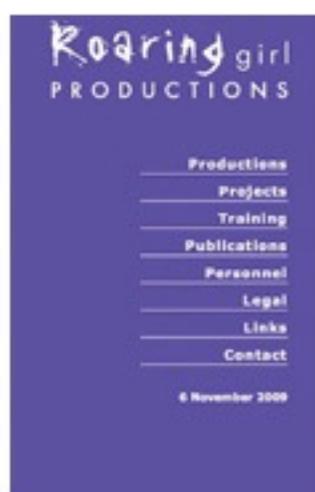


## Days of Future Past

Recently voted one of the top ten fourth plinth exhibits in Trafalgar Square, performance artist Liz Crow finds solace from the past in the past present and future



### Open Road

Directed by Liz Crow  
Produced by Sue Fairbanks  
2005 10 x 5-second bites  
Shot on mini-DV



My computer days began with the heady technology of the early 1980s, when my soul was saved by the Microwriter.

Thanks to Roger Jefcoate at the Foundation for Communication for the Disabled (now Abilitynet at [www.abilitynet.co.uk](http://www.abilitynet.co.uk)), this little hand-held device meant I could commit my words to paper for the first time in a decade. Granted it held a maximum of three pages and most of my time at university was spent running back and forth to printers, emptying the computer ready for the next lecture, but this was true

liberation.

Eventually I discarded my Microwriter in favour of newer technology and I've regretted it ever since. I found a picture on the web recently ([www.old-computers.com](http://www.old-computers.com)) and was suffused with fondness.

My next big venture into the technological frontier was in the late 1990s on a visit to California when I discovered the internet (though not all by myself).

I searched on "disability" and the world wide web delivered a full four sites. A Google search today has netted over 47 million links in 0.47 seconds.

Email didn't convince me at first, not least because no one I knew had signed up yet, which made it a bit like talking to myself. But Helen Keller changed all that. In 1999, I made my first film (The Real Helen Keller, co-produced with Ann Pugh), filming on the other side of the Atlantic. Email solved the time difference, saved the project a fortune and had me hooked.

My own website ([www.roaring-girl.com](http://www.roaring-girl.com)) followed soon after and is key to getting my work to an audience. My current project is Resistance, a moving image installation that takes as its starting point the Nazi campaign against disabled people and its contemporary echoes.

As we prepare to launch at Liverpool's DaDaFest on 17 November, we're reauthoring the site to make it more interactive and I'm turning to the web even more to grapple with social networking and twittering. When it all gets too much, I turn to the Slap Nick Griffin website ([slapnickgriffin.co.uk](http://slapnickgriffin.co.uk)) and that makes me feel a little better. (After attracting 20 million slaps, the site has now been taken down.)

There's a fine balance with the web – that point where the freedom of the highway turns into a sticky fly trap. For relaxation, I tend to move away from the screen. But I do like the Longplayer (<http://longplayer.org>), a 1000-year musical composition that's the antithesis of instant internet gratification and I like to browse Woodlands ([woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk)) dreaming of a little patch of green where I can pitch my tent...

Recently, when life seemed to operate only through a keyboard, I reminded myself of that early Microwriter liberation. I'd like a little time away from technology, but I know I'll be back.

Meantime, if anyone's got a spare Microwriter taking up space in the back of a cupboard, let me know.