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### 13 Questions: Liz Crow

by Ouch Team

25th November 2009

A disabled film-maker and mum to eight year old Molly, Liz Crow lives and works in Bristol, where she directs and runs her company, Roaring Girl Productions. Known widely in disability arts circles for her portrayal of strong women through her films, including Helen Keller and disabled Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, Liz is now focussing on educating the world about T4. This was a programme which ordered the mass murder of disabled people during the Holocaust.

Having taken her turn on the fourth plinth at Trafalgar Square to raise awareness, she has recently launched Resistance: Which Way The Future? Her installation discusses the Nazi programme and its relevance today, and is part of DaDaFest in Liverpool. We caught up with her before the opening to ask 13 Questions.



#### People think I am ...

Full of courage, just for getting up in the morning. I've been congratulated by a complete stranger for not having committed suicide. If they think I'm amazing for something so small, how do I ever find out whether I'm any good at the real stuff I do?

#### Not a lot of people know that I ...

Like to knit to Queen. I've only just discovered this myself. I'm not a natural knitter and before this, the only experience I had was of knitting Oxfam blanket squares as a kid. It is a complete counterpoint to the other thing I'm obsessed with, my installation.

#### The best piece of advice I would pass on is ...

Not being able to conform teaches you that you don't have to conform and there's a freedom in that.



Liz, aged 10, in her acting debut as Lady Jane Gray

#### I struggle with ...

Maintaining a strong public image as a disabled person and the way it often conflicts with the realities of my impairment. People think what you see is what you get, where in fact, 95 percent is hidden. I don't want to distract people from my work by explaining my impairment all the time so, although it is unpredictable and I grapple with illness and neurological difficulties constantly, I deal with these in private.

#### I excel at ...

Being a terrier, communication, self-doubt, passion, empathy, looking grateful and determination.



Liz Crow attending a disability rights protest

#### If I didn't live in the UK, I'd live in...

Nowhere instantly appeals. I like home because it is familiar and set up for my needs. Wherever I did go, the issues I face here would follow me.

#### Where do you spend most of your time?

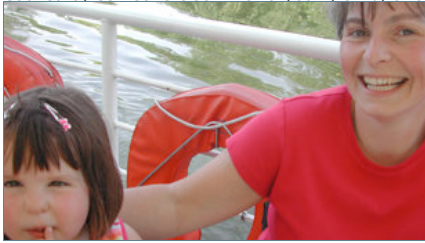
In my head. Mine's not a 9 to 5 job, so I'm always plotting, researching, planning and imagining, in search of the next story, how to get that project off the ground or what I can do to make what I'm doing into an effective tool for change.

#### My first job was ...

As a tea lady in a little business in Bristol, after I was kicked out of uni for being a cripple. I was up front about what I needed when I started, but half way through the year they withdrew my provision so I couldn't take my exams and therefore, failed on a technicality. I was a medical student and if you peel back the layers, there wasn't a fit between me and the course from the university's perspective. With the benefit of hindsight, I'm glad I took the direction I did.

#### My favourite food is ...

Cooked by someone else. With a young child, a lot of life revolves around food. She eats well, but by the time I've sorted her out I just can't be bothered.



Liz Crow in France with her daughter Molly

**When I come home in the evenings I ...**

Spend time with my daughter, trying hard to resist getting dragged back to calls that haven't been dealt with earlier in the day. When I succeed in not being distracted, it's bliss.

**Being a disabled film-maker ...**

Might just be viable within the mainstream, but to run inclusive productions and to make political work about disabled people does not sit easy. It's taken a decade for me to understand the medium, the industry and the constraints enough to be able to throw the rule book away and work on my own terms.

**What hasn't been invented but should be ?**

A pause machine. There was a fantastic cartoon years ago where when the parents needed time out from their kids, they would put them in a time suspense machine and just read the paper. Obviously I'm the only one who would be allowed to press the button.



Liz Crow on the fourth plinth at Trafalgar Square

**My time on the fourth plinth was ...**

The most terrifying thing I've ever done. It was a Saturday night at pub closing time and I was wearing a Nazi uniform, so there was always the risk that nobody would understand why I was doing it, or would just throw bottles at me. I had a brilliant team of disabled supporters who ringed the plinth and gave out leaflets. It took a week for my heart rate to come down.

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