**The Making of the Winter Lantern Trail – an artist’s perspective**

**Jess Kay talks about her role working on the Winter Lantern Trail as an assistant artist.**

**How were you involved in the creative process?**

‘Andrew Kim, one of the lead artists, from Thungumajig, already had a general plan for what would be going on around the trail sites. He described all the different things that he’d like us to make, and the other two lead artists, Kerith from Handmade Parade and David from Rag and Bone, outlined their visions too. The team of 6 assistant artists walked the trail route with Andrew, then he asked what we’d be interested in helping with.

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We all put forward our ‘makers wish list’. The leading artist in charge of each section gave a brief, and we could come up with a design for our own idea within that. We each had our main project to design but on top of that we all had to help each other’s structures. I designed a giant slug but Sascha and Stefan built it. Kerith’s area was the moving city but she gave me completely free rein with my design. I showed her a drawing and I felt we were on the same wavelength as she just said yes, I could get on and make it.

I went diving in a skip and picked out cardboard boxes and bits and bobs, used tissue paper on the inside of the windows, and put fairy lights in the boxes. It’s cute. If there’d been time I’d have wanted to add way more detail like street lights and washing lines, but time was limited.’

**Our involvement during the event:**

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*‘*All the artists helped run the event and we were also part of the performance. That was part of the job description – they were interested in people who were willing to get stuck in at the event. We all went in convoy, driving things down there, unloading the vans and setting up puppets, getting poles in the ground, plugging things in and carrying batteries, alongside the 101 and Corn Exchange teams who were also helping set up on the day. We were also part of the performance. We were either pushing houses around, puppeteering or switching lights on and off.’

**Reflections on what was learnt:**

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‘I got to practise more willow work. Dave showed us a bit more welding so I got to do more of that which was good. We also learnt how things can be done differently during a pandemic.

It had been a really horrendous and difficult year, and suddenly I was around all these people again and feeling something positive. Rather than obsessing over news and COVID numbers, and being isolated and alone in my van, I was creating for an event which was going to make everyone’s year feel nicer, in a year where people hadn’t had much going on. The team was so brilliant. Everyone was really really fricking nice, really fun, really positive. I honestly did absolutely love it. It just felt really great having breakfast, lunch and dinner together. Even having the chef Lou cooking for us, we were really spoilt – we had fires in the evening and stories. It was a really lovely team and I didn’t want those ten days to end. I was so grateful and so relieved to have something going on. I made up the lantern packs with Olivia and delivered them to schools for a few days, too.’