



**in**

**DISABILITY ARTS  
IN THE MAINSTREAM**

## **Introduction by Adrian Plant, DASH Trustee**

This publication serves as a very brief summary of the five commissions which comprise the IN project.

Huge thanks are due to the artists and the arts organisations who have made the IN project such a resounding success in both artistic and developmental terms. So, how to define success?

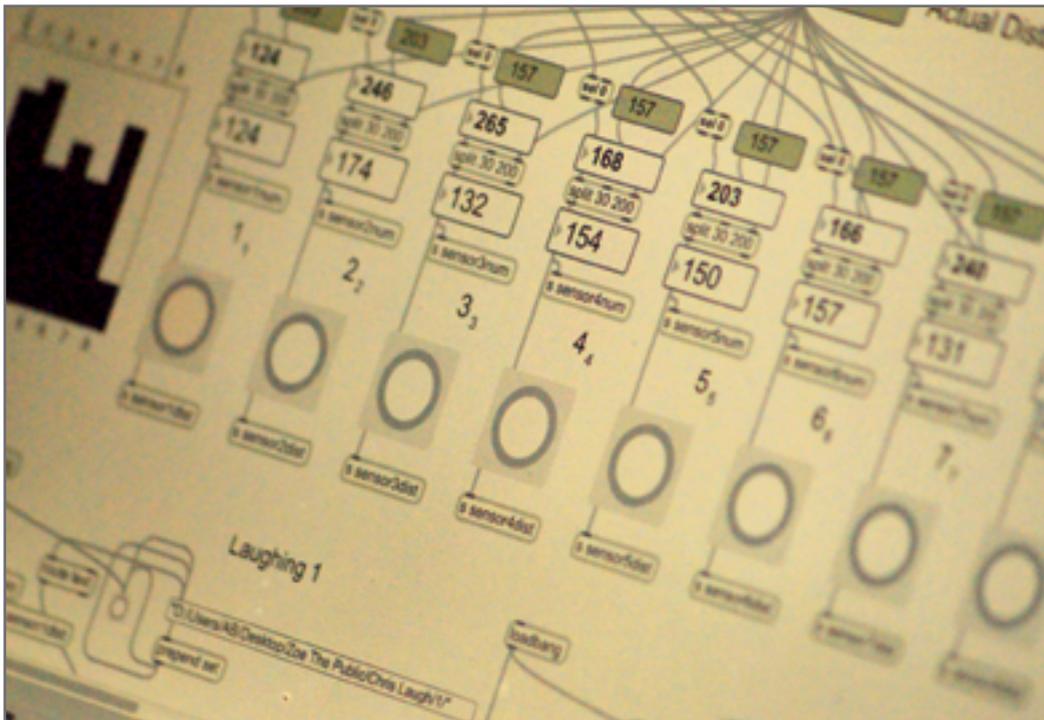
In artistic terms - the quality of the artist's work is clear and sits comfortably (rather than awkwardly!) within the current mainstream critical discourses about the practice of artists - disabled or non-disabled. You will find within the IN commissions diversity, integrity and innovation in abundance. The IN commissions successfully challenge the stereotype which, sadly, can still underpin a rationale of including disability arts as merely a 'token' or 'politically correct' or 'marginal' contribution – and thus fixed out-with of the mainstream curatorial programming priorities.

In developmental terms – the vision of the arts organisations in hosting and resourcing the IN commissions is clear and to be commended in what, as we know, are very difficult times within the cultural sector. IN has not only provided these organisations with great artists but also, through DASH's careful management and support of the commissions, facilitated a new organisational culture based on a greater awareness, understanding and confidence in engaging with the 'awkward' subject of disability arts.

The successes of the IN project provide a potentially profound legacy, and therein lies the challenge to artists, arts professionals and arts organisations as we move forward...



Top: 'Sound Canvas' photograph by Graham Peet  
Below: Coding photograph by Paula Dower



# Sound Canvas

## Zoe Partington and Andrej Bako

Zoe is an artist who works with sound, image and language. As part of this commission Zoe collaborated with Andrej Bako to produce the vision. Her work is influenced by her experience of sightloss and pursuing new ways for blind and partially sighted audiences to feel engaged in galleries and museum installations.

She experiments with the relationship between the visual world and the impact of sound on interpreting meaning in the 'visual'. It is a multi-sensory installation which uses sensors and digital technology to provide access in an innovative way. The sensors are located at an accessible height, which trigger the sounds and lights. Zoe was concerned with movement around the piece and the sensors have been programmed in a very subtle way to react differently to where the individual viewer or viewers are in the space adjacent to the piece.

The first commission of the five to be realised, Zoe Partington's 'Sound Canvas' won a Jodi Award in November 2013 after only 6 months of being exhibited.

'Sound Canvas' has been touring the Welsh borders since then with an unscheduled tour to The Hive in Shrewsbury, Celf O Gwmpas in Llandrindod Wells, The Courtyard in Hereford and will be shown in 'Disrupted' at mac birmingham in 2015.

Zoe is now working on 'Sound Canvas II' which she hopes will be as warmly received and push the boundaries of creative inclusion being at the heart of the art.

# Walls with Wounds

## Dale Vn Marshall

Dale Vn Marshall was the second artist to be commissioned for the IN project.

Marshall started out as a graffiti artist spray painting the walls of Bath and Bristol. In 1999 following a number of psychotic episodes, Marshall was detained under the Mental Health Act and treated at St Lawrence's Hospital in Cornwall. This imposing building, commonly known as the Cornwall County Asylum, and Marshall's time there, informed much of the work in his exhibition. Marshall's work is also inspired by his current studio, a former Victorian workhouse in North Wales, where decaying walls were inscribed by children over 100 years ago.

His stunning, evocative work is inspired by dramatic memories and each one represents a healing journey through physical destruction and repair. Marshall's layered, multi-media works consist of a symbolic language of abstract expression and mark making. The result is a series of vibrant, powerful works documenting his personal journey from rebellion to rehabilitation.

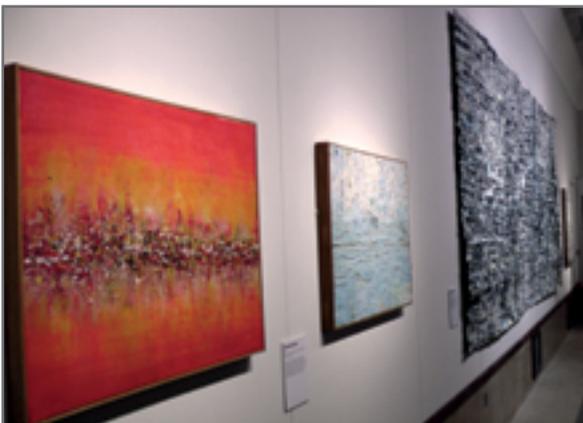
Marshall strikes a balance between the frightening and the beautiful by accepting and embracing his past. These raw, emotive paintings show that hope and redemption are possible, whatever darkness may lie beneath our scars.

The exhibition ran from February to May 2014 was seen by over 8000 visitors.

**Herbert**  
Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry



Above: 'Into a worry and a curse', Dale Vn Marshall



Left: Walls with Wounds exhibition at The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum - photograph Paula Dower

# In Conversation with the Past

## Nicola Lane

Disabled artist-filmmaker Nicola Lane was commissioned by DASH and Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery to create a film reflecting on the life of deaf Romany William Hubert Lock, born in 1910 to a Romany family who travelled throughout the Borders and Shropshire. He was born deaf and was known by some as 'Dummy', to others as Bill and to family as William. Bill and his family lived and worked in and around the villages of Clun and Bishop's Castle in South Shropshire.

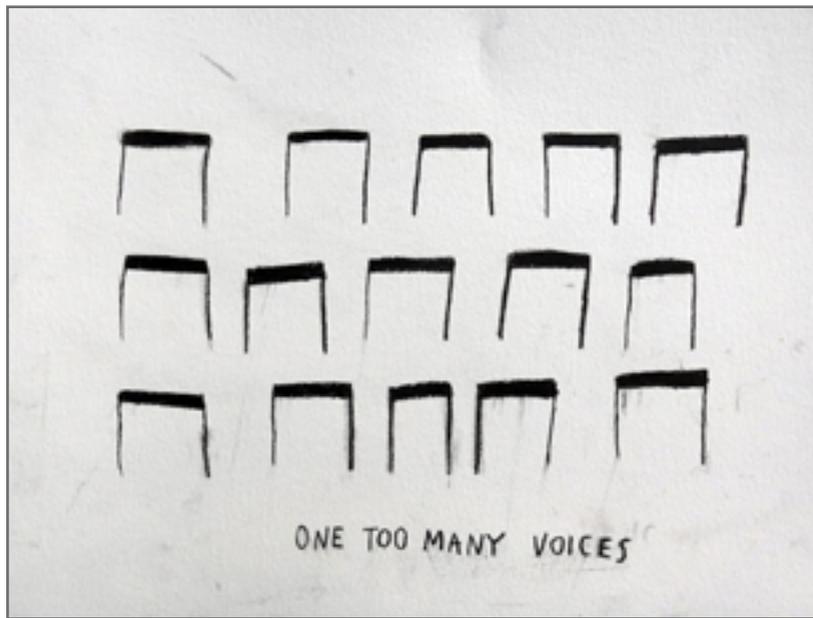
Throughout the summer of 2014 Nicola visited Clun and its neighbouring villages with a small film crew, meeting people who shared their memories of Bill and through them discovering the landscapes where Bill and his family lived and worked. Bill was a highly visible character in this community, memories of Bill are still strong and many people have kept photos of him.

When Bill died in 2000, his nephew Harold Lock asked the funeral cortege to stop in the middle of Clun Bridge, to hold up the traffic for one last time, as Bill used to do - he would walk in the middle of the road literally deaf to angry hootings from the cars and lorries that now stream through Clun in ever increasing numbers. Someone in the White Horse Inn said: "Since Bill died, lorries started to crash into our bridge!"

Nicola writes: "I want to thank all those people in Clun and beyond who generously shared memories and good times with me."

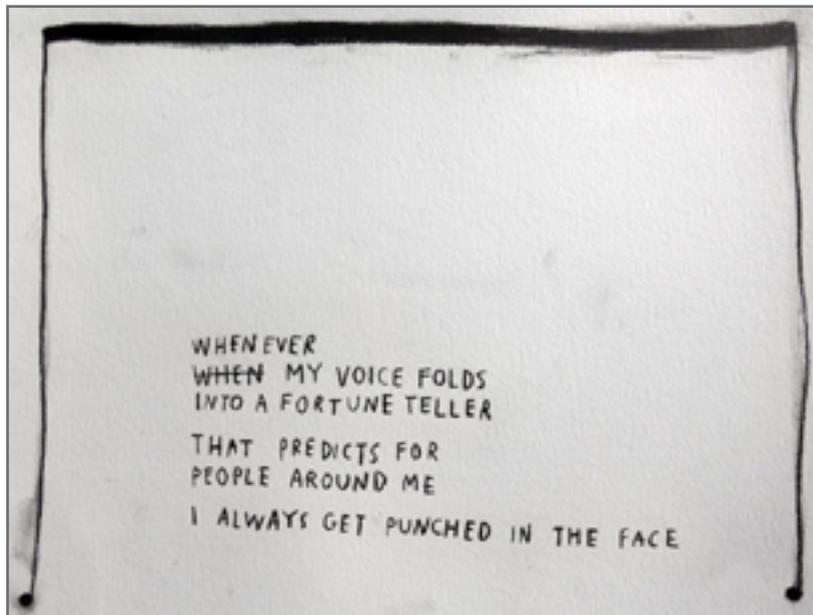


Above: Still from 'In Conversation with the Past'



Above: 'One Too Many Voices', Christine Sun Kim

Below: 'When ever my voice folds into a fortune teller',  
Christine Sun Kim



## Almost a Score

### Christine Sun Kim

Christine Sun Kim is a visual artist who works with concepts around sound and visual language. Deaf from birth, Kim deals with sound as a medium that can be physically expressive, communicative, and experienced viscerally.

Working across conventions of American Sign Language (ASL), Kim investigates the identity of her own voice and her associations of sound as a deaf person. She asks audiences to consider the role that sound and listening have in building an experience of both inner and outer worlds and how this can inform listening and language.

A new collection of her drawings, created for the exhibition at Arnolfini, will be on show in Gallery 5, March to May 2015.

During her residency in Bristol, Kim will create a new film installation work in Arnolfini's intimate Dark Studio that explores the themes of language, sound and silence. This will be the first time that the artist has created a film work of this size and in a residency setting.

The residency and exhibition will be complemented by a performance lecture with the artist and a specialist panel discussion, focused on the relationships between language, sound and listening, followed by an evening showcase of performative works that have been inspired by the themes discussed.

**ARNOLFINI**

# Disrupted

## Noëmi Lakmaier

This curatorial commission for the IN project is a group exhibition that has been conceived for mac birmingham to directly respond to, and interact with, the arts centre venue, the building and its audiences.

The artworks and installations exhibited here invite visitors to encounter the 'Other' - that which is different and unfamiliar, often remaining unseen in our day to day lives - and to engage with it in a familiar space.

Curated by Noëmi Lakmaier during her year-long residency at mac, the exhibition explores the sense of awkwardness such encounters can bring, and the unique experiences and unexpected insights that can emerge from them.

'Disrupted' brings together both established and emerging artists working in the realm of Disability Arts, including the Swedish performance artist Anna Berntson, London-based artist and activist The Vacuum Cleaner, Martin O'Brien and up and coming sculptor Anna Smith from Wolverhampton.

"The opportunity to work with DASH, enabling us to commission work and share learning with peers, is a rare and valuable one. It allows us to go beyond a superficial addressing of disability arts in the mainstream. For mac, the IN commission has been designed to impact upon, inform and shift our working practice around diversity from a longer-term strategic position." Craig Ashley



Above: 'Swing', Anna Smith



**Inside** is DASH's new programme of work for 2015-2018. This is an exciting new development opportunity for Galleries, Museums, Libraries and Archives across the Midlands to commission new high quality work by Disabled visual artists from across the UK and Internationally.

**DASH is committed to:**

- Commissioning Disabled Artists to create new work for arts and cultural venues in England and Wales.
- Training and development of artists and cultural organisations through workshops, mentoring and including transforming notions of disabled arts practice through digital means.
- Providing support for the management and talent development of local, regional and national disabled artists.
- Promoting DASH's ethos which encompasses the Creative Case for Diversity by addressing issues of accessibility (in the widest sense) to arts and cultural organisations.

**For further information on how you can take part in this programme contact:**

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## **Cultivating spaces for extraordinary artists**

Recognising their considerable expertise, leadership and track record in the realm of disability arts, DASH's support is a great enabler. They play an integral role in bringing diversity in professional practice to this organisation and our audiences, and setting the bar for excellence in this arena.

**Craig Ashley mac birmingham**

It is really great to see an opportunity for a Disabled curator. I have felt for a long time that this was overdue and that establishing Disabled curators is one of the most important steps to bringing Disability Arts and Disabled artists into the mainstream and keeping them there.

**Noëmi Lakmaier commissioned curator mac birmingham**

Working with DASH has allowed the Herbert to recommit to accessibility in a time when all areas of work are being squeezed because of lack of money or time. Their supporting style is open, relaxed and non-judgemental which is vital when addressing accessibility issues.

**Jess Pinson The Herbert**

DASH and the IN project receive funding from Arts Council England



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