was called the Bad Girls season.

JB: I remember that. Leslie K. Hill and I had a residency during Bad Girls, I think in the Glasgow iteration, because there was a US version, a London version and then the version in Scotland. I think I was the only man included in the Bad Girls programme overall, but Leslie and I made a performance together within the Bad Girls performance season.

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SG: I'm curious about your sense of work being made elsewhere in Scotland other than let's say Glasgow and Edinburgh and maybe Dundee. I been thinking a lot more about Deveron Arts up in Aberdeenshire, which is maybe a later period. You've just told me you spent a lot of time not working in Scotland in that period so maybe it's a redundant question, but did you have a sense of the expanded Scottish ecology?

JB: I think I had a definite awareness of, for example, the community of Findhorn partly through Ruby, but also partly through a woman called Trisha Stakes who was the cook at Overbridge centre which I mentioned previously. Trisha had a play performed at The Royal Court Theatre around the same time as Andrea Dunbar and Trisha and her husband were also partly involved in the Findhorn community. I think that was my point of entry. Donna Rutherford had also returned from Nottingham to Scotland, and I think Donna was quite wide searching across Scotland for stuff that wasn't just Glasgow-centric, but I think I was, if I'm honest, quite Glasgow-centric. I think my consciousness was maybe more around the development of site-specific art in Scotland as opposed to performance, including work that was happening in the Highlands and islands.

SG: I'm conscious that when we set up this conversation originally where you told me about the period where you'd worked most intensively in Scotland, but now obviously you've come back and worked in Scotland and in Glasgow in more recent years. Maybe just to wrap up, what's your sense of coming back and doing projects more recently? What's your sense of how the landscape has changed? Maybe that's a whole other conversation, but I'm just thinking about how some of the institutions that we've been talking about are still very present and active albeit in different forms, while others have undergone quite radical changes in their curatorial or their programming practices for lots of different reasons.

JB: Yes, I think there's a variety of things that I've engaged with in Scotland over the years since I left. I continued to develop a curatorial project in Castlemilk for quite a number of years after I had already moved out of Scotland. I undertook the Scottish Arts Council Amsterdam residency in 1998–99 and then went on straight afterwards to a yearlong residency with David Metcalfe [Associates or Forma Arts and Media] in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and then left from there to here, so I've never been at a Scottish residence since pre-millennium. I went back for a short time between Amsterdam and Newcastle. I've engaged

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with a variety of things since then. I curated a first European career survey of the work of Yvonne Rainer for Tramway in 2010, I think. It was an extraordinary experience. I had been following curatorially the work of Clare Jackson at a distance because I thought she was doing some amazing stuff. I knew Sarah Munro because I had previously shown twice at Collective in Edinburgh, including a project I did for over a year with young homeless people in Glasgow and did a show of works in collaboration with them and that came out of my relationship with the ex-director of Project Ability, Kathleen [O'Neill]. I think this is another thing that is significantly overlooked, Kathleen mounted a very large exhibition on interaction and art in curatorial collaboration with Richard Layzell at the McLellan Galleries, including work by myself, Nicola Atkinson Griffith, as she then was, recently returned from Los Angeles and was developing what we might think of as new public art. There was quite a lot of performativity around that particular exhibition. As far as I understand, Kathleen is an arts officer somewhere elsewhere in rural Scotland these days. Obviously, I curated with Rachel Bradley the official representation from Scotland at the Venice Biennale in 2005. I contributed on a few occasions to the School of Civic Imagination at the CCA later with Viviana Checcia and then more recently a commission as you know with the Gallery of Modern Art in Scotland with Queer Times School. There are a couple of other things that maybe are worth mentioning that my commission, *I Swear This Body Will Not Be My Witness* (Parts I and II), originally commissioned by the ICA in London in 1997, was remounted, or parts of it were remounted, by Institut Francais d'Écosse in Edinburgh. Parts of the exhibition transferred to them in late-97/98. The work in Institut Français d'Écosse at that time is quite overlooked in this narrative. They were funding quite a lot of activities in Scotland. The Fruitmarket in Edinburgh had quite a significant relationship with Institut Français d'Écosse in its Edinburgh iteration. I've returned to Scotland at points to teach or give keynote lectures at GSA. I taught at the Scottish Conservatoire where I did projects with students on two occasions; one based in Castlemilk and another project where I looked at disability politics with students and co-produced a live work and a video work as a puppet show based on the life of Helen Keller and [the playscript of] *The Miracle Worker*. The project included people like Ian Nulty and Gillian Lees, who were students at the Conservatoire at that time. That was really under the invitation of David Richmond who was teaching there at that time.

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SG: I'm interested in the place that community art or public art has in relationship to a history of live art. I'm conscious that there is a little bit of a study of live art which is about socially engaged practice, but it feels like there has been an omission of a certain body of community arts work and I'm really struggling to trace at what point there seems to have been a split in practice. I found this one moment in reading something about the Arts Council of Great Britain as it then was when they had a committee which was looking at work that didn't fit under other categories and they tended to look at stuff which was either performance art, or what they call community art. After a while that committee broke up and the performance art was sent to be dealt with by the fine art department and community art got sent somewhere else. That separation for me seems very revealing of a certain narrative at that moment in the eighties and nineties. I don't know if that chimes with your experience.

JB: You said Arts Council England?

SG: This was Arts Council Great Britain. It was a decision by them, but one I think got refracted through what Scotland or other parts of the UK were doing.

JB: Okay. My understanding of this type of narrative is that lots of us were involved in various phases of community art. I first met Lucy Byatt at Project Ability who is now director at Hospitalfield in Aberdeen. Lucy was an artist at that point as opposed to an arts manager and she was there. Karen Henderson the sculptor was there, A. L. Kennedy was very active within Project Ability as a writer, so there were particular organisations. I also worked with Artlink in Edinburgh. I think a possible key into this is to speak to people who were arts officers in Glasgow at that time because if I recollect accurately, almost every neighbourhood in Glasgow had some form of arts officer and those arts officers were supporting community arts development within the area, but community arts was also engaging with other types of services whether that be health, youth work etcetera. When we first arrived in Glasgow in 1989 Alison, Mike and I were living in Lenzie so we were outside of the city, and one of the first things we did was as drama workers with youths. I remember taking a lot of the stuff that we had learned from visual theatre practice into youth work settings at that time. I think we did it for six or nine months in Kirkintilloch with youth groups there. I think the Gorbals Arts Project was very important, and I think it's

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massively written out of the history of the city. There were people who were working in incarceration settings. People like Ross Maine and Steven Healy maybe were working at Lennox Castle Hospital. I know from an exhibition at Street Level, I can't remember the artist's name, but I remember seeing images of performance in photographic images from a psychiatric hospital in Scotland. The narrative as far as I remember it in terms of disability arts within Sense Scotland, because Morven Gregor also worked there, was that deafblind people in Scotland only really began to gain a legal right to education in the 1980s. The development of arts practice around sensory impairments was a whole new area. Of course, it had been operating within schools for deaf and blind people to some degree, but the sense of a community arts practice, by which I mean the cultural democratisation of access to production through facilitative acts was very ideologically particular. It was ideologically particular in that I think that we can suggest that it was an ethos, but an ethos that was understood within those frameworks to also be part of what has recently been defined within community arts historiography as a movement. That would include for example, the work of the Craigmillar [Festival Society] in Edinburgh which I think is really important to that historic framework. I think that those things were also taking place in Clydebank and Easterhouse. I think that at points those were also interfacing with Trotsky dynamics and anarchist organisations that were in those post-industrial housing complexes that had been built there. The majority of those housing complexes that had been built around Glasgow at that time were built without infrastructure. I remember Nicola Atkinson Griffith also developing curatorial projects within the Pearce Institute in Govan around that time informed by her experience of developing new public art. I think there was an infrastructure but that the infrastructure is possibly sitting within other forms of social services in terms of community arts in Scotland, or community arts overall. Edinburgh tape-slide library was a significant project. There was a history of tape-slide work in Glasgow in what later became Glasgow Media Centre, there had been film, video workshop previously and maybe for that type of thing it might be worth speaking to somebody like Ann Vance or Paula Larkin, who also worked at Variant for a time but was also involved in film and video. Ann and Paula were really engaged with the question of the role that film might play within human rights.

SG: That's really helpful.

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JB: The work that Mark Waddell did at the CCA was also important because he was beginning to incorporate writers in ways that I don't think some of the other programmes did. Chris Carrell was obviously very engaged with questions of literature during his directorship as was the Third Eye Centre, but I think Mark began to support emerging novelists, experimental writers and provided a platform for that.