

‘Have fun and know that you can make something out of not much’

Chase arts correspondent **AMY FORDE**, marketing and communications assistant at Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR), talks to artist Isabella Carreras.

FOR this month's feature I got to interview Isabella Carreras, a new face around ROAR who is working on some fascinating ventures in the region including *Other Words for Anger*, a collaborative project between artists and survivors of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

Whilst also working as an artist/costume designer in her own practice she has recently been elected as one of ROAR's Board of Directors, bringing her experience and knowledge to the organisation.

For all these reasons I was really fascinated to find out more about her work in the arts.

We begin by discussing her way into the industry. Originally from Oxfordshire she decided after school to study for an Art Foundation at the Bristol School of Art, which she tells me was a great experience, learning in such a creative city and sharing studios with a new group of people that she still makes work with now.

She went on to study for a BA in History of Art at the University of Leeds with influential feminist theorists Griselda Pollock and Vanalyne Green as professors, as well as being able to delve into the great collections in the city, particularly the Helen Chadwick archive held at the Henry Moore Institute. This brought together her interest in how research, critical discourse and archival material could play an important role in her creative output.

During this period of study she sought out and got involved with organisations and creative projects like Temple Works Leeds and Project Space Leeds, establishing connections through a number of internships and working with artists and theatre groups. She explains: "I was always into exploring art through projects and finding spaces where lots of activity was happening."

Her enjoyment in collaboration is something I pick up on often in our conversation and she agrees. Indeed this open approach seems to have been beneficial to her work as an artist.

She has recently worked with artist and curator Mark Fell, designing costumes for his work *Numb Imperatives* for Frieze Art Fair (London, 2017) and for dancer Justin F Kennedy as part of Fell's installation piece *Paralleling* for Live Arts Week (Bologna, 2018). She is currently working with Mun Sing, solo project of punk techno duo Giant Swan's Harry Wright.

After university Isabella trained as a textile artist in the film industry, where she acquired a number of vital skills – dyeing, printing and painting – which she has taken and applied to her own work.

She also spent time in Glasgow doing an internship with Glasgow Women's Library and working for Turner-prize nominated artist Monster Chetwynd, assisting her with performative installation *The King Must Die* at Edinburgh Art Festival (2015). "Glasgow has a really fun and independent arts scene, everyone just does their own thing."

I feel this sentence summarises Isabella's refreshing, unrefined and impulsive approach to her work on which she elaborates further: "I think working with Monster, seeing how she gets excited by sharing ideas and making things quite quickly but with really incredible references, was really inspiring." This attitude she clarifies later: "I really like to encourage others to do things, not be overly precious about what you are making, have fun and know that you can make something out of not much."

This passion to encourage others creatively is relevant in two projects she is currently working on in Yorkshire. Firstly, as assistant producer of Art School for Rebel Girls, a project by Leeds-based visual arts organisation Pavilion. The project seeks to build confidence in young women through art, exploring the power of images and questioning who/what is an artist. Through a series of after-school sessions and experimental workshops, the girls get to test out different mediums and learn to channel their creativity to further express themselves: "When you see the impact it has on the girls, it feels really good that they are so happy, inspired and with this new kind of pride and excitement."



Stylist/Designer,
clothing/costume for Mun
Sing (Harry Wright)



Costume Design, Numb Imperatives by Mark Fell

“I was always into exploring art through projects and finding spaces where lots of activity was happening”

The second is Other Words for Anger, originally a one-off event at Old Market Gallery (June 2018) for survivors of CSE in Rotherham to get their voices heard. The project was initiated by T, a survivor of CSE who reconnected with old school friend and local artist Rian Treanor to help bring it together: “It was this really DIY collaboration between survivors and artists. The event looked at issues around child sexual exploitation based upon survivors’ first-hand experiences.”

Isabella is now working with T to help develop the project: “Our aim is to establish collaborations between artists, activists and educators to make work that will be presented in Rotherham.” The project is survivor-led, with Isabella and fellow artists acting to facilitate and provide tools which can be useful for setting up group action and creating work. On this footing Isabella hopes that the project will break the conventions of community organising and in turn bring leading, contemporary artists to the town.

I asked how she has found working in Rotherham. She says: “Since we started developing Other Words for Anger in November, I’ve been reaching out to lots of

different organisations and been really surprised by all the amazing support and advice on offer locally like VAR, RotherFed and ROAR. People are responding really positively to what we’re doing.” Becoming a member of ROAR and recently a board member she adds: “It’s really interesting being

part of the board, and I really enjoy ROAR’s monthly artist talks which are a brilliant way of making connections and finding out what people are getting up to.”

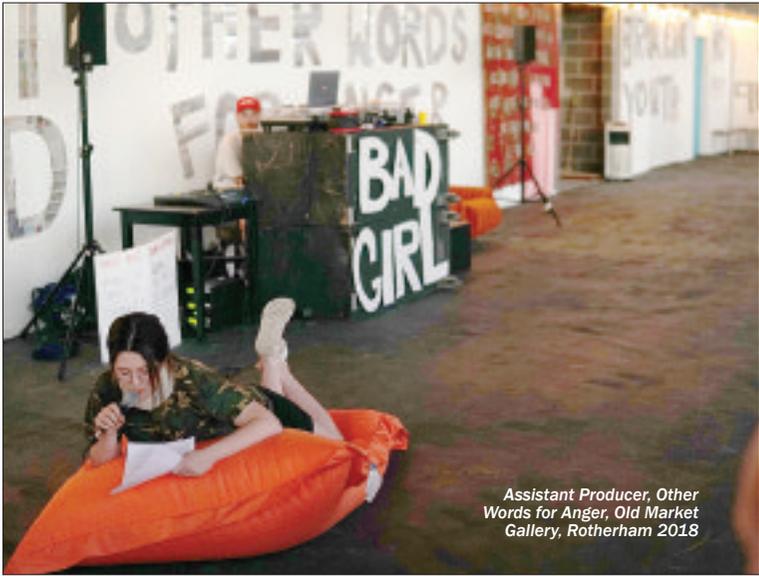
With a notable passion and dedication to working with women, I end with asking about her future ambitions.

She tells me she is going to Indonesia for an art residency organised by Pavilion and the University of Leeds as part of a West Java West Yorkshire Coop Movement. She elaborates: “I will be working with Jatiwangi Art Factory, a socially engaged arts collective, on a creative exchange between young women of the same age in West Java and West Yorkshire with the aim of developing a shared visual language through things we will create.”

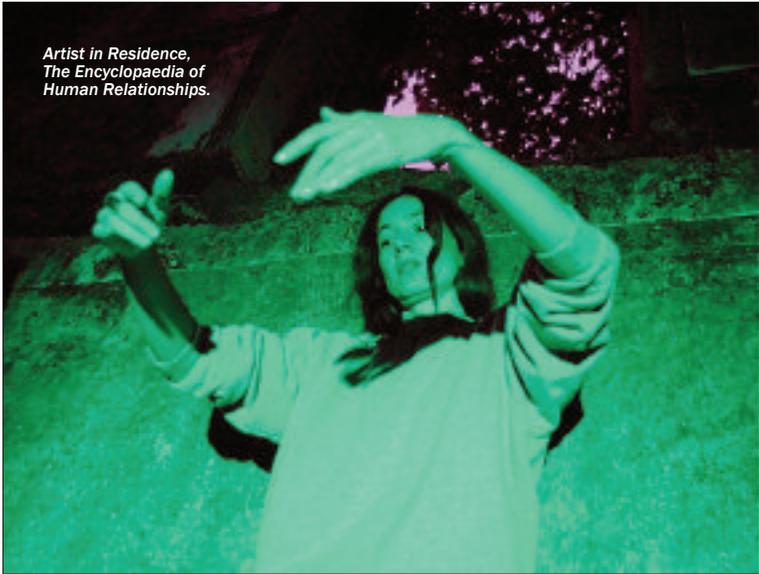
To see more and keep up with Isabella’s work you can check out her website: www.isabellacarreras.com



Set and Costume Designer, Out of a Morass by Giles Bailey, The Hepworth Wakefield, 2014



Assistant Producer, Other Words for Anger, Old Market Gallery, Rotherham 2018



Artist in Residence, The Encyclopaedia of Human Relationships.