

Disability Arts, Outsider Art, art, artists and art lovers, organisations and venues.

Issue 41



Cover by Lorna Wilson

Welcome

Autumn is
An artist who uses
An oak leaf on which
To paint a masterpiece

William Allen Ward

Summer is over. And what a summer of events it has been. This issue reviews Wiltshire Creative's Lift Off! We also looks back on UNLIMITED, the Arts Commissioning Programme, held at the Southbank Centre at the beginning of September. Sensing Helen, The Brushstrokes Art Group, Sue Austin's Creating the Spectacle and Write On are also in the spotlight.

- Guest Editor Lorna Wilson

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Write On

We welcomed new members Rosie and Robina to the group in September. I can confirm that the group is buzzing with new writing ideas, friendships and gales of laughter.

Meeting in Sarum College has certainly given me a new lease of life as workshop facilitator who suffers from depression, anxiety and stress in large dollops. We've had a fantastic summer of writing and I always feel warmly welcomed and morally supported by the staff at the college. As we feel so comfortable there, and the building is fully accessible to wheelchair users, we've decided to have a festive winter Christmas lunch together in the College restaurant on 4 December after the morning writing session.

Help with Hearing Equipment

On the odd occasion the room isn't available, we've met in the Cathedral Cafe which is great, if not a tad noisy for those with and without hearing difficulties. I've been researching hearing devices for use in the workshops, and will report back when I've tested them out. In the meantime if anyone has any suggestions for user friendly hearing equipment suitable for a small group of about 12 people, please contact me, I'd love to hear from you. The enormous range online is mind boggling.

Funding

As always the F word raises it's ugly capitalist head sooner or later, and now is the time we need to start finding funding so that the group and LinkUpArts can continue into 2019 and beyond, and provide more hearing, and other equipment, to make workshops accessible to more people. We will be applying to the Arts Council but any suggestions as to where we can apply for matched funding for a proposed three year writing and art project would be wonderful.

To keep us going until then, your donations would be greatly appreciated, however small. Please make cheques made out to LinkUpArts, and send to Gini, Chair, LinUpArts, c/o Salisbury Arts Centre, Bedwin Street, Salisbury SP1 3UT

By Angela Street

Sensing Helen: Research & Workshops

We catch up with Tam Gilbert for an update on the Sensing Helen project who talks about her work with young people and her research into Elizabeth Groves and Sophia Ridout, two young women from Victorian Dorset.

Sensing Helen is now complete! We have conducted and delivered our research, compiled an Education Resource Pack for young people and shared our film at three locations across Dorset. The film was well received by audience and can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3V5gJY1M7So>.

We came across Sophia Ridout and Elizabeth Groves who attended Bristol School of Industry for the Blind in the 1850s and 1860s respectively. Both came from female-led families with strong work ethics. There is no doubt that both women had extremely difficult lives – both were eventually ‘given up-’ by their families and died alone in institutions (Elizabeth in the Dorset County Asylum aged 46 and Sophia at 77, after spending her final twenty years in the Union Workhouse).



Left: Tam dressed as Sophia Ridout in white mop cap and apron

We find Sophia in 1851, age 9, living in Gotts Corner, Sturminster Newton with her mother, grandmother, aunts and her younger sister Ann (Sadly, her father passed away when she was small). Sophia studied at Bristol School of Industry (also known as Bristol Asylum) for 7 years,

returning to her family in Sturminster Newton at the age of 17, where she worked as a Knitter and later, by the age of 39, as a Glover, like her mother before her.

Over a three month period, we delivered Creative Drama and Research workshops to young people from Victoria Education Centre and a group of Home Educated pupils in school and at the Priest’s House Museum in Wimborne. As we had more information about what life would have been like for visually impaired people at Bristol School of Industry and Sophia’s journey seemed a more positive story than Elizabeth’s, we decided this would be a good one for our young people to explore. The workshops looked at Helen Keller’s communication systems and gave the chance to ‘meet

Sophia' through role play. We took in research which included Resource Packs with censuses, photos and documents about Bristol School of Industry, along with a Loans Box from Priest's House and costumes we had borrowed from Wimborne Community Theatre.

Right: Group workshop looking at items from Priest's House Museum Loans Box.



After working separately with both groups, we brought them together for a joint drama workshop at Victoria focusing on communication today. We asked all the young people to prepare a short introduction to themselves using their chosen form of communication. The workshops were a great opportunity for the students to share their experiences and for me to learn the different styles of education systems preferred by each group. It was wonderful that Victoria had themed their curriculum around Sensing Helen, along with researching the history of the school.

We sparked the Arts Awards students' interest in Helen Keller, who followed up by producing sound recordings including [Helen Keller: Fun Facts](#) and an audio [exploration of our artefacts](#).

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Another strand to the project has been sharing our research with adult groups and collecting oral histories for Dorset History Centre from visually impaired women today. The Centre is keen to add to their records and document how access has changed in Dorset over the last Century. Although members of Dorset Blind Association loved hearing about the project and looking at artefacts (some of which reminded them of their childhood), many seemed loath to share their personal experiences, often saying they just got on with their lives, and had nothing interesting to contribute.

Whilst many of the women who were happy to delve into their past, had on the whole only recently 'lost' their sight and so could not answer all of my questions about their early life, some individuals outside of the group did come forward to share their experiences as growing up visually impaired. Our interviewees overwhelmingly reported good experiences and attitudes from the general public, and it seems that for many, despite the cuts, Dorset seems a helpful place in which to live!

By Tam Gilbert

Photography by Alastair Nisbet

Brushstrokes gets Bags of Help

Lorna Wilson introduced her Art Group Brushstrokes, who meet at Salisbury's The Bourne Centre.

The Art Group meets on the first of every month at The Bourne Centre (Tesco), Southampton Road, Salisbury. It has just been awarded £1,000 by the Tesco Bags of Help Award Scheme and is intending to put this to very good use.

The aims of Brushstrokes are to promote the health and well being of the members, be it carers, service users or members of the public, using creative projects. To provide a monthly 'club' at which people can relax and/ or be involved with their own/ group projects. Also to facilitate the ability for carers to take some recreational time and to shop during the group's meetings.



Left: Photograph by Lorna Wilson

The 2018 project will be aimed at all members of the public, to promote the group's identity and show how challenged individuals can use 2D art and 3D mediums to create beautiful and thought inspiring works.

The Award will go towards two main aims in 2018/2019:

1) Producing silk banners, promoting Salisbury as a creative hub, especially when it comes to disabled people. The banners are also intended to promote the group and encourage membership, by drawing attention to a display of the groups' work.

2) Producing a series of 2D studies and clay sculptures for display and potential sale (all proceeds going to furthering the groups' work) at three different venues:

- Five Rivers Leisure Centre in the Autumn of 2018.
- Salisbury Arts Centre in the Autumn of 2018.
- The 2019 Salisbury Arts Festival.

Brushstrokes meets at The Bourne Centre (Tesco), Southampton Road, Salisbury at 10am on the first Friday of every month. All ages and abilities are welcome. For further information contact Lorna Wilson on brushstrokessalisburyartgroup@gmail.com

By Lorna Wilson

Creating the Spectacle!

Our thanks to Disability Arts Online for allowing us to share their recent event. In association with Adelaide Film Festival (ADL Film Fest) and Midlands Art Centre (MAC), Disability Arts Online hosted the livestream of 'Creating the Spectacle!' – a live art performance by acclaimed multimedia, performance and installation artist and LUA Committee Member Sue Austin at 10:30am, on 18th and 19th October.

Originally commissioned by Unlimited as part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, Austin's now iconic 'Creating the Spectacle!' made its Southern Hemisphere premiere, exclusively as part of the ADL Film Fest. Since it was first performed, the piece has shot to international acclaim with over 400 million people estimated to have seen the work and Austin being invited to speak at NASA, TEDMED, and TEDxWomen.

Left: Sue Austin 'Creating the Spectacle!' copyright Sue Austin/
www.wearefreewheeling.org.uk
Photograph by Norman Lomax



Dramatic and unexpected juxtapositions attach new and powerful narratives to meanings attached to the wheelchair. Austin's art opens up debate around societal attitudes to disability through the presentation of empowered and empowering images.

Austin took her wheelchair underwater to perform a stunningly beautiful work that was filmed and projected poolside. Award-winning Restless Dance Theatre accompanied Austin with a performance as part of this unique live art event.

A livestream of the event was played at MAC Birmingham as part of their 'Creating the Spectacle!' Immersed in 360 exhibition programme which runs until 25 November. The livestream was also hosted on Disability Arts Online.

Over an extended period of time, Austin's practice has operated as a vehicle to open up a thinking space around the significance of the wheelchair as an object. This is being used as a metaphor to raise questions about the value of diversity in society.

Austin aims to find dramatic and powerful ways to re-position disability and Disability Arts as the 'Hidden Secret'. She argues that this 'secret', if explored, valued and then shared, can act to heal the divisions created in the social psyche by cultural dichotomies that define 'disability' as 'other'.

To watch the livestream from the event follow this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=214&v=6d7BTI7UNBI
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=214&v=6d7BTI7UNBI

Review: Lift Off!

Our thanks to The Ocelot for allowing us to include an edited version from their 2 September 2018's article.

Wiltshire Creative's Lift Off! weekend, celebrating the arts in Salisbury, attracted estimated crowds of more than 13,000 residents and visitors into the city over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Four days of free events and activities marked the start of the first season of programming from Wiltshire Creative, the new organisation that combines Salisbury Arts Centre, Salisbury Playhouse and Salisbury International Arts Festival. On Friday evening live music from bands Just Us and The Deloreons in The Close was followed by a spectacular fireworks display, set to music, over the cathedral. Across the weekend there were free theatre performances in and around the Playhouse performed by community groups, a Family Fiesta of craft activities at Salisbury Arts Centre and a visual arts trail between the two venues.



Bank Holiday Monday saw a programme of theatre, dance and circus in Market Square, The Maltings and Old George Mall as well as the moving Boots on the Ground, a promenade performance inspired by stories from World War I that audiences could participate in. There were also two performances of Howard

Moody's evocative opera *Push*, sung by the Salisbury Festival Chorus with La Folia Orchestra in a packed St Thomas's Church. Wiltshire Creative Artistic Director Gareth Machin said: "Lift Off! was a free party for everyone, a celebration of this creative city and our new organisation as we open the doors for our first season of work."

Wiltshire Creative's new season of programming starts in September with a wide range of theatre, music, comedy and film. Full details of the season are available at www.wiltshirecreative.co.uk or by picking up a brochure from Salisbury Arts Centre or Salisbury Playhouse.



By Claire Dukes
Photography by Adrian Harris

Review: UNLIMITED 2018

The Festival

Our thanks to Disability Arts Online for kind permission to include edited versions of the following reviews:

The Inner Vision Orchestra perform the epic Antardrishti



Inner Vision Orchestra, led by Baluji Shrivastav, presented *Antardrishti* inspired by the Hindu philosophical epic the Bhagavad Gita in the Queen Elizabeth Hall on Friday 7th September, commissioned by Unlimited (delivered by Shape and Artsadmin).

Left: Baluji Shrivastav plays the dilruba.
Photo © Simon Richardson

Antardrishti is a Sanskrit word for inner vision or divine sight. It may come as a surprise to those familiar with the work of gifted multi-instrumentalist and blind sitarist Baluji Shrivastav that in this concert he explores the concept using the mediums of music, dance and film.

The idea conveyed by the Inner Vision Orchestra with an endearing lack of irony has up to now been that optical sight is not of primary importance. As the publicity email announced "What is worse than having no sight? Having no vision!"

This new work, according to the accompanying notes "examines the complex interplay between light and darkness, what sight and sightlessness are, and the power of music to transport you to inner vision".

Baluji and six Inner Vision Orchestra members, together with four Indian guest musicians were teamed up with four classical Indian dancers. There was a mostly spoken (though occasionally sung) text, elegantly performed by award-winning blind storyteller Giles Abbott – mostly in English but with elements of Sanskrit. That stated, references to Rumi, William Blake and Isaac Newton suggested a theology that was less Hindu than interfaith.

They were also teamed up with electronic duo Addictive TV (Graham Daniels and Mark Vidler), known for their work as samplers and remixers. For *Antardrishti* the duo shot and then sampled footage shot in India such as temple bells, market scenes and dancing feet.

Physically taken to private locations such as the beach, an alleyway or onto a roof, the musicians and singers were encouraged by Addictive TV to improvise by themselves – and then snippets of this new work was filmed, looped and placed alongside other new recordings in order to create an aural collage.

This, then, was in some ways a far cry from Baluji's' previous performance at the 2016 Unlimited festival when he performed a delightful 'East meets West' concert with viola player Takashi Kikuchi. What was on display this time around felt far more ambitious, more experimental and less intimate, and it must be said, considerably more visual.

Baluji first worked with Addictive TV through their Orchestra of Samples project. He is one of over 200 musicians in 30 countries throughout the world whom the duo have filmed in order to create "a supergroup of artists that have never met". The excellent resultant album features Baluji in a track "Sitar Hero". Having performed in a number of Addictive TV's shows, Baluji asked them to collaborate on *Antardrishti*. Following from the performance in London, *Antardrishti* transferred to Norwich, Delhi and Mumbai.

By Stephen Portlock

Dan Daw & Aby Watson Double Bill

Dan Daw's *On One Condition* and Aby Watson's *-ish* were part of a double bill of contemporary dance exploring identity and disability on 9 September, as part of Southbank Centre's Unlimited Festival.

Dan Daw's 'On One Condition'

Right: Dan Daw - *On One Condition*.
Photograph by Graham Adey

On the final day of Southbank's Unlimited festival, Artists Dan Daw and Aby Watson hosted an incredible double bill, each giving a performance that eclipsed their abilities to hold an audience, but also highlighted for me what the festival is truly about. Celebrating Difference. A pertinent finish.



Dan Daw came on first performing his piece *On One Condition*. He appears in his underwear. His stage is minimal. He walks through a white door frame into a house made up of outlines. Thick white lines mark out the exterior and interior walls, whilst thinner lines denote the bed, sink and television set.

A few pieces of white furniture; a chair and fold up table sit to one side and his clothes – comprised of white shirt, black jeans and white shoes – sit to the other. He walks to the pile of clothing and begins putting on his socks. This takes him a while and is evidently difficult. No sounds accompany this introduction. It is incredibly effective in setting the tension.

It's a good opener for Daw because his work deals with just that, the raw relationship between the audience and a performer – the discomfort many people feel when confronted with a body that is not like their own. Over the next hour or so, Daw meanders around his bare house, sharing stories of growing up in Australia, his relationship with his grandfather and the way he was treated at school.

A lot of his stories were difficult to hear, and it was evident that even the funnier ones weren't always responded to accordingly. The audience found it difficult to laugh at a disabled performer, and that I think is what Dan's trying to explore.

It's a consciousness-raising work. It acknowledges that many people will find it difficult to apply the same expectations to a disabled performer as they do to a non-disabled performer, but instead of using that to cultivate alienation, Daw looks for solutions.

He lets the audience see him in a stark encounter. He's not hiding from you. His house presents him fully and over time, through that encounter – with honesty and a pinch of humour – you become familiar with his physical difference.



Aby Watson's '-ish'

Left: Aby Watson- *-Ish*

Where Daw's work rewards through its relative discomfort, Watson's choreographic piece '-ish' draws you in with a loving sense of intimacy. The result of an Unlimited Emerging Commission, *-ish* explores 'the murky territory that dyspraxia inhabits

between the simple dichotomy of able/disabled.'

While dyspraxia is the focus here, Watson, with BSL Interpreter Amy Cheskin, playfully explores how we treat difference through the polarities we ascribe to it (steady/wobbly, able/unable, rising/falling).

Watson opens *-ish* with several balloons strapped to her head. She moves to the centre and begins inflating herself. She inflates and inflates until there is no room left and boom, the air blows out and she throws herself about making that squelching noise of a balloon losing all its air. It's great to watch, suggesting both the hidden pressure that builds up over having a 'murky' disability and the inevitable chaos that can be created. With a soundtrack of everything from big band jazz to quiet ambience, Watson and Cheskin take us through several routines that look at those various dichotomies. Cheskin's BSL was wonderfully theatrical.

Halfway through the show, Watson asked a member of the audience for some assistance in blowing up a white space hopper using a foot pump. Whilst the audience member pumped, Watson would go through a choreographed routine.

Yet the woman, in what she called a 'dyspraxic moment,' accidentally slipped up and was unable to fully pressurise the ball. Seeing this, Watson broke from her routine, stopped the music and offered some assistance. It took them a while to get things going. It made for a beautiful moment that opened up some pretty interesting questions.

Yes, it affected the flow of the piece, but could this slip up instead be a celebration of the very chaos that this double bill is about? Our efforts might not always go as planned, but that is okay. It's not something we should get angry at. Instead, we should explore and cultivate it.

It being the last night of Southbank's Unlimited Festival, we ended on a real high. Both works for me were about recognition and acceptance, something that can feel alien when it comes to disability. But what Daw and Watson proved is that by stripping back on what we expect from these kinds of performances, we can learn to see this art, and maybe even the world outside the theatre, in a new and challenging way.

By James Zatka-Haas

Unlimited: The Symposium

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Please follow links at the end of the article to see live streaming of events.**

Unlimited: The Symposium was a disabled-led, two-day discussion event, held at the Unicorn Theatre on 4 and 5 September 2018. It was aimed at

both a national and international audience across the cultural sector, with people attending in or engaging in the discussion and debate online. The Symposium took place in the lead up to Southbank Centre's Unlimited Festival 2018 – Wednesday 5 until Sunday 9 September 2018.

Why did we do it?

Unlimited has three aims – to commission high quality art by extraordinary disabled artists, to embed disabled artists in the cultural sector and ultimately to transform the perception of disability.

We can't do this alone. Artists, organisations, producers, programmers, curators, critics, funders and others across all art forms need to be a part of the conversation around disability arts and to discuss the issues, solutions and possibilities with disabled people themselves.

What did we discuss?

The topics we discussed were chosen by our audiences. Each topic in the Symposium's four main sessions – Art, Equality, Attitude and Future – was [voted for on Twitter](#):

Art: How can disabled artists change the 'mainstream' arts sector?

Equality: Disability, intersectional identities and the arts

Attitude: Why is it taking so long? Can we speed up change? Will we ever get there?

Future: Does new technology enable or create more barriers?

Each session began with provocations from a diverse range of speakers, followed by discussion and debate in chaired breakout spaces and animated by artists-in-residence and other creative responses around the building.

Who was it for?

The Symposium was aimed at those in the cultural sector who want to engage with different perspectives and to plan for real change. Global audiences watched the live-stream online and joined the discussion on social media.

Get involved

Watch the recorded sessions and read the discussion round-ups:

[Watch the recorded ART session](#)

[Watch the recorded EQUALITY session](#)

[Watch the recorded ATTITUDE session](#)

[Watch the recorded FUTURE session](#)

[Sign up to our newsletter](#) and add your voice to the debate with [@weareunltd](#) [#UnltdSymposium](#) on Twitter.

<https://weareunlimited.org.uk/symposium/>

At the heart of LinkUpArts:



NEWSLETTER FORMATS

You can receive this Newsletter in print form, it is available in bigger type and an audio cassette. You can also download it from salisburyartscentre.co.uk -> Resident Companies -> LinkUpArts



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LinkUpArts and Salisbury Arts Centre work together for the benefit of both organisations. LUA advises and consults with Salisbury Arts Centre on its Disability Arts programming and helps to promote the events. Salisbury Arts Centre gives LUA its home and provides marketing and administrative support. LUA is a strategic creative partner in Salisbury Arts Centre's Creative Family.

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