

How not to do Disability

(By that I mean: that's how to do life the way you wanna not how they wanna)

A tribute to Katherine Araniello by Martin O'Brien

Presented at LADA at an event to celebrate Katherine's life and mark the launch of a LADA Screens in her memory, 16 April 2019

Let me start by saying what I've already said, I think Katherine is one of the most incredible artists I've ever seen. Sorry I can't be with you all today. I'm visiting family. I'm up on the west coast of Scotland as I write this wee tribute to Katherine. I'd like to say, I'm drinking a glass of bubbles from a straw as I write, but actually I'm just drinking milky tea. Here goes:

Only the good die young sang Billy Joel. Katherine disproved this. She died young, too young but she wasn't good, far from it. She did disability in the wrong way. By that, I obviously mean: in the right way. She was too funny you see, too witty, and parodic and too much. She was too satirical, too much humour, too many laughs. She was wild and disrespectful. She was queer as well and that didn't help her image. Where was the victim, we've come to expect? Where is the hapless, helpless victim we all love to love? She made us laugh at her. That's not the way to do disability is it? And by that, I obviously mean: that's just the way to do life how you wanna, not how they wanna.

Katherine was destructive too. She loved to destroy things. Ramming things, crushing things, smashing things, driving into things, breaking things. She was a bloody liability. Never leave your valuables out with Katherine around. I once saw Aaron Williamson do a performance with some beautiful headphones, loads of them. Next on was Katherine, she drove in and crushed all the headphones. Smashed them up, reversed back over them, they couldn't be used again, destroyed, completely destroyed. That's not the

way to do disability is it? By that I obviously mean: that's the way to do life the way you wanna, not how they wanna.

Katherine and I often spoke about phlegm. We both have too much of it. She told me, I could have some of her mucus for a performance if I didn't have enough. But it was fine, I have plenty. Sharing mucus, though, come on, that's no way to do disability is it? By that, I obviously mean, that's the way to do life how you wanna, not how they wanna.

And the hair and the clothes and the chair. She was loud, all too loud, but quiet too, too quiet, far too quiet and too loud. She was always all so loud and so so quiet. Too much. That's no way to do disability is it? And by that, I mean, that's the way to do life how you wanna, not how they wanna.

She used to drink, too. Always with a glass of bubbles, and a straw. If the SMA charity people had seen her, that wouldn't have been good for fundraising: having fun? Fun doesn't generate money. Pity does. And the singing, the god damn singing, the sing-a-long singing. The karaoke singing, the sick bitch blues singing, the song singing, the music video singing, the cabaret show singing, the sing song singing, and all the songs sung singing. The everybody join in singing, the one more song singing, the driving around crushing baby dolls singing, the pissed up singing. And the songs she sang singing. So much singing and so much sung.

Let's not forget the fuck you's and the fuckers. The videos she made and the organisations she exposed as fuckers. The fuckers who are all saying nice things about her now it's too late. And it's too late for that, fuckers. Fuck you. The not giving a fuck about the fuckers fuck plans for what she should be. The not fucking giving a flying fuck about the fuckers fucking fuck plans for what she should do. The what the fuck moments in her shows. The What the fuck is going on? The how the fuck? The fuck me, that's fucking funny moments.

And the showing her work to students moments. The is she serious or is this satire moments felt by the audience around me. The she should have her

own TV show moments. The this is boring and you so know it moments. The oh god someone is going to get hurt moments. The no bullshit moments, the smirking moments. The oh oh oh it's a lovely ward moments, the sick bitch crips moments. The pissed butler moments, the character moments, the punk moments, the I can't breathe because of what you are doing to me moments. That's no way to do disability is it? By that I obviously mean, that's the best way to do disability.

Katherine was wrong, so so wrong. Her pity party, potty porn party pity was wrong. She did disability all wrong and by that I mean, she did life so right. The fuck you telling me what it should be and the joy, the laughter, the darty eyes and the splashes of colour.

From one sick bitch to another, we miss you.