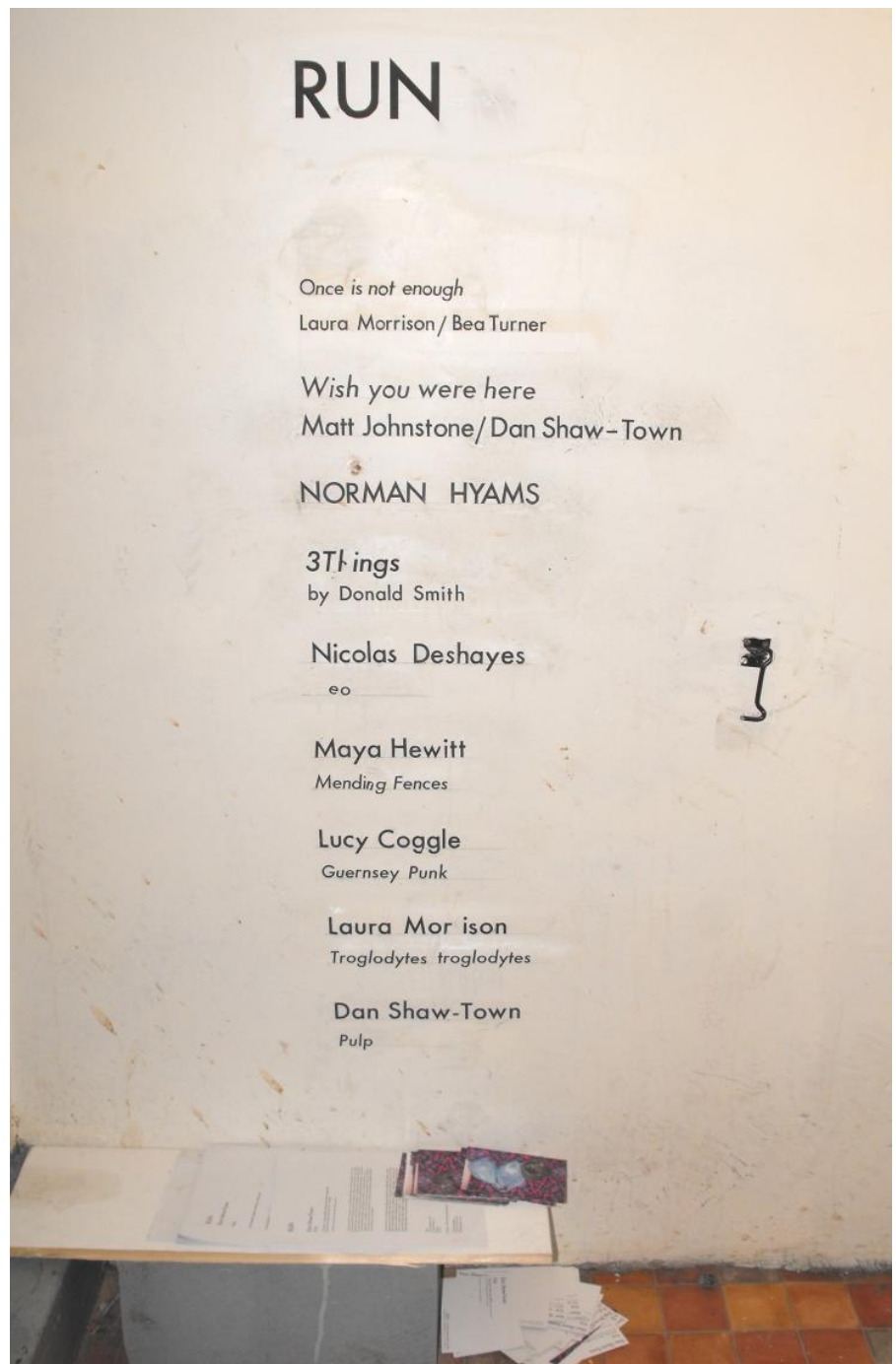


RUN Gallery's Hana Noorali and Lynton Talbot speak to Becky Hunter in a pub in North London, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

RUN has been the catalyst for excellent exhibitions of emerging artists since 2006. With various line-ups in various London and Berlin locations, (including apartments, a disused ballroom and the Whitechapel Gallery, a major public space) RUN continues to grow and develop, providing an open, experimental and relational experience for artists. RUN's projects have drawn interest from contemporary art figures such as Fiona Banner, Lisa Le Feuvre, who acted as guest curators during one exhibition, as well as working with Donald Smith, director of Chelsea Space. Others at different times involved in organising RUN's practice include Simon Christopher, Rebecca Ribichini and Tanja Busse.



**BH:** *Can you say something about the beginnings of RUN and where the very appropriate name came from?*

**HN:** RUN started off with someone that I studied with at Chelsea College of Art, a woman called Rebecca Ribichini. We moved to Berlin for six months, and both of us at the time were feeling really unsure about what we were making as artists and decided to make exhibitions... It was very spur of the moment, we got convinced that you didn't have to pay for space, you could just, kind of, do it, and we did do it. We had a show in our apartment in Berlin; we had a show in someone else's apartment; we had two shows in this old ballroom... that's how RUN became peripatetic: we would move around, see what we could get for free, people that we knew. But the story behind the name... We had this slightly drunk conversation about what we would call the project: my surname is Noorali, which begins with an N, and Ribichini begins with an R.

**LT:** ...it could be Ribichini Noorali... or maybe [that's] a bit too much for a gallery that doesn't have a gallery. And then R & N, and then...

**LT:** RUN seemed the obvious thing. And also that tied in with the fact that we were peripatetic. But also I think at that stage, the idea that you could be a gallery without having a gallery, that became a conversation about having a gallery being more about an ideology or an intention than actually having four walls to hang artwork on. So then the word RUN became fitting in terms of that kind of thing; it worked... But I guess if we're talking about how it started, the current or more recent incarnation of it: when Hana was doing those kinds of things in Berlin, the Whitechapel contacted her via Myspace or something, saying, 'this sounds quite exciting, do you want to do this in London, do you want to use the Whitechapel Gallery? Perhaps you could call part of the Whitechapel Gallery RUN Gallery for a night.'

**HN:** We had a show [in Berlin] that was opening three days before the Whitechapel show and we couldn't afford the flight back for both of us, so I called Lynton and said, 'how do you feel about curating a show with RUN?'

**LT:** We put together a show that was more about an event, or something more ephemeral or throwaway, something that could exist as an artwork for an evening only, so it was kind of like an exhibition, or an event or a situation, masquerading as an exhibition for one night that was called RUN Gallery. That was I guess our first foray into doing things in London.

**BH:** *Do you think of arranging events like this to be your artwork?*

**HN:** Do we think it's our practice? I don't...

**LT:** But if you're talking about whether your practice is putting exhibitions together, [if that] is an art practice, bearing in mind that we came from a fine art background, it's interesting from my point of view, because I'm still a practising artist... That show [at the Whitechapel] I did think about in that kind of way. My idea of what good contemporary curating is, from an artist's perspective, which I suppose is what I am, is about taking things and putting things together to form an idea or a narrative, or to direct an audience to a particular reading of something.

**HN:** But do you think you're a curator?

**LT:** Yeah, but I think you can be both... A curator will do the same thing an artist will do, but instead of using tools and materials that artists have available, their tools are a different set: artworks and artists, but ultimately the idea is that you're driving a direction for an audience to go in...

**HN:** Maybe that's why we work, because we each have a different approach. I think, as a practising artist in that sense, the approach that I took to what I made was vastly different to how I work now. Just in terms of I don't curate, all the formal understanding of what it means to curate, as people would describe it.

**BH:** *Either you're responding to an artist, or you're kind of imposing your own thought, or...*

**HN:** I like to see it as collaborating as well, which is very important to us...

**LT:** When Hana came back from Berlin, and said perhaps we do need a permanent space, what had become apparent to us all was that trying to do it nomadically was quite a lot of work: it's not that easy to occupy an empty space and put on an exhibition.

**HN:** It is in Berlin, but not in London.

**LT:** The idea, the model didn't translate that well into London.

**HN:** Logistically it ended up being more expensive.

**LT:** If we were to support a program of artists that we liked and cared about consistently, we may be better off doing it from a permanent location if we could find one. Simon came on board, and had already expressed an interest in doing this so we joined forces. He had the opportunity to use a space, which we then occupied for a year and a half on Tudor Grove. That's the RUN Gallery that most people know and that's when we got the website, it consolidated all the things we were doing previously into one very focused program that came out of one building and I suppose we took on the look and feel of a real gallery... it gave us a much more solid identity.

**HN:** This idea of a gallery structure, or a mode of operating, is very important... Even though our [new] space isn't going to have a commercial concern – it's stupid in the current economic climate to open another commercial gallery, you know, there is the potential it could shut in the next half a year - but I think even in terms of the people that write about us or the curators that we become involved with, for everything to grow together, that's something that has always been very important with us. We're still working with a number of people that we were working with before and those relationships -that there's actually dialogue and things are actually being built is really important - as opposed to saying, 'we have this amount of space' and show or pick interesting people, but not continue that discussion, that debate.

**LT:** I think essentially, what we would try and do in the new space is operate like a [commercial] gallery over many years... a good relationship, have the artist's career interests at heart. We're not looking to make money out of this. But of course that doesn't mean we're opposed to the idea of selling artist's work – that is intrinsic to

their career. You want to put the artist's work in good collections and have affiliations with museums, so of course we will endeavour to do those things, but it's not with the intention of earning money. That's kind of a realistic thing we've got.

**BH:** *How would you sustain that over a period of years then, financially? Keep working really hard?*

**HN:** We have other jobs, Lynton and I were both working at the Lisson Gallery, for a number of years in different forms, for more times and less times, and they're a gallery that influenced us. But we've always had jobs, even when we were both studying...

**LT:** Of course, you can do great things with really great economy as well; you don't have to spend lots of money. We're talking about supporting an artist, allowing them to do whatever they want, but the thing is, it comes back to the relationship you have with that artist... We'll have continued conversations and friendships with people and we'll talk and communicate and budget accordingly.

**HN:** The current times are all about being DIY, I think. If you want to do it, you've just got to do it.

**BH:** *Do you ever get tired of work? Or is it because you love it so much?*

**LT:** No, not at all. It's tiring, but you don't get tired of it.

**HN:** I think we've got a really good network of support, not financially at all, but we've met, through places that we've worked and through doing what we do, we've met some really, really amazing people.

**LT:** Supportive, and interested.

**HN:** Even with advice, like there's always someone you can be, 'oh shit we don't know what to do.' We've been extremely lucky.

**LT:** Of course I think London can be a really draining and difficult place to be, and you find yourself struggling and a bit miserable in London.

**HN:** When you've got no money, it's the worst place to be.

**LT:** But I think students who left art college find this a bit easier, because being at art school is all about being adaptable and flexible, and that's what you learn: you know that you want to do something with your life but you know you can't do it immediately and be financially dependent on what you want to be. I think most people who are serious about pursuing an art career - being an artist or a gallery or whatever, any sort of cultural practitioner - soon learns that you've got to work out balance.

**HN:** But that's life.

**LT:** And you enjoy it.

**HN:** That's how it is. Like anything, if you've got two kids and you want to go study, you balance those things in the same way.

**LT:** It's about what your intentions are and what your ambitions are and what you're motivated by, and you just go and do those things.

**BH:** *What are your ambitions and plans for the future?*

**LT:** We're looking for a space, we're homeless at the moment. As a gallery, and as a thing, it's very much alive... but our immediate hard work at the moment is finding somewhere.

**BH:** *But it's really good that it still exists all the time within community or within a set of relationships.*

**HN:** Just because we haven't had a space for six months... Dan Shaw-Town and I are emailing, we're talking to certain artists that we want to work with, what you do day to day, your conversations don't stop.

**LT:** Also, our confidence in the fact that it still exists without a space refers back to the fact that that's how we started anyway. Not having four walls to hang pictures on doesn't phase us in terms of the existence of a gallery. We've been there before...

**BH:** *Have you got any certain plans for the first show or is that secret at the moment?*

**LT:** I'll try and answer this question hypothetically. I guess we're unsure whether it's going to be something along the lines of a group show that will set out what our intentions are as a gallery: who we're going to be working with, outline what it is we're doing and how it might be slightly different to what it is we did before. Or maybe a solo exhibition, somebody who is a good example of the way we've changed things in the gallery. Either way, we're going to be looking to show how we've moved on a little bit.

**HN:** Stepped up.

**LT:** Things will be slightly different. Our ethos and our approach will be totally the same, but it might be evident that we are a bit more ambitious in terms of what we are prepared to do and prepared to show, and how we're going to do it.

RUN's new space will open in London in Spring 2009.