

**"Their open-access Study Room provides a gateway into a provocative, challenging yet wonder-full world"**

The Independent's 50 Best Museums and Galleries (October 2010)

## **Live Art Development Agency Study Room Testimonials from Study Room users:**

The Live Art Development Agency's Study Room is one of the most (if not \*the\* most) important archives in the UK on experimental theatre, performance and Live Art. It has one of the best specialist book collections on these subjects and a fantastic array of DVDs stretching back over 40 years of artists' innovative practices. It is a major and indispensable resource for artists, scholars, students and journalists and furnishes a vital space for research, considered curatorial decisions, writing and contemplation.

**Adrian Heathfield, Professor of Performance and Visual Culture  
Roehampton University, London**

I have been collaborating with Brazilian film maker Marcia Derriak over recent months, and on her recent visit to London having the chance to use the Live Art Development Agency's Study Room was invaluable. It gave us a rich layered world of meanings, practices and methods in which to weave our own webs. We were able to contextualise still fragile and emerging ideas on expressions of sexuality through body in performance. I was able to tap into works that had formed the bedrock of my practice years ago, such as *Certain Fragments* by Tim Etchells, and I found the video documentation of a La Ribot performance that had profoundly affected me as a young student. There is such a wealth of information there that I'm always left wanting to go deeper and be more methodical. Andrew [Mitchelson, Agency Projects Manager] gave us carefully considered listening and feedback time and we were able to invite practitioners to a Study Room evening to elaborate, critique and develop our ideas with us.

**Lottie Childs, Artist**

The Study Room opened the doors of my perception when I had lost my way and it is my sanctuary and gateway to alternative arts practice. I felt safe there knowing that all the material was donated by artists and was therefore artist led. A place where I could lead my own research, with access to Lois Keidan [Agency Director] who would signpost me to different artistic practices relevant to my research at a time when I really needed it. It was my rite of passage from theatre to visual art and performance, intimacy, autobiography, archeology; it bridged the gap between art and academia, finally inspiring me to read aural and visual culture at Goldsmiths. In the Study Room, I have been engulfed for hours by the array of work and hands-on documentation I could not access in

any academic institution. For me, this space is central to the mission of the Live Art Development Agency and at the heart of its strategy. A rare space created by artists for artists. I have recommended this space to many others trying to understand contemporary art and performance, and those other factions trying to create archives for marginalised work. I have brought many others to this space, and will continue to do so. Perhaps the only space in the arts where I feel safe, welcome and truly at home.

**Shabnam Shabazi, Artist**

The Live Art Development Agency's Study Room is a unique and vital resource for anyone carrying out research into Live Art. It provides access to a large collection of performance documentation that is unavailable elsewhere, which makes it the first port of call for any student or researcher looking for information about artists working in this field. It also has a wide and regularly updated range of international publications that exceeds any collection in the country, including the British Library. Having access to this resource is integral to my ongoing work as a writer about, on or with Live Art and performance.

**Mary Paterson, Writer**

The Study Room facilities have given me many different levels of engagement, from pure information-based research to artistic projects to career focused development. I really like the wide range of resources, they have been very valuable to my experience and understanding of Live Art, its history and its international influences. I have used the Study Room facility since 2003 when I was an undergraduate student, and have continued to use the resources for my professional works. The Study Room has given me a space to focus on my research and has inspired me to create ambitious and challenging projects that I want to do.

**Li E Chen, Artist and Producer**

The Study Room is one of the most valuable resources in the country for me as a writer, performance maker, and teacher in Higher Education. Every publication which is essential to the field is available here, in one place, as well as a vast array of resources which can be found nowhere else. It's my first port of call when beginning any research project, and a place that I keep coming back to again and again.

**Theron Schmidt, Writer, Artist and Teacher**

The Live Art Development Agency's Study Room has been for me the most wonderful resource for my research on issues of performance documentation. The library holds the most important bibliographical titles for anyone studying the history and the varied approaches to Live Art (happenings, performance art, non-dramatic theatre, performative installations etc), from the Sixties on. Although the emphasis is on Anglo-American artists working in the last two decades, I have particularly appreciated the openness to non-Anglophone experiences, to the

transcultural dimension of contemporary Live Art. Such openness is undoubtedly due to the international network of contacts entertained by the Live Art Development Agency. While working in the Study Room I have been able to meet and exchange conversations with artists and scholars from all over the world. The library is only half of the story though. For many users, the Study Room is especially useful for the wealth of VHS, CD and DVD documentation, which makes up for the ephemeral nature of many Live Art events with a no less creative (and often theoretical) reflection on what can be witnessed and passed on to future generations. Having seen so many young students using the Study Room resources as a lively introduction to Live Art and Performance Studies (not just students at all levels, I may add, but also visiting artists, curators, programmers, scholars...), I can only say that the Study Room is a crucial hub around which the cultural work of the Live Art Development Agency opens out and accumulates traces of its multiple encounters. I wish it could continue expanding, even though the intimacy of the setting is an integral part of its fascination, a kind of very personal one-to-one relationship with the historical material glimmering from the screen.

**Marco Pustianaz, Lecturer, Università del Piemonte Orientale  
Vercelli, Italy**

I have used the Study Room for many years in many different ways: as an artist getting to grips with my own practice, as a member of a group convening a discussion, as a company member undertaking research for a new project (to name but a few ways!). It is without doubt an amazing resource. What is particularly great about the room is that if an artist's name comes up in discussion it's immediately possible to find something about them, perhaps watching a DVD or looking at some writing about them - this just isn't possible in most other libraries/resource rooms as they aren't specialist enough. On a personal level, I also find that the Study Room situates my practice, gives it a context, proves to me that what I do is part of a long lineage of other practitioners - this is invaluable on days when I feel confused about what I am doing.

**Sheila Ghelani, Artist**

I have been taking groups of students to the Study Room as part of my core teaching at De Montfort University, Drama Studies department, in Leicester, since about 2006. I take both groups from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year who are undertaking modules titled Devising and Independent Performance Practice on their BA degree, respectively. I have literally brought hundreds of students over the years.

I write these visits into my teaching because of the invaluable access to material. This includes DVDs/Videos, as well as the publications. The Study Room has material unavailable elsewhere such as rare recordings of performances by Marina Abramovic and Ulay and early works by Bobby Baker. There is also material that is by artists un-documented through mainstream channels, such as artists concerned with issues of race and sexuality... artists neglected by institutions and the authorial voice of

academia. The reactions from the students is immense. Many of them haven't ever been to London before, let alone to an environment where contemporary practice is at the heart of an organisation, and I see the options for their own participation into practice immediately opened up. Often students go on to book the Study Room independently of me for either further investigations into practice for their performance development, or for research for their dissertations. This is a one-off environment made even more rich because it is not all on the internet/ a database, encouraging approaches to research through actually being somewhere, looking, handling and discovering the vast extent of the diversity of contemporary performance.

**Helena Goldwater, Teacher and Artist**

Thank you all for the time, care and commitment with which you facilitated my visit in November 2009, with 13 of my undergraduates. I developed a new seminar course last year, pitched just below Masters level at my very bright 3rd year students, titled "Performing the Body". As the title suggests, the course was intended to focus quite tightly and rigorously on recent "uses" of the body in performance and on the body "as" performance.

Our visit to you provided a platform and context for the students, and an insight into the professional field they were encountering, many of them for the first time. Lois Keidan's introduction reverberated deeply for them (and still does) - quotations from her talk appeared in almost every essay written for the end of the class. She really got them thinking about the public face of the work, and the critical engagement it enacts. The students loved the space of the Live Art Development Agency itself, the way they felt genuinely invited into it and respected (rather than spoken down to or treated like pesky young people, which unfortunately can too often be the case...) and the way they were then trusted in the space to sit with the materials and find their way through them. It was an inspiring afternoon for us all.

The visit remained one of the things they all mentioned in their student evaluations at the end of the class as one of the best things about the course. But what's even more significant to me is that it moved them on in their journey as thinker-researchers in a lasting way, and it gave them this terrific sense of the political and cultural work of Live Art - it kind of de-sensationalised it for them, and they began to really get it at a much deeper level. As a result, I know several of them came back to spend more time there studying independently (for their essays but also just out of interest) and their seminar presentations and essays for this class were the highest cohort of essays I've marked from 3rd years in 10 years! The visit to the Live Art Development Agency was a really important marker, a catalysing moment for them that set them spinning at a different intensity. I think such days can remain so significant for us when we are young and in such an open and formative period. I know it has made some of them rethink the direction they now take their work in and at least one of them is considering a Masters in order to pursue this kind of work more intensively.

**Dr. Sara Jane Bailes, Senior Lecturer in Theatre and Performance  
University of Sussex**