

ARTISTS TALKING

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Feature

northcabin

By: **Katherine Daley-Yates, Aldo Rinaldi**

Aldo Rinaldi and Katherine Daley-Yates discuss northcabin, a programme of site-specific commissions in an unusual venue in Bristol from 2008-09.

The first project I experienced at northcabin was Sovay Berriman's piece *Cabin Tactics* which took place in the spring of 2008. For the project the artist pasted sections of paper marked with a graphic motif onto the side of one of two disused operating cabins that flank Redcliffe Bridge. I remember the appearance of the work well as Berriman's intervention had significant visual impact (causing viewers to stop and look again at a structure that most take for granted). The work also featured in a review in *a-n Magazine*, September 2008.

Katie Daley-Yates, the project initiator had approached us to inquire into the use of the cabins for site-specific commissions in late 2007 in what appeared to be an adjunct to her ongoing studio work. At the time Katie was an MA student in Fine Art at the University of the West of England. Permission was granted by Harbour Estates with the usual provisos and agreements needed and Berriman's work was quickly followed by a suite of further commissions. All of the projects at northcabin have built on the heritage of the space, and its particular characteristics in a playful, and often hugely polished form. One such example is Chloe Brooks' work *Balancing a Leaf* (September 2008) for which the artist fabricated a scaled down facsimile of a section of the bridge in its elevated form (Redcliffe Bridge is a bascule bridge which moves with a counterweight to allow for boat traffic) which was – aside from being brilliantly executed – both absurd and strangely uncanny.

Daley-Yates' own work has not featured in the commissions programme, and what had initially appeared to be a forum for her and other artists' work quickly became apparent as a premise for her own curatorial investigations into 'place'. It culminated in her emergence from her MA as a curator rather than a practising artist, securing a post at Situations and ongoing involvement in many of the city's active public art commissions.

It is important to point out from the start that the project was initiated by Daley-Yates, rather than through a commissioned brief or invitation from Bristol City Council to 'activate' the space as it were. The council's support has largely been in the form of permissions to use the cabins. Financial support was provided later as the project generated a following and to support a second phase in tandem with a (successful) grant application to the Arts Council England.

In hindsight it is apparent that Berriman, like the artists that followed her, all latched onto and engaged with the 'surveillance' overtones of the site, for the operating cabins are both cells and watch-posts, heightened by their grey/green colour scheme and utilitarian design. However, the success of the project is largely down to Daley-Yates as curator in her selection of artists who have tackled and engaged with the space rather than using it to display works.

My professional relationship with Katie is now quite established and she is engaged in various commissions Situations are undertaking for Bristol City Council; however northcabin is emblematic of Katie - it was well managed, well executed and has contributed to the city's arts offer, providing a forum for artists and indeed curators to develop their work.

In an oblique (and more developmental) way northcabin has also contributed to



[\[enlarge\]](#)

Sovay Berriman, 'Cabin Tactics', 2008. Photo: Katherine Daley-Yates



[\[enlarge\]](#)

Helen de Main, 'Laying the Bounds', 2009. Photo: Simeon Higginson



[\[enlarge\]](#)

Chloe Brooks, 'Balancing a Leaf', 2008



[\[enlarge\]](#)

Jo Ray, 'Broken Watch', 2009



[\[enlarge\]](#)

Gary O'Connor, 'Inherent Sin', 2009. Photo: Max

McClure

ongoing debates surrounding the development of our cities, for Redcliffe is a unique city centre district with significant architectural history. In order to safeguard its character the area has its own supplementary planning document¹, drafted with the community and residents who are now actively involved in how Redcliffe is developed (or not in some cases) and how funding is spent. In Redcliffe the 'have a say' is underwritten by policy. northcabin, for the period it existed, provided a forum for artists to comment on the fabric of the city, in an area where the collision between old and new is perhaps most heavily contested.

Aldo Rinaldi

I began to develop northcabin as a feasible project just before Aldo Rinaldi started at Bristol City Council. However, we began communicating at a crucial stage in the project's development and the relationship with the city council to date has been supportive. The city council facilitated the project by providing key services such as access to the space and contributing much needed funds to the project budget.

Working in collaboration with such a large institutional body has also enabled access to a large body of knowledge across a range of subjects and departments. For example, Property Division were very approachable from the start about a proposal to use such an unusual space, which in addition belonged to the industrial heritage of Bristol's harbour. In particular, Aldo significantly aided the process of generating funding for the series by identifying key initiatives within the city council, which northcabin could support; this included Redcliffe Futures and Legible City.

During the course of the project it was rare that I encountered any specific problems or negative aspects when working with the city council, and this was probably because I had forged a particular relationship, which was based on a physical asset (ie the space) and services, which came attached to providing the asset. I can only recall one negative encounter, which occurred during the installation of the first commission (*Cabin Tactics* by Sovay Berriman), which was a particularly delicate work in the context of a public art commission (laser print on to paper). The morning after the first section of the artwork had been installed, the artist and myself arrived at the cabin to install the remaining section and we discovered that the first section had been completely removed. Following some phone calls, we found out that it had been removed by the City Council, who had not realised they were removing part of an artwork! This episode highlights how important communication with the City Council was: not only the relevant departments had to be kept up-to-date so that similar situations did not arise again, but it was also essential to use an appropriate language to communicate with the various partners.

My experience of working with the city council and the other partners connected to the project has been unique to date, because northcabin is the first project I have developed and run independently. Previous to northcabin, forging partners has been mediated through educational institutions, collaborating with fellow students or working for organisations. As an individual developing a project I think it is crucial to seek out partners or stakeholders who can support what you are trying to achieve, and this support can be diverse, whether it is in the form of providing a space at a low rate or for free, providing funding, sharing common aims and ambitions or pooling resources. In the case of northcabin, I was able to negotiate further support from Spike Island Associates, which provided a space, equipment and additional marketing for the programme of talks, which ran alongside the commissions. At the same time, the talks contributed to the growth of the Associates Programme and opened up new audiences.

The city council has played an essential part in the development and success of the northcabin series, but equally important have been the strong relationships with all the artists, which I knew would make or break the success of the individual commissions and the series as a whole. Northcabin has been the result of a considerable amount of support, which has come from a diverse range of

organisations in Bristol, but also from across the country. The success of the series of commissions is a testament to the significant part that relationships have played within northcabin.

Katherine Daley-Yates

PROFILES

Aldo Rinaldi is a curator and commissioner. He is currently Senior Public Art Officer for the City of Bristol.

Katherine Daley-Yates graduated from the University of the West of England in 2006 with a BA (Hons) in Art & Visual Culture and completed an MA in Fine Art through curatorial practice there in 2009. She has been a member of Spike Island's Associate Scheme since its launch in 2007, and has recently completed a six-month Curatorial Internship at Spike Island, which led to her developing an experimental exhibition for the Project Space, 'Responses: three approaches to one space'. Katherine also works as an independent curator and has just completed the series of short-term commissions entitled northcabin on Redcliffe Bridge, Bristol. Future projects include a collaboration with Sovay Berriman to produce an artist's publication and associated series of events across the UK. She is also investigating the possibility to produce a publication documenting the northcabin project. Alongside her independent activity she works for Situations as Programme Coordinator.

www.northcabin.org.uk

www.situations.org.uk

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