

On the Couch with Jill Orr

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Who is Jill Orr?

An Australian Performance Artist who has presented work nationally and internationally for many years. I relate to eco-feminist and new materialist thinking and site-specific embodied practices that engage the histories and the psycho-social complexities of each site that I create work within.

The performances, either for the camera or live for audiences, embrace the language of art as a symbolic instrument of communication that can resonate underneath words. My work is to listen, reflect and embody. I am most grounded in Australia, where I was born from settler ancestry, and from this position, I acknowledge First Nations people whose land was never ceded.

What would you do differently from what you do now?

That's an interesting question, particularly as the aging process makes changes for, and on one's behalf so there is constant adaption. The consistent gift for me is the imagination, working in tandem with the mind and cyphered through the body. My job is to invent ways through limitations which are continuous.

Who inspires you and why?

I find inspiration everywhere from the all-encompassing natural world and everything that is within it. Whilst I am conjuring new work, I see related inspiring people, art, books, animals and thinkers everywhere but when I am actually producing a new work, I am focused only on that and external inspiration becomes distracting.

What would you do to make a difference in the world?

I am a tiny moment in time and if I make any difference at all, it is probably something I will never know. Rather, I am one of many voices, contributing in my own way to the urgent issues of our time. I prefer to direct myself forward, there is too much to do. Others will analyse my contribution.

Favourite holiday destination and why?

Anywhere quiet and bushy is perfect like the red deserts of Australia where space and stars and deep time is palpable. But I do love to travel to other cultures. I have never been to the Arizona desert, but neither have I been to New York even though my work, performance photographs and videos, have been there without me – to go to New York would be awesome!

When friends come to town, what attraction would you take them to, and why?

I love to take them to local bush land but equally to galleries, theatre and performance events. Anything that's on at the time.

What are you currently reading?

We have just taken on two rescue dogs. One is a Kelpie and the other is an Australian Stumpy Tail Cattle Dog. I was given a book about Kelpies, that's absorbing me at the moment as well as my up-and-coming exhibition at Linden New Art in St Kilda for PHOTO24.

What are you currently listening to?

I always love Nick Cave and Warren Ellis and Coldplay did an amazing concert at sunrise and sunset on a roof top in Jerusalem quite some years ago. I have revisited that concert on YouTube, in the light of the tragic destruction and loss of so many lives in the region. The Coldplay performance was well before this war, but their performance was one of sheer beauty. In reflection on the many blood spots on the planet, we humans just can't seem to get out of the cycle of 'a life for a life' in revenge, perpetuating the intergenerational circle that keeps going round in the complexities of existence.

Happiness is?

Happiness is when the heart is full of kindness overbrimming with warmth that is shared with each encounter – human and non-human. Really, I love to dance!

What does the future hold for you?

There is an internal path full of possibilities and potentials to follow, but the manifestation can derail at any time. That makes this question between birth, life and transcendence, not mine to answer.

Jill work can be seen in *The Promised Land Refigured* – which is on display at Linden New Art from 24 February to 19 May, as part of [PHOTO2024](https://www.lindenarts.org). For more information, visit: www.lindenarts.org for details.

Image: Jill Orr – photo by Andrea Wilson