

Artist Liz Crow uses shock tactics to teach lessons from history

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Catherine Jones talks to the disabled artist using Nazi iconography to bring home the horrors of the holocaust

WHEN artist Liz Crow took her turn on Antony Gormley's Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square it's true to say it caused something of a stir.

The 45-year-old was helped up to her perch above the pigeons and tourists covered in a sheet.

It was only after 10 minutes that Liz pulled off her cover to reveal she was wearing full Nazi regalia as she sat in her wheelchair.

"It's not my regular dress!" she laughs from the office of her arts company, Roaring Girl Productions.

"That was just an opportunity that came up and it seemed a perfect chance to start to put this thing on the map, and it's become the image for the project now."

The project being Resistance, Liz's new multi-media installation whose thorny theme is based on the Nazi's mass murder of disabled people at the start of World War II.

It receives its premiere at the Contemporary Urban Centre this month as part of DaDaFest, the UK's leading deaf and disabled arts festival which is held each year in Liverpool.

"This is the big launch," says the Cheshire-born but Bristol-based artist, whose mum Barbara hails from Liverpool.

"I got the new media arts award two years ago, and I've had a film screened at Dada before, but this is the biggest project I've ever worked on and it's the first time I'll personally have got to Dada.

"I'm really looking forward to it, I've wanted to come in previous years and just never

been able to manage it.”

Resistance itself has also been years in the making.

“I read a book about it 12 years ago, about the historical part of the project which is the Nazi programme which targeted disabled people,” explains Liz. “It was that first phase of systematic murder that became the blueprint for everything else.

“As you’d expect it was horrific information that really shocked me, but I was also shocked because I hadn’t come across that as a history before.

“I knew a lot about the Jewish Holocaust and that other social groups had been targeted, but I had no idea disabled people were not only the target but also the initial target.

“I was also struck by two other things. One was that in the midst of all of that, disabled people actually resisted which I just thought showed courage beyond anything I can even get my head around.

“The other was that when you looked at values within that system, and the thinking that permitted it to happen, it was familiar to the kind of rationale of disabled people being lesser or burdensome or pitiful.

“Those things are all around today although generally they don’t lead to such extremes. But just to confine it to history is a really risky thing to do.”

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