

Aaron Williamson - Artist Presentation

‘Seven Adventures in Intervention Art’

For: ‘We Are Invisible, We Are Visible’

Online Event

DaSH 28.9.2021

1. 'Guerrilla' (Uninvited) Intervention

'Barrierman'

Using just Barriertape and a hi-viz vest, and followed around by a hidden camera, I disrupted the public 'crowd-flow' for a day around Liverpool. Once I'd intervened into a certain site, we would quickly move onto another, keeping ahead of the authorities.

Performance and Video
DaDaFest, Liverpool, 2009

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=4N2Bu7J4xC8



2. 'Authorised' (Invited) Intervention

'Leaflet War'

Many of the Pavilions at the Venice Biennale employ leaflet distributors to attract the crowds. In this piece I staged a 'leaflet war' with a doppelganger distributor (Tony Grisoni). As the first distributor persuaded people to accept a leaflet, the second, positioned 10 metres behind and dressed exactly identical, attempted to snatch it back.

Performance and Video

Venice Biennale, 2013

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



3. 'Breaking the Rules'

'Collapsing Lecture'

The premise of the Collapsing Lecture was that the delivery of lecturing and conference presentations is often fraught with mishap: equipment malfunctions and the lecturer her/himself is subject to unforeseen difficulties.

I delivered a series of 1 hour long 'collapsing lectures' – which never got started due to everything going wrong - in the formal setting of various lecture theatres. These were advertised in advance as formal lectures and not performances.

Performance at: Byam Shaw School of Art, Goldsmiths College, Whitechapel Gallery, Queen Mary and Westfield, 2009, Tate Britain, 2011



Collapsing Lecture - Script

Turning up at the lecture theatre in a fluster, fifteen minutes late, rolled-up 'Racing Post' in pocket.
The laptop slowly starts up before crashing, (pull plug lead).
The projector won't respond to the handset, request replacement batteries (Jenny).
The replacement batteries don't fit.
The dry marker is out of ink, (tape secretly covers the nib).
Cause alarm by attempting to marker pen the expensive-looking projection screen.
Remain oblivious to mobile phone ringing in my pocket (I'd arranged with a friend for him to call me at some point during the performance).
Request a jug of water - the plastic cup springs a leak.
Request that floor is mopped.
I can't find my spectacles, unable to read.
I drop the thick pile of notes.
Find glasses but drop and tread on specs.
An extended, violent coughing fit, much chest beating etc.
The technician finally arrives to help.
But my desk top files will not open – 'corrupted' notice.
Try to recall password, audibly mouth A-N-A-R-C-H-Y-I-N-T-H-E-U-K.
Nervously remove jacket and jumper, before replacing them again.
Discourse obscurely on the pink forms that I was told everyone was supposed to collect from the Dean's office – does anyone know about this?
Interchangeable use of water, newspaper, the pile of notes, batteries, handset, crashing computer, broken specs, ink-less pen and so on.
Threaten formal complaint to University about the state of their technical services.
Become irate.
Conduct conversation with Chloe in sign language about last night's television (Unless there are other deafies present!)
Become very sad, withdrawn/defeated.
Draw meaningless diagram on whiteboard: 'vernacular vs perfunctory mode of action'.
After 45 minutes: Any questions?

4. Protest Intervention

‘The Disabled Avant Garde: Stage Invasion at Liberty Fest’

With Katherine Araniello as the Disabled Avant Garde (aka ‘DAG’), we protested against the Liberty Festival organised by London Mayor, Boris Johnson, that offered the public a weekend of feelgood, apolitical entertainment by disabled people. The protest took the form of invading the stage without being invited, to declare that ‘Disability Art is Dead’.

Live performance, and video; South Bank Centre, London 2011

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



5. Anti-Normative Intervention

DAG: *Amazing Art*

As DAG we portrayed ourselves as innocent, naive know-nothings as we underwent 'art therapy' to create rubbish artworks which we then managed to con the public into buying at a commercial 'Art Fair'. This work satirically addresses the often patronising perceptions and low expectations of 'disability art'.

Performance: London Car Boot Art Fair, and Video, 2009

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lg6vyoraUQk>



6. Crowd Protest/ Street Intervention

'Diszombie Jakarta'

Working with a disability community group, Jakarta Barrier Free Tourism, we devised an intervention on the streets of central Jakarta costumed as Zombies to protest against the social exclusion of disabled people, since there is very little access in the city. The ragged banner we carry threatens, in Indonesian, 'Disability is Coming for You!'

Performance and Video, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2017



7. Political Intervention

'Shhh!'

Posed photographs were staged with guests invited to a prestigious disability arts celebration event. The rear of this cardboard sign reads:

'The Government wants to believe that people are 'not really' disabled so that they can cut benefits and rights. Pose with me – in masked disguise – for a photo that humorously confirms their idea.'

**Interactive Performance, National Theatre,
London, 2017**



Summary: 'Seven Adventures in Intervention Art' – Aaron Williamson

Some types of Intervention Art:

1. Guerrilla
2. Authorised
3. Breaking the Rules
4. Protest
5. Anti-Normative
6. Crowd Protest
7. Political

