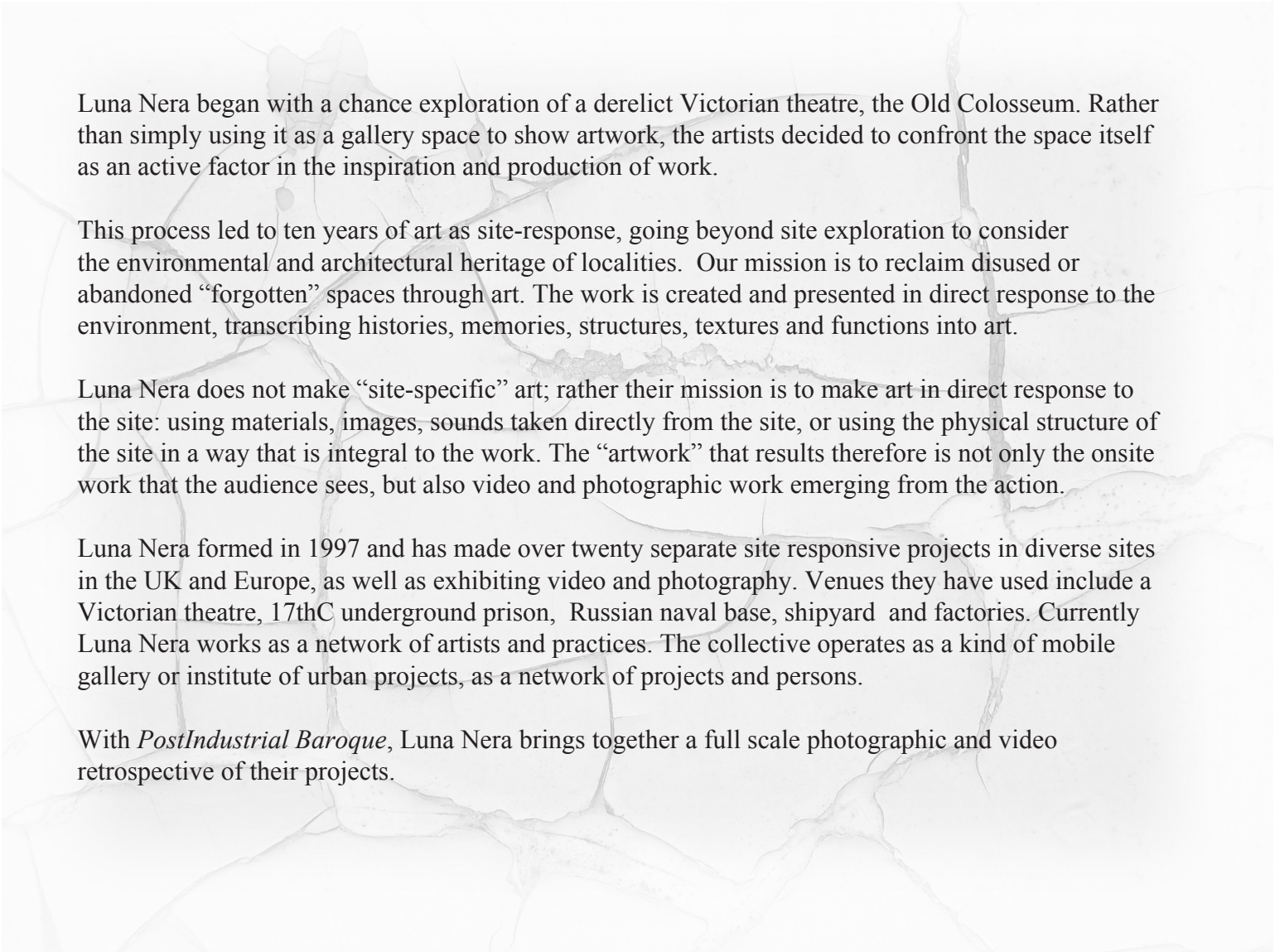


# POSTINDUSTRIAL BAROQUE

LUNA NERA



Luna Nera began with a chance exploration of a derelict Victorian theatre, the Old Colosseum. Rather than simply using it as a gallery space to show artwork, the artists decided to confront the space itself as an active factor in the inspiration and production of work.

This process led to ten years of art as site-response, going beyond site exploration to consider the environmental and architectural heritage of localities. Our mission is to reclaim disused or abandoned “forgotten” spaces through art. The work is created and presented in direct response to the environment, transcribing histories, memories, structures, textures and functions into art.

Luna Nera does not make “site-specific” art; rather their mission is to make art in direct response to the site: using materials, images, sounds taken directly from the site, or using the physical structure of the site in a way that is integral to the work. The “artwork” that results therefore is not only the onsite work that the audience sees, but also video and photographic work emerging from the action.

Luna Nera formed in 1997 and has made over twenty separate site responsive projects in diverse sites in the UK and Europe, as well as exhibiting video and photography. Venues they have used include a Victorian theatre, 17thC underground prison, Russian naval base, shipyard and factories. Currently Luna Nera works as a network of artists and practices. The collective operates as a kind of mobile gallery or institute of urban projects, as a network of projects and persons.

With *PostIndustrial Baroque*, Luna Nera brings together a full scale photographic and video retrospective of their projects.

Natasha Mayran, performance "The Derelict Sensation" London





Julian Ronnefeldt, installation  
"Reality Machines and Temporary Existences" London



# POSTINDUSTRIAL BAROQUE

The places that Luna Nera temporarily inhabits are places of power, places that resonate with both the ghosts of the past and the as-yet-unanswered questions of the present. These are sites that had great significance in the past – as public buildings affecting the economic, social and/or political systems – and are now abandoned, falling into decay.

Luna Nera occupies these spaces at the moment when their existence is being called into question. Whether it is a single building, such as Hotel St Pancras, or a whole island, such as Kronstadt, that the group occupies, the entire physical and social landscape becomes the focus for art work.

Sites are contested, controversial spaces. Often, the narrative that accompanies one's entering is a specific historical narrative. Opening a closed site is frequently a claiming of "heritage". But who writes the narrative? History is simply a collection of things that we think we know. The telling of history is certainly not objective, altered as it is by the unconscious baggage that the tellers are carrying. It is not an accident that in English the word "his-tory" contains the word "story". It is a story, how we understand the past: the different academic theories, the conflicting belief systems, the impact of politics, ideology and religion on how we understand "fact;" clearly, the elusive "objectivity" is impossible.

The opening of a site to art, however briefly, is something else. In this case the artists are able to subject the grand narrative of history to a different kind of examination. For Luna Nera, opening the closed history of a site is not to "educate" – replacing one set of propaganda with another – but to allow people to see and feel the place mediated by creativity and not authority. In places which already often have "too much" history, or conflicting historical narratives, Luna Nera seeks to present instead a set of "fresh eyes" with which to see the site. Through the lens of art, the audience can feel that the site has been neutralised and made available for imagination. The audience to forget at least for the moment the "official narrative" of the site and re-look at the site in a new way.

*PostIndustrial Baroque* is a record of art actions made under the conditions of “post-industrial art,” emerging on the cusp of the Millennium.

Postindustrial because it is art made in the wastelands of urban dereliction, in the consciousness of the postindustrial state we live in, where old structures that bound social existence, such as factories, hospitals, lidos and schools have been abandoned to new ideologies. Baroque, because the works are maximalist, exploding with drama, tension and exuberance, seeking to reactivate the vestiges of grandeur in these forgotten places.

Abandoned and decaying, abandoned and about to disappear. Traces of the past drifting into the present, fragments of time and haunting mysteries ... these are our raw materials, out of which we make art.

*Moving across the world from site to site, like archaeologists, uncovering memories, stories, small objects. Cleaning rubbish out of a building. Putting up a paper “window” where no glass has been for fifty years. Making sound in an empty machine hall. Projecting an image onto a blank crumbling wall. Bringing human life back into a sarcophagus-like void. Putting things back together.*

Gillian McIver



Kronstadt 2004, exterior view



The city as a cinema screen  
Valentina Floris and Ben Foot (SDNA)

# Kronstadt, Russia

Luna Nera undertook a two-year residential project in summer 2003 and 2004 in Kronstadt, an island located in the Gulf of Finland off the coast of St Petersburg, Russia. Kronstadt, founded by Peter the Great as a naval base to protect the city, has fallen into decay - though the town and naval base survive. Many buildings from the 17th century to the early 20th century stand empty and rotting. Luna Nera's work focused on communication and its relevance to Kronstadt, in particular the fact that the first radio broadcast took place there.

Kronstadt, 2003 & 2004

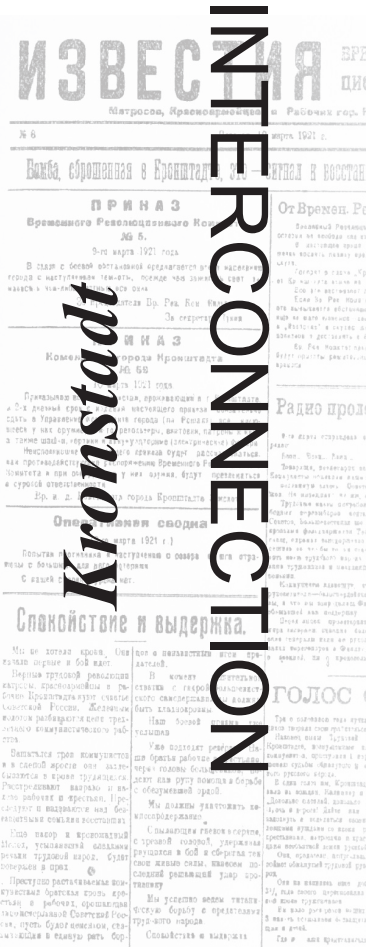


above, Valentina Floris & Ben Foot

this project was made possible by support from







The project «Interconnection» realized by Luna Nera in Kronstadt, the main strategic base of the former Russian - Soviet empire, took place during a passive time in geopolitical activity in the region.

Kronstadt is historically the force and center of the huge East Europe state, which occupies a sixth of terrestrial territory, concentrating critical stocks of raw material and power.

The city of Kronstadt always had special strategic status within European borders. Located only 30 kilometers from Saint Petersburg, (today the cultural capital of Russia with six-million population), for 300 years this small island intensively concentrated high technologies, minds and strategic resources of the whole of Russia. Kronstadt always was a peculiar elite club. Access to it has been extremely limited, in connection with its extreme privacy. This heavily-armed island, despite its small size, supervised all the territory of the Baltic Sea and the western borders of Russia.

The artists carried out a unique programme of research in this extraordinary city, selecting the most significant historical points, and its subsequent reanimation to active cultural zones. Projects were directed to the environment's re-activation, bringing new attention to this demarked social zone.





“I wanted to find out more about the tension between military attitude, soviet ethics and contemporary decline that I noticed watching people and environment in Kronstadt. What happened to the atheist cosmos, sport, discipline, ideals, visions of conquest of the world in relation to everyday reality?”  
- Agnes Domke, “Attitude & Discipline” Kronstadt 2004

*interconnection cont'd...*

БАЛТИЙСКОЕ МОРЕ  
BALTIC SEA

This was a rare chance to see in action the creation of a new, actual genre in modern art, involving the matter of geopolitical resources of a society as a creative material. This is a creative attempt to investigate the social and human realities of a selected terrestrial point, together with research of its historical myth. To create this research in public as art, and have it publicly available to the research subjects, is in itself art.

For this purpose, many local artifacts and historical documents were used, as well as live interviews with inhabitants of Kronstadt. The material was processed *in situ*, transformed into art material. St. Petersburg's Centre of Contemporary Art's art residence was the base, and the artists used a derelict naval storehouse as well as a military tent to show various installations, video-projections and objects around and within. This public activity stimulated and facilitated cultural dialogue between visitors and artists.

*Interconnection* has evoked interest from the Russian public and local authorities, who are searching for new ways to bring about the economic and social development of Kronstadt. The project united all constructive forces, especially in the young generation, for creative activity instead of social degradation. This experience is due some special attention by contemporary art institutions, which need to explore the relationship between different forms of culture and its influence on social changes.

Together we have investigated one potential point in the central European area, and have in due time delineated a phenomenon of overlapping artistic, social and economic forces and potential.

Oleg Yanushevsky, co-curator  
Kronstadt 2003 - 2004

ОГЛАНД  
ENGLAND  
background illustration "Homage to Popov" by Evgeny Strelkov



## St Pancras Chambers, former Midland Grand Hotel, St Pancras, London

Luna Nera took over part of one of London's most distinctive, mysterious and magnificent edifices, the former Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras Station. Closed since 1935 this Victorian Gothic former grand hotel was occupied by the artists just before the beginning of its reconversion back into a grand hotel and apartments. "The Derelict Sensation" took advantage of the grand guignol structure with a large exhibition, where the challenge was to work within the restrictions of a property that was both Grade A listed, yet falling apart.

"The Derelict Sensation" 2003





# Way Station

Railway termini have historically acted as catalysts of urban revitalisation, capital and enterprise. As the bulldozers and cranes moved in, the twin clocks of Kings Cross kept time over this rapidly changing area. The station and hotel were built as places of accelerated exchange and transit, and “The Derelict Sensation” did not differ so greatly in its aims.

The advance of rail brought with it a changing force of perception of the environment and scale. This site responsive event also aims at a change in perception of the site. Victorian supporters described the hotel as a “gothic phantasmagoria” –“ its value to the London skyline is inestimable...high as a cliff crowned with a pinnacled castle in a Grimm’s fairy story...drawing up with complete confidence into the sky assaulting rage of turrets”.

The romanticism surrounding the site remains as it did indeed become a “sleeping beauty” awaiting a new awakening in its complicated life cycle. However, “The Derelict Sensation” aimed at moving beyond the hotel as backdrop and emphasised the critical relationship and interaction between the event and the site - opening up the monumental to an alternative program or reading by the transgression of formal and cultural expectations.

Architecture today cannot claim permanent meaning, as it is always open to the conversion of purpose and design. The return of The Midland Grand to luxury hotel may signal a return to its original function, devoid of the elements that caused its downfall. Technology has advanced; trains no longer spew soot and thunder and the





hotel has coped with the insidious fumes of traffic for half a century. It was built to last and is determined to do just that.

Stations have always been places of theatricality and mobility. In “Remembrance of things past” Proust refers to them as “Tragic places, for in them the miracle is accomplished whereby scenes which hitherto have no existence save in our minds are about to become the scenes amongst which we are living.” They are places where things happen, where real life dramas occur and around which fictional dramas pivot. This quotation is apt in reference to “The Derelict Sensation” drawing together myriad imaginations and interpretations of the site, linking fragments of the past and present and potential futures and composing them in new constellations. Termini are not only the end of the line – they are also far-reaching distribution points.

Luna Nera’s two - day show in this terminus hotel follows the classic pattern of arrival and departure, facilitating a temporary rendezvous with the space and the artists and visitors. It is a relay, a trace – an in-between meeting place, prompting a moment of shock or turning point in expectations highlighting value in the transitory.

As if touched by a passing stranger’s glance from a train in motion.

Hilary Powell

# Sandrine Albert

Barcelona

Originally a photographer, since the mid-nineties, Sandrine Albert works in installation and the relationship between the artwork and the space it occupies.

Her installations include video, photographs, found objects and multisensory elements. In the work, the process and the action becomes as important as the finished product, and dictates its form. The meaning of the work rests not necessarily within itself, but in its context. Sandrine's working practice remains a spontaneous reaction to the environment, from which it evolves into art.

Sandrine is the founder of Luna Nera BCN, developing site-responsive projects in Barcelona.



# Agnes Domke

Berlin

Trained as a painter at the Dresden Academy of Art and the Beaux-Arts in Paris, Agnes Domke's work examines traces of folk cultures, through paintings, installations and interactive performances.

Her work references ethnography and in particular ethnographic museum display and costume design.

She has exhibited widely in Germany, Russia and Finland, and created projects in Estonia and Lithuania. Agnes has worked with Luna Nera since 2004.







Agnes Domke, performance, Belfast

# The Sihl Paper Factory

Zurich

This was a large paper factory in the working-class south suburbs of Zurich. It was empty for more than a decade and was the site of the 2003 Dada Festival. Derelict, the site had many items of disused machinery, bolts of paper and objects lying around, which Luna Nera used to make the installation and performance work “Painting Machine”.

Luna Nera with Milo Taylor  
“Painting Machine,” 2002  
curator Mark Divo



# Valentina Floris

London

Valentina Floris is a video and installation artist. Her video and installations create environments that are at once familiar and sinister, playing on the fault line between dream, memory and nightmare.

Valentina Floris also works together with Ben Foot with making large scale projections, indoor or outdoor, which have been shown at the Victoria & Albert Museum, the ICA, Sadlers Wells and other major sites.



# The Battery Factory

Oberschoeneweide, Berlin

This late 19th century structure was part of the huge AEG complex designed by Peter Behrens for the southeastern industrial suburb of Oberschoeneweide.

“Helden der Arbeit” 2002



Gillian McIver, “C8H10N4O2 / C6H12O6”



# Ben Foot

London

Ben Foot is interested in the creative possibilities of technology and the art work that emerges he sees as a by-product of the creative impulse of experimentation.

Ben works with digital media, video, lights, electronics and kinetic objects.

In the 90s he was part of the Grey Area and Fur Factory projects in East London, developing and presenting avant-garde projects.



# Former power-generating plant

Nizhny Novgorod, banks of Oka river, Russia

The overgrown derelict structures that exist here, in full view of the thriving city yet completely isolated, form a significant part of the city's history.

"Floodplain of Time", curator Evgeny Strelkov 2000





## Natasha Mayran

Paris

Natasha Mayran performed at the first Luna Nera event in 1997 and has been closely associated with the group ever since. Natasha creates highly original site responsive performances that combine any or all of: trapeze, dance, dervish-whirling, singing, vocal sounds, original music and video projection.





# Harland and Wolff, former HQ

Belfast

The former HQ of the world's largest shipyard remained impressive, set in the wasteland of Queen's Island since shipbuilding has declined. The Drawing Offices were remarkable Neo-classical structures flooded with natural light, overlooking the slipways where the ships, including Titanic, were built.

"Titanic HQ" 2005





# Gillian McIver

London



Gillian McIver's work investigates grand narratives and narrative structures through site-responsive works that include film, video, installation and photography.

Following studies in History and Philosophy in Canada, she trained in London as a film-maker and photographer. From the specific to the universal and from the universal to the specific, her work questions the metaphysics and epistemology of history, memory and lived experience.

*"I am interested in revealing images which are very strong; that offer a glimpse of past worlds and indistinct realities; where the boundaries between fiction and documentary blur, and memories take on a life of their own."*



## The House of Detention, London

This underground prison was built in the 17th century as a remand prison and housed some of England's most notorious felons. The underground chambers are constructed out of the natural limestone hollows under Mount Pleasant in Clerkenwell. The original prison aboveground structure burnt down in the early 20th century and the prison proper closed at the end of the 19th. Until 1998 it operated as a kind of museum, though the poor and tacky exhibits could not vie with the fascinating structure itself. An attempt was made to turn this dismal catacomb into a trendy restaurant but needless to say, no planning permission was given. It is now closed and there has been talk of filling the whole structure with sand, as happened to most of the rest of the limestone caves underneath Mount Pleasant.

Luna Nera at the House of Detention was an exhibition of works and performances exploring the labyrinthine space through themes of incarceration, both physical and psychological.

The House of Detention, 1999

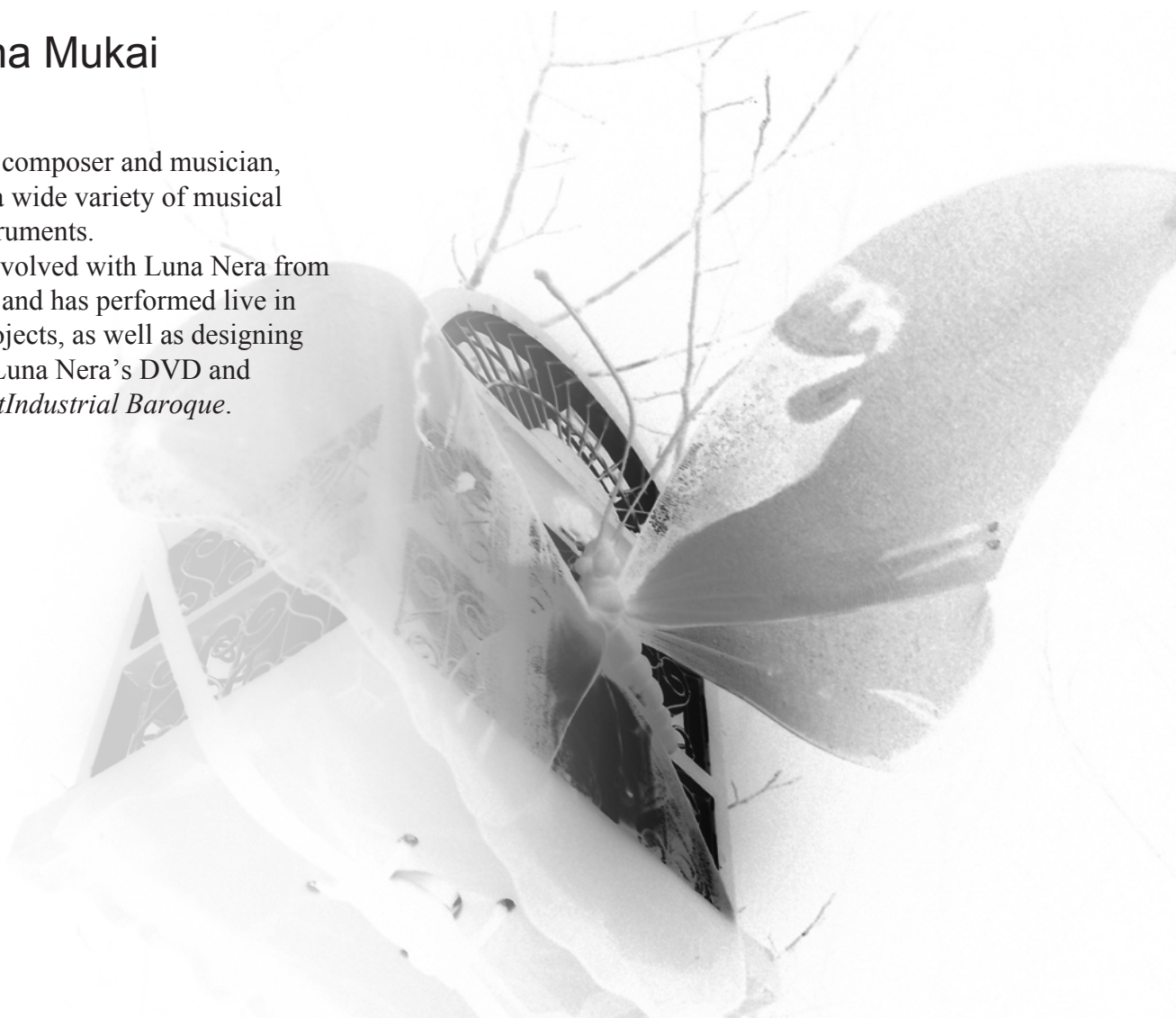


# Takatsuna Mukai

London

Takatsuna is a composer and musician, working with a wide variety of musical forms and instruments.

He has been involved with Luna Nera from the beginning, and has performed live in Luna Nera projects, as well as designing the sound for Luna Nera's DVD and exhibition *PostIndustrial Baroque*.

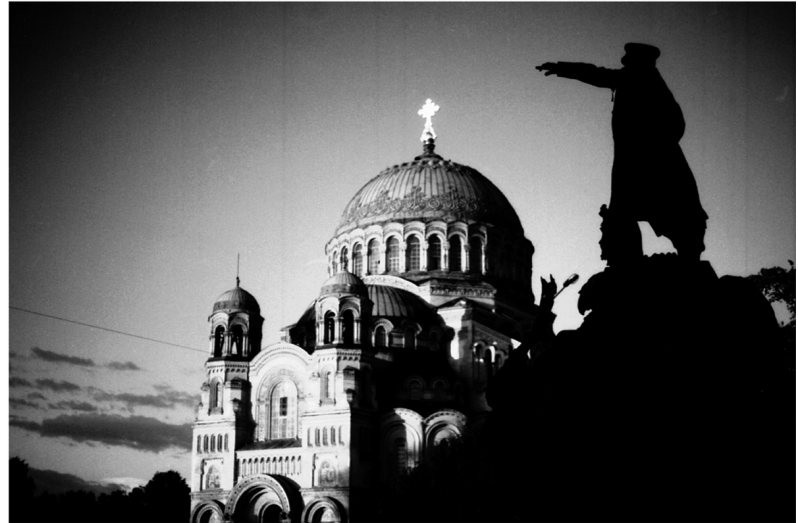


# Julian Ronnefeldt

Berlin

Julian Ronnefeldt apprenticed as a freelance advertising/still life photographer in Düsseldorf before moving to the UK where he studied Photography at St Martins and Westminster College. Julian works with Video, Film (16mm/8mm) projections, and installations. His photographic work encompasses experimental printing techniques and presentation. His installation work often involves exploration of the physical manifestation of the living organism, in response to mechanism and machinery or the built environment. He also makes live site-specific performances on similar themes.

Julian currently lives and works in Berlin where he exhibits and manages an artist-run space.







Julian Ronnefeldt, "Titanic Dead", installation with performance, Belfast

# Hilary Powell

London

Hilary Powell situates her installation practice within the derelict and abandoned sites of the city to construct a form of “event architecture” in the creation of highly atmospheric environments. She holds a PhD in cultural studies at Goldsmiths College, investigating the idea of “junk space” in the city, producing a highly visual documentary journey through these sites of imagination and their potential urban futures.

She works with Optimistic Productions, making independent short film and television projects.

Hilary has worked on various projects with Luna Nera since 2002.

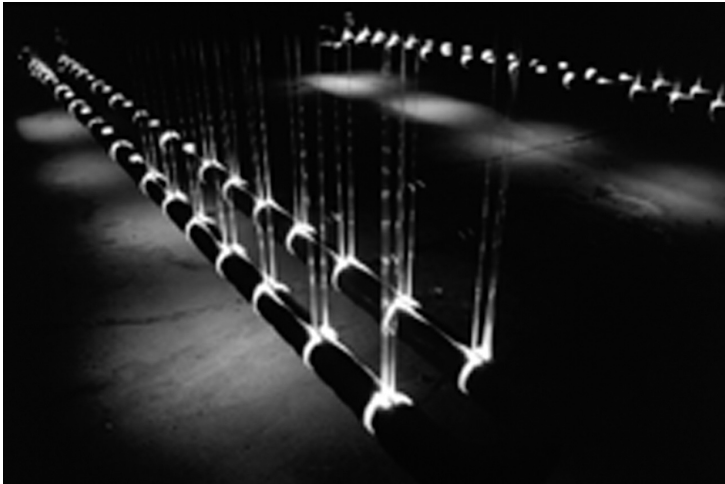


# Chris Singer

London

Chris Singer has been exploring unusual buildings in London since the mid-90's. He works across a variety of art forms including installation and sculpture with found objects.

Chris was a founder of Luna Nera's first incarnation, the Colosseum Project, based in the Old Colosseum in Dalston. He has worked with Luna Nera on various projects.





# Nazir Tanbouli

London

Born and educated in Alexandria, Egypt, Nazir's work is based mainly in drawing and encompasses a range of 2D works, including mural painting and large scale drawing as well as video animation and installation.

He has participated in many exhibitions in the UK and internationally, and also collaborates with other artists.

Nazir began participating with Luna Nera in 2005.







Valentina Floris, video still

Gillian McIver



Artists who have worked with Luna Nera include

Sumer Ere / The Tiger Lillies / Dirizhable / Evgeny Strelkov /  
Gil Bensmana / Lennie Lee / Marissa Carnesky /  
Jenny Brockmann / Miguel Santos / Lukas Saizopath (Luna Nera  
BCN) / Olga Lopez (Luna Nera BCN) / Leo Cayuela (Luna Nera  
BCN) / Michael Alstad / Milo Taylor / Nicola Green and Jairo  
Zaldua / Adrian Palka / Mikhail Pogarsky / Andrei Suzdalev and  
Olga Xan / Dmitry Alexeyev / Gruppe TRO / The Toolroom Salon  
/ Phil Dirtbox / Lorena Guzman / Andy Bolus - Evil Moisture /  
Claudine Schaeffer-Legrand / The Jesus Underground / Bingo /  
Caia / Liliana Klimova / Michael Park / Mark Squire / Mark Video  
/ Stephanie Crouail / Derek Hart / Charro Corrales / Stelios  
Styllianou / Kos Ahmet / Elfie Brandther / Stephanie Mas / Jo Vox  
/ Juana Serrat / David Remondo / Eran Tsafir / Rey Akdogan  
/ Anna Fras-Jones / Jean-Marc Teychenne / Joel Cahen / Jen  
McConachie / Kelty McKinnon / Liane Lang / ...



Special Thanks to The Globe Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne  
[www.globegallery.org](http://www.globegallery.org)



## PRINCIPAL EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS, 1997 - 2007

2007 - "In Situ" Farinera del Clot, Barcelona (Luna Nera BCN)

-- "Coldstore" Kuhlhaus in Gleisdreieck, Berlin

2006 - "Vidifestival" Valencia

-- "Climatic Conditional" Smetanovo Embankment, Prague

-- "Generalized Empowerment" International Conference on Urban Interventions, London

-- "Lighten Up" Wysing Art Centre, Cambridge.

2005 - "Urban Clearance" Belfast

-- "l'eta nomade" Mattatoio, Rome

-- Optica Festival Gijón Asturias, España

-- "Luna Nera Video Art" Helsinki

2004 - 6e Biennale Champ Libre, Montréal

-- "Interconnection," Residency Project, Kronstadt Russia.

2003 - "the derelict sensation" St Pancras, London

-- "Into the Deep Blue" Oberschoeneweide, Berlin.

-- "Cross Encounters" Residency Project, Kronstadt

-- DADA Festwochen, Sihlpapierfabrik , Zurich

2002 - "Helden der Arbeit?" Batteriefabrik, Berlin.

-- BackUp Festival, E-Werk, Weimar

2001 - "Art Moscow" art fair - Central House of Artists

2000 - "Present Perfect" CCA Nizhny Novgorod

-- Festival of Performance and Experimental Art, St Petersburg

-- "Floodplain of Time" Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

-- "Thames-Oka Project" London

-- "Luna Nera" Dunn Street Factory, London

1999 - "Colosseum Project V" The House of Detention, London

1998 - "Colosseum Project IV" London

-- "Colosseum Project III" London

1997 - "Colosseum Project II the Old Colosseum Theatre" London

-- "Colosseum Project I the Old Colosseum Theatre" London

[www.luna-nera.com](http://www.luna-nera.com)

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