

# Disability & New Artistic Models

A Study Room Guide on Live Art and Disability



Compiled & written by Aaron Williamson  
2010



Live Art  
Development  
Agency

## LADA Study Room Guides

As part of the continuous development of the Study Room we regularly commission artists and thinkers to write personal Study Room Guides on specific themes.

The idea is to help navigate Study Room users through the resource, enable them to experience the materials in a new way and highlight materials that they may not have otherwise come across.

All Study Room Guides are available to view in our Study Room, or can be viewed and/or downloaded directly from their Study Room catalogue entry.

Please note that materials in the Study Room are continually being acquired and updated. For details of related titles acquired since the publication of this Guide search the online Study Room catalogue with relevant keywords and use the advance search function to further search by category and date.

**Disability And New Artistic Models**  
**A Study Room Guide to Live Art and Disability**  
**By Aaron Williamson**  
**July 2010**

In May 2010 the Live Art Development Agency commissioned artist Aaron Williamson to research and write a Study Room Guide on Live Art and Disability drawing on the many publications and films the Agency houses that represent and engage with this issue, whilst also recommending new titles for the Agency to acquire.

The Guide reflects the ways in which the practices of artists who work with Live Art have engaged with, represented, and problematicised issues of disability in innovative and radical ways, and the ways in which Live Art has been, and continues to be, a potent platform for artists to explore notions of physicality, identity and representation.

**This Guide is available in large print on request.**

**About Aaron Williamson:**

My work as an artist is inspired by my experience of becoming deaf and by a politicised, yet humorous sensibility towards disability. Mostly, I devise unique performances and videos that are created on-site immediately prior to their public presentation. These consider the situation I encounter and represent, in part, my response to it. A constant theme is to challenge and subvert the traditional/ romantic valorisation of social 'outsiderness' and thus my performances and videos portray myself in the guise of sham-shamans, pretend-primitives, hoax-hermits, fake feral children, charlatan saints and dubious monsters. With these figures I explore and devise humorous or absurd actions that reference and pay homage to the 'classic' period of performance art in the 1960s and 70s.

In 2004 I was a 3-Year AHRC Fellow in the Creative and Performing Arts at the Birmingham City University, (2004 - 07). The AHRC Fellowship's Final Report was assessed through peer review and awarded a grade of 'Outstanding'. I have also been awarded several other fellowships and residencies including the Helen Chadwick Fellowship in Rome, 2001 - 02; a resident artist at Civitella Raniera Centre in Italy, and was a recipient of Live Art Development Agency's 'One to One' bursary.

A book, *Aaron Williamson: Performances, Videos, Collaborations* was published by Live Art Development Agency/ Kingston University in September 2008 [P1160].

In 1997 I completed a Doctoral thesis on performance, writing and bodily identity, entitled *Physiques of Inscription* at the University of Sussex, UK. Other publications include *Hearing Things* (London: Bookworks, 2001) and I co-edited *Art Becomes You* a collection of essays on art and subjectivity (Article Press, 2007).

In addition to my solo work I am Artistic Director of the collective of disability artists, 15mm Films – [www.15mmfilms.com](http://www.15mmfilms.com) . I'm a member of the international performance artists collective 'The Wolf in the Winter'. With Katherine Araniello I collaborate on video making and public performances as the 'The Disabled Avant-Garde' [www.the-disabled-avant-garde.com/](http://www.the-disabled-avant-garde.com/)

In November 2008 I won the 'New Media Artist of the Year' award sponsored by FACT, Liverpool and DaDa Festival. I was a Cocheme Fellow at Byam Shaw School of Art, Central St Martin's, University of London (Sept 08 – May 09). I was awarded the Adam Reynolds Memorial Bursary for 2010 at Spike Island, Bristol. A book arising from the residency will appear later in 2010. A retrospective of video works *The Bell-Clapper and Bestiary* was exhibited at Spike Island, Bristol May – June 2010.

## **DISABILITY AND NEW ARTISTIC MODELS**

**Aaron Williamson, June 2010**

### **Introduction**

Whereas the political content of much disability art is usually challenging to a mainstream audience, too often the 'artistic model' – the formal and conceptual structure – is not. In selecting work from the Live Art Development Agency's Study Room to respond to, I have chosen to seek out:

'work that explores new artistic models'  
'new representations of ideas'  
'new strategies for intervening in the public sphere'\*

Just as I am passionate about the political claims of disabled people I am also a keen advocate of artistic innovation and experiment. And so my selections for this Study Room Guide were chosen for emphasising conceptual strategy over a display of skill/talent, and for questioning the staging of art beyond the static performer-audience structure of cabaret and theatre.

I have discovered a cache of exciting and innovative work in the Study Room and I hope that, where my selections might be contentious, they can facilitate wider debate and responses. Each of the selections engage critically with the parameters of art-making and are 'responsive to contexts, sites and audiences'\* rather than assuming familiar models and methods. As these works prove, there is no intrinsic reason why disability art that takes a critical, innovative engagement conflicts with either the provision of access or with political content.

\* These asterisked phrases are lifted from the Live Art Development Agency's webpage 'About Us'.

A Note on Disability:

Contemporary disability politics broadly identifies three 'models' of ideology and representation and these have intrinsically informed my selection for the Guide:

#### 1. The Medical Model

Emphasises physical impairment and sees disability as something that can be alleviated or corrected through medical intervention or the development of aids or 'cures'. Integral to the medical model is the

perception that disabled/impaired people are 'tragic' and 'deserve pity'. Discredited by the politicised disability movement, the medical model is still a prevalent perception in mainstream society, largely through its reproduction in the mass media.

## 2. The Social Model

The Social Model of disability proposes that individuals are 'disabled by' society; that physical and cultural barriers to social inclusion rather than physical impairment constitute the disabling factor. A central tenet in disability politics, the social model demands access to all the workings of society by disabled people. Barriers may not only be physical but can also be taken to imply the stereotyping, discrimination and stigmatisation of disability.

## 3. The Affirmative Model

A recently articulated and burgeoning model proposing that the individual's life has not been debilitated but that their experience of disability is intrinsic and accepted by them. That is, through weighing the claims of 'gain' over 'loss', the affirmative model proposes that disability/impairment can be an aspect of identity and experience that – all things considered – the individual would not wish to be different.

**Bobby Baker: *Kitchen Show*' (D0956)**

**+ *Redeeming Features of Everyday Life*' (P1051 – pp 164 - 70)**  
(1991)

With hindsight, all of Bobby Baker's performance work makes a convincingly consistent and assured *oeuvre* right from her days at art school in the early 1970s to her 'mature' work from *Kitchen Show*' (1991) on. Since that piece, Baker has become a critic of the mental health system and battles against its discrimination and stigmatisation of individuals. Occasionally, she has graphically turned stereotypical perceptions of mental health around: in 2000 for example riding around London on the back of flat-bed truck during Mental Health Week hollering at passing members of the public to 'pull yourself together' (the title of the performance), to 'cheer up' or to 'get a grip' - all no doubt exhortations drawn from the kind of useless blandishments to which she'd been herself subjected.

Before 'going public' however, Baker's art always *had* worked closely with what the mental health system might objectify as 'pathological' or 'unreasonable' behaviour - but chose to do so in the one place it was unlikely to be considered all that unusual: in performance art. There, one is professionally afforded a platform to explore what normative types might deem 'obsessive' or 'neurotic' behaviour for which (all too recently) people have been locked away. (I remember a friend's mother who was forcibly sectioned in the 1980s for being a serial back garden crockery-smasher - but without arts funding).

It's worth watching any/all of the 9 DVD series of Bobby Baker's work housed in the Study Room but I've selected *Kitchen Show* for particular recommendation in this Guide. Undoubtedly a key work in which all her previous concerns seem to have melded, *Kitchen Show* (both the performance-to-camera, and the live version) were conducted *in situ* in her big kitchen (in London, Baker's own), which added an extra frisson of voyeurism and intimacy that her work has often thrived on. As she said of this piece, it arose from the *eureka* realisation that she might 'perform kitchen tasks as if they are the work of a genius'. Thus *Kitchen Show* sees Baker creating a unique fusion between the feminism of say Martha Rosler ('Semiotics of the Kitchen', 1975) and the heroic certainties of Jackson Pollock, (an acknowledged influence whom Baker both critiques and reveres in her later works *Drawing On A Mother's Experience* (1988) and *Spitting Mad*, 1996).

For me, *Kitchen Show* demonstrates how - far from being 'pathological' - Baker's actions are representative of the rituals and departures from

socially constrained rectitude that surely most people feel the need to perform/invent some times, even if only in isolation? It is impossible to ignore the familiar, political analysis of Baker's 'mad housewife' persona, (alone and turned feral at home all day perhaps, while the hubby and kids are out at work and school). Yet I also read this piece as belonging to a tradition of joyous lyrical expression that might include say, Gene Kelly 'Singing in the Rain' or Charlie Chaplin arriving home at 'One a.m.' But whereas Baker's work also belongs to an established formal tradition of performance, it is additionally, explicitly, influenced by her experience of the type of behaviour that is stigmatised, made 'other' and categorised as 'mad' by a normative, objectified standard of health.

It is this fragile membrane between what is deemed socially acceptable behaviour and the inner urge to transgress such limits that most – perhaps all people – experience, which makes Baker's work so powerful. Whereas many artists have engaged with performance art in order to exhibit their need to objectify or even step out of 'daily life', Bobby Baker does so with an expertise and artistic mandate that is informed by her own experience and identity as a woman disabled by society's treatment and perceptions of her.

**Tony Heaton: *Shaken Not Stirred*  
(P1458 Newspaper/ magazine clippings)**



Diorama Arts Centre, London, 1992

This was a protest performance staged at a press conference designed to register disabled people's opposition to ITV's charity Telethon. There were three ITV Telethons: in 1988, 1990 and 1992 each taking over the entire network for more than 24 hours and raising many millions of pounds through phoned-in credit card donations. By the time of the 1992 Telethon an umbrella organisation 'Block Telethon' had been formed by over eighty disability groups. The main thrust of the protest was that disabled people need social rights rather than charity. More specifically though, there was anger at the televisual device of what the protestors dubbed 'show-us-your-stumps voyeurism': the more pathetic and needy that disabled individuals were portrayed, the greater the public donations.

In the build up to the 1992 Telethon, the Press had sensed the strength of disabled people's anger and the possibility of (newsworthy) unrest. Hence the 'Block Telethon' Press Conference organised by the London Disability Arts Forum at the Diorama was well-attended by TV and newspaper journalists.

In the centre of the conference room was Tony Heaton's sculpture *Shaken Not Stirred* consisting in a pyramid formed from 1,683 charity collecting cans (1). The performance was a brief, shock-intervention into the conference as Heaton swiftly entered the room in his wheelchair carrying a prosthetic false-leg wearing a 'bovver boot'. Swinging the 'leg' overhead he flung it into the pyramid to send the cans crashing to the ground before immediately leaving the room again.

In an article published after the event ('Versus' magazine, Jan- April 1994), Heaton elaborates upon the piece's form, outlining that its geometric design of a pyramid was intended to echo the hierarchical structures of (non-disabled led) charities. Further, the title *Shaken Not Stirred* reflects the essentially superficial act of assuaging one's guilt/sense of superiority, by 'giving' to disabled people through charity appeals rather than through social justice and rights. Heaton asserts that the typical couch-potato Telethoner isn't stirred to any meaningful action even if s/he is 'shaken' by the supposedly harrowing images of begging and drooling crips.

A short film of Heaton's performance was shown on Channel 4 and photographs of it were published in The Observer (July 12<sup>th</sup> 1992). Around 2000 protestors circled the LWT building on the South Bank

whilst the 1992 telethon was underway and a few people infiltrated the studio to shout slogans ('Rights Not Charity', 'Piss On Pity' etc) at the show's compere, Michael Aspel.

The 1992 ITV Telethon was the last one.

**Note:**

(1) An interesting, ironic aside is that, having located a manufacturer of disability collecting cans, Heaton was not able to persuade the firm to charitably donate so many of them to his sculpture. It was only through the provision of an Arts Council grant (i.e. legitimate or 'meretricious' social funding) that he was able to purchase the cans - with no charitable discount - for £2,000.

**Alan McLean/Tony Mustoe: *Knocking* (D1428)**  
(1998)

*Knocking* is a performance-to-camera film (7 minutes in length) that represents the live work that McLean and Mustoe were presenting throughout the 1990s (see footage of the 1995 ICA performance *Snoozyland*, in the study room [V0054 and V0173]).

McLean and Mustoe formed, around 1990, a staple 'tit-for-tat' slapstick duo with the added twist of disability. In an interview (for *Digitising Disability* [P0145]), they refer to a performance 'language' existing between them informed by the fact that 'we both have difficulty communicating'; and that this language evolved between 'two disabled men working together when class, biology and culture divide them'.

Far removed from the kids-glove playfulness of children's TV slapstick, MacLean and Mustoe were unafraid to push their work into the darker performance art territory explored by say, The Kipper Kids and Paul McCarthy/ Mike Kelly. Their 'drama' is one of thwarting, cajoling, bossing around; staging combatitively rumbunctious battles of one-upmanship that explore decidedly adult themes in a knowing way. As Tony White said of their performance *My Body Did Everything I Asked It* [D1251], in *Performance Magazine* (March, 1991): '(this was) an emotionally and intellectually demanding work which tackles issues of power, sexuality, representation and disability head on'.

*Knocking*, then, contains scenes that may be uncomfortable to a mainstream audience who expect 'disability art' to be anodyne and/or sentimental in depicting supposedly tragic circumstances. Instead, the physically aggressive, quickly-paced scenes show Mustoe spanking and 'riding' McLean; staging a shouty dialogue of 'oompah, oompah, stick it up your jumper!'; McLean bound in a stocks wearing a chicken mask while Mustoe pelts him with fruit; water fights and the classic DIY-assembly/sabotage of a table.

Each of the actions explore domestic materials in a lo-tech set (there is a wonky projection of a forest to the back wall in places), and some of the film is speeded up to emphasise the work's roots in slapstick (i.e. silent comedy). But it is the gloriously libidinal physical intimacy of the duo's battles – rolling around on the floor at one point – that is the key image that McLean and Mustoe seemed keen to develop and impart, and which, evidently, was a personally liberating aspect of their collaboration as disability artists.

**Philip Ryder: Solo Works (V0425)**  
(1998 – 2001)

This is a selection of very short films or documentary clips of performances. In the supporting notes, Ryder describes how several of the films and performances were informed and 'the artist's sense of powerlessness and pain when using his hands'. Several of the works then, have a 'hands-free' component built into the form of the work.

For example, the performance piece *Spit* is described as 'a fight without the use of hands' as Ryder and an opponent confront each other in a locker room to spit combatively into each others faces. In a further twist, Ryder is shown 'fighting' a woman, which emphasises that the action of competitively spitting at someone challenges traditional/male displays of physical offence.

*Acid Piano* sees Ryder perform a unique piano solo 'that doesn't require the use of hands for key pressing' (accompanying notes). Dressed in industrial protective clothing he proceeds to pour acid on the instrument's exposed strings which, as they snap, ring out individual notes to create a musical composition of sorts. (Not covered on this compilation was a performance I saw in Hackney around 2002 that involved crushing a piano in the back of a rubbish truck - the huge 'claw' contraption standing in for the pianist's hands - and recording the resulting sounds and musical notes).

Two further works incorporate entropy or erosion more literally. *Rock*, is a distressed film: the footage shows a rock being thrown into a river and indeed the physical Super 8 film itself was sunk into a river for two weeks before being recovered, the artist noting that this period is 'the average time it takes for a drowned body to resurface'. In a similar use of process, in *Train*, Ryder depicts himself in the familiar silent movie scenario of being tied to railway tracks and struggling for release before a train comes along. After shooting, the original 16mm film was physically laid out along a railway track and left for a freight train to run over it. The resulting distressed film was then re-photographed and the soundtrack of screeching wagon wheels added.

This selection of short films, (and the performances they represent) then, explore the artistic formal possibilities of depicting pain and physical alteration in original and unique ways.

**Juliet Robson: 'Norman/ Shopping' (V0725)**

Video/ performance – 24 minutes (2000)

This video consists in the documentary footage of two performances being interspersed. The 'ground' footage is of the performance installation *Norman* at Loughborough University's Gallery in 2000. In this, Robson visited her own gallery installation to manoeuvre herself (out of chair) around the marked-out space while a 'generative' diagram graphic projected onto a screen at the end of the room. Robson wears a costume reminiscent of a medical institution's pyjamas but with the trousers extending a long way past her feet. This amplifies her movement as she uses one hand to drag herself forward and the other to then pull her legs behind her. The soundtrack is mostly white noise that is seemingly generated alongside the projected graphic diagrams.

Interspersed into this footage is a film of Robson using the same method of movement as in the Gallery but in a public shopping centre. As she pulls herself along the floor, the camera follows her progress to catch the public's responses. A series of episodes, candidly filmed to appear voyeuristic, sees Robson buying a greeting card, trying on a pair of high-heels in a shoe shop, and drinking a cup of coffee in a burger café – all whilst remaining on the ground. Members of the public's reactions to Robson vary from concern to disdain – some people offer to help or carry her, whereas others stare or pointedly attempt to avoid her. Whereas the shop assistant at the greetings card shop helpfully takes Robson's money at the door and fetches her change, the shoe shop assistant is less friendly, her face expressing the opinion that Robson's purchase of a pair of high-heeled shoes would be an absurd waste. In contrast, the assistant in the burger café appears to be unable to do too much: fussing and fetching while Robson drinks and smokes at her feet.

As the film switches backwards and forwards between the gallery performance and the shopping centre excursion, the viewer develops a sense of the internal responses and feelings, perhaps turmoil, behind Robson's deliberately inexpressive appearance in the public performance.

**15mm Films: The Electricians (V0606)**  
2003 – 13 minutes video.

*The Electricians* was the first '15mm Film' in 2003 and featured Laurence Harvey, Juliet Robson, Caro Parker, Simon Startin and Brian Catling. I wrote, directed and acted in the film and it was shot by Philip Ryder. Whereas *The Electricians* is an edited film, everyone involved in its making was from a performance background and it features a central sequence of devised solo performances to camera.

*The Electricians* is a transgressive, delirious panto-film that parodies medical science narratives around disability and impairment. Further, in its low-budget take on the costume drama can be felt the influence of disability-relevant films such as 'Freaks' and 'Frankenstein'.

It is set in the 18th Century at the Gothic Sanatorium of a Physician and his apprentice, Harvey. Their experiments with generating and harnessing electricity have led them to speculate that they can 'repair' disabled people. The film opens as the Physician is experimenting on himself. He is electrocuted and dies, his last request being for Harvey to release his human guinea pigs - the Electricians - and let them take over the asylum.

Released, the Electricians swarm to the Generator, since they are desperately addicted to electricity. Harvey cranks up the Generator to give the Electricians their fix, after which, recharged, they conduct a raucous party, raising toasts to other Electricians such as Luigi Galvani and Benjamin Franklin. A storm breaks out overhead and Harvey lowers a chain from the ceiling for the group to cling to in a circle. Lightning runs down the chain and dramatically electrifies them, scattering them to the floor in a heap.

The final scene pays homage to the orgiastic 'arthouse' films of Jack Smith such as *Flaming Creatures* (1961), as the Electricians, prostrate on the ground, bask in the afterglow of the storm and their electrocution. Lightbulbs grow from various body parts as the camera roams around them, the bulbs flickering on and off as they sigh and twitch with satiation.

**'Point of View': Compilation DVD (D0229)**  
(2004)

A documentary film directed by Gitta Gsell that includes interviews and live footage of five dancers and performance artists from Germany, Belgium, England, Austria and Holland who, according to the blurb on the DVD case, 'explore the vulnerable body as an aesthetic figure on stage in dance performances as well as in daily life'.

In making this selection from the materials in the Live Art Development Agency's Study Room it was impossible not to note that contemporary dance is perhaps the most common artform for disability art. Personally I find this problematic since the aestheticisation of athletic or gymnastic movement performed by idealised bodies (i.e. strong and fit) is indubitably a major objective of dance as an artform.

However – this DVD contains footage of two very interesting artists:

1. **Rika Esser:** excerpt from *Le Jardin* + interview.

This contribution appears to be an excerpt from a film *Le Jardin* in which Esser appears as a nightclub singer and dancer, although from the interview with her it appears that the performance was devised by Esser herself rather than by the director. As a person of small stature Esser begins her act by climbing atop a prostate male on stage and singing leeringly in a punk manner, jumping up and down and stamping on the man's face in an exuberant manner. A second stage piece shows Esser arriving on stage in a holdall carried by a male assistant, who then holds her aloft as, dressed in a tutu, she mimics the leaps and pirouettes of ballet dancing. Esser talks engagingly in the interview about her use of parody as a form of critiquing (able-bodied) dance.

2. **Raimund Hoghe** – dance rehearsal to camera and interview.

Judging by another tape in the Study Room (V0572), Hoghe appears to be rehearsing some of the material from his dance piece *Throwing the Body into the Fight*. This consists in a sequence of choreographed moves that have a slowed ritualistic aspect, verging upon semaphore in places. It's notable that Hoghe has developed a movement language that is uniquely identifiable with him rather than attempting to follow a mainstream dance aesthetic. Again, there is something trance-like and deliberative in his appearance that recalls task-based ritualised performance art as much as dance. If Hoghe sometimes talks (in the accompanying interview) in a way that recalls the universalist positions of the European avant-garde - he worked for many years with Pina Bausch - then he is also concerned to particularise his ideas by developing a movement language and use of objects that relate specifically to his own physical form. He says that whereas most

people may not want to have his body he is not seeking pity and that one purpose of his performances is to incorporate his physical shape in the work in ways that assert: 'it is what it is'.

**The Disabled Avant-Garde: 'Amazing Art' and 'Damaged Dance'  
(D1301)  
2008 and 2009**



'The Disabled Avant-Garde' (aka 'DAG') is a satirical arts organisation formed by myself and Katherine Araniello. Our concern is to create contemporary art (video and performance) that is informed by the social model of disability. That is, the Disabled Avant-Garde's work is an intervention into society's perceptions and expectations of disabled people. Thus, DAG deliberately create confusion or inspire debate through humorously distorting or subverting the traditional 'medical model' stereotypes of disability (that defines disabled people by their impairments). Our work fits the category of 'crip humour', being both pitch-black and self-knowing.

These two films are fictional 'mockumentaries' constructed around a pair of actual public performances: *Amazing Art* for London's Art Car Boot Fair in 2008, and *Damaged Dance* for the Lighthouse, Wolverhampton in 2009.

#### DAMAGED DANCE (7.25 mins)

Ever wondered why disabled people are often employed for things they are entirely unsuited? The para-olympics, 'stand up' comedy, crafts art, and, above all, contemporary dance. Wince-along as the Disabled Avant-Garde, newly ensconced in their lush new studio, meet the world-renowned 'able-bodied' choreographer Madame Commander to devise a dance piece to launch a new public fountain in Wolverhampton. Share the Madame's horror as she realises that one of her dancers is 'wheelchair bound' and the other as deaf as the proverbial lamppost he seems to have bumped into.

This tightly constructed film builds to a crescendo when, in broad-daylight on a cobble-stoned plaza, the DAG - draped in silver foil - cut a bunch of hot moves as the appalled single-figures audience titters in discomfort. A satire on the body-aesthetics of contemporary dance, *Damaged Dance* also depicts (perhaps for the first time) the oft-discussed 'disability ghetto' created by tick-box arts funding.

#### AMAZING ART (6.30 mins)

Despite being appallingly disadvantaged by their tragic circumstances, the Disabled Avant-Garde have developed their artistic skills to such a pitch that they are able to sell their 'amazing art' at fashionable art fairs for decent prices. Follow the DAG to their 'art therapy' drawing and pottery classes and see how 'ready made jam' was invented! Marvel as the punters flock to the DAG's stall in Hoxton, loading themselves high with purchases of 'limited edition' artworks and of course, pausing to stroke the DAG's little doggie! All the money was in

a good cause – to fund an ongoing process of art therapy for the artists themselves!

A satire on the aesthetics of commercial art and the low expectations of disabled people as conceptualist art-makers, *Amazing Art* is a sly mockumentary complete with 'patronising' voiceover commentary (by Penny Pepper).

## **Two Performances by Katherine Araniello (D1427)**

### **1. 'Terminal Services' (with Jessica Voorsanger)**

(2009)

This was a live performance at the Tate Britain commissioned by Beaconsfield Contemporary Art. Araniello portrayed a smart air-hostess while Jessica Voorsanger accompanied her in fancy dress alternating between portraying 'Francis Bacon' and 'Henry Moore'. Araniello would clear the way in the crowded Duveen Galleries, driving her chair through the crowd and shouting through an amplifier: 'Make way for the famous artist Henry Moore/ Francis Bacon'.

Voorsanger would offer to sketch portraits of people in lipstick, communicating to them through whispering to Araniello, who as well as passing on Voorsanger's messages would enquire as to the member's of the crowd's experience of Tate Britain as if they were disabled:

'There is a disco, but it will probably be overcrowded but I can try to make room for you if you want to go.'

'There is a private party going on in the Millbank Studio, unfortunately it doesn't have facilities to accommodate people like you.'

'We have First Aid here – that security guard over there will show you where it is.'

'Please can you move over a bit to make room for this gentleman so that he can see the film. Thank you very much.'

## **2. Vital Statistics – New & Improved!**

(2009)

Performed as part of an evening of feminist re-discovery and new work organised by The Women's Art Library/Make and Feminist Review at Tate Modern, Araniello's re-enactment of Martha Rosler's *Vital Statistics* (1977) highlighted the arbitrariness of the standards by which we judge ourselves and one another. Martha Rosler's *Vital Statistics* depicted women being measured by assistants wearing clinical garb but wasn't solely about measuring up physically: it was also about conforming in terms of life choices and mental attitude. More specifically, it was about women feeling the need to fulfil certain roles as determined by patriarchal western society. According to Rosler's monologue, women have become masochists in their attempts to conform to society's expectations. Her narration also states that the men who invented the standardisation of physique and the tests to judge and measure the body were trying to prove their own

race's/gender's superiority. In this sense the measurements are arbitrary.

Araniello addresses this performance work – deemed a feminist classic – by adding a disability twist. As she states in relation to this work:

'I find the standards by which disabled people are judged when they go into the public realm to have no relation to who they actually are'.

Following Rosler's work then, Araniello gives the notion of statistically measuring people against a standard an extra dimension by placing herself in the role of the clinician and a blow-up doll (presumably an expression of male idealism) as the object of measurement. Her stated objective was to update and to create a farcical, uproarious re-enactment of *Vital Statistics* informed by contemporary disability black humour whilst incorporating the original feminist critique of patrilinear standardisation.

## **Full list of materials on Live Art and Disability held in Live Art Development Agency Study Room.**

**July 2010**

### **Documentation –**

- Alan McLean and Tony Mustoe** - Snoozyland (V0054, V0173)  
**Alan McLean and Tony Mustoe** - My Boy did Everything I Asked it (D1251)  
**Alan McLean and Tony Mustoe** - Knocking (D1428)  
**Mary Duffy** - Stories of a Body (V0185)  
**Aaron Williamson** - Mnemonic Reposition (V0180), Compilation 1 (V0322), Compilation 2 (V0323), Obscure Display (V0351), Sonictraps: Involuntary Head Sounds (V0360), Video Clips 2000 – 2002 (V0519), The Electricians (V0606)  
**Mat Fraser** - Perfectly Deformed (D0059 ), Genetically Modified ..... Just For You (D0060), Survival of the Shittest (D0061), Wrong Bodies and Born Freak (extracts) (V0571)  
**Raimund Hoghe** - Meinwärts (V0034), Excerpts of Letter Amorose (D0154), Throwing the Body into the Fight (V0572), Sacre - The Rite of Spring (V0651), Der Buckel (interview) (V0682)  
**Vital** - Curated by Juliet Robson and Kate Stoddart featuring Ann Whitehurst, Alison Lapper, Aaron Williamson, Monuments 2 Incompleteness, Bill Shannon, and Jaap De Jonge. (D0051)  
**Girl Jonah** (Caroline Bowditch and Fiona Wright) - This Two (D0461)  
**Philip Ryder** (with Ange Taggart) - Samples of Work 1998 - 2001 (V0425)  
**Pete Edwards** – FAT (D1227)  
**Point of View** - Gitta Gsell, featuring Milli Bitterli, Rainmund Hoghe, Ju Gosling, Rika Esser, Simon Versnel - (D0229)  
**Juliet Robson** - Norman & Shopping (V0725)  
**Bob Flanagan** - Sick, The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan (D0190)  
**Mat Fraser and Max Zadow** - Everything you wanted to know....(Liverpool – short clip - D1004)  
**Various artists** - Extravagant Bodies Festival, Zagreb documentation (D1264)  
**The Body of Art** – Bob Dickinson (featuring Catherine Long) (D1191)  
**Bobby Baker** – How To Live (D0386)  
**The Olympics Disability Culture Projects and VSA Arts of Rhode Island** - The Tracks Project - Scar Tissue - A body of work (D0413)  
**Aine Phillips** – Harness (Performing Rights Collection, Vienna)

(D0721)

**SPILL** Festival of Performance 2007 (compilation featuring Raimund Hoghe) (D0802)

**The Disabled Avant-Garde** – Amazing Art and Damaged Dance (D1301)

**Maria Oshodi/Extant** – Cast Party (D1302)

**The Olimpias** - Myths, Bodies and Disability Culture (D1308)

**Katherine Araniello** - 'Terminal Services' (with Jessica Voorsanger) and Vital Statistics – New & Improved! (2009) (D1427)

### **Publications and articles -**

**Extravagant Bodies catalogue** - Eds. Ivana Bago, Ivana Ivkovic, Olga Majcen Linn, Tomislav Medak and Suncica Ostoic (P0972)

**Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge** - Petra Kuppers (P0422)

**Digitising Disability** – Andrea Philips (P0145)

**Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time** (featuring *Conceiving Difference* by Ann Whitehurst and *Pull Yourself Together* by Bobby Baker) - (P0182)

**RE Search - Bob Flanagan: Supermasochist** (P0538)

**The Pain Journal** - Bob Flanagan (P0537)

**On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century**– C. Carr (featuring essays on Bob Flanagan and Frank Moore) (P0221)

**Disability** – Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer (P1258)

**Disability, Culture and Identity** - Sheila Riddell and Nick Watson (P0974)

**Performance/Video/Collaboration** - Aaron Williamson (P1160)

**New Work Network's 'No Budget Guide for Artists to Disability Access'** – Ju Gosling (P1246)

**Explore Handbook - Improving Access to the Galleries for Disabled and Deaf People** (Engage) (P1183)

**engage 23: The International Journal of Visual Art and Gallery Education - Disability and Access** (P1184)

**The Performance of Disability** - Petra Kuppers (essay in TDR) (A0176)

**Celebrating Disability Arts** – Arts Council England (P1272)

**Pain in Soul** - He Chengyao (P1374)

**Difference on Display: Diversity in art, science and society** – Ine Gevers (P1391)

**Scanning** – Bobby Baker (P0473)

**Face On - Disability Arts in Ireland and Beyond** - Kaite O'Reilly (ed) (P0942)

**Shaken Not Stirred** – Tony Heaton, newspaper and magazine clippings (P1458)