



# LONDON 2012 CULTURAL OLYMPIAD - LAND OF GIANTS

## THE BRIEF...

To **WRITE** / **DESIGN** / **DIRECT** the biggest outdoor show ever to be staged in Northern Ireland on the historic Titanic slipway in Belfast.

To be performed to a live audience of 30,000 - the show recruited cast, crew and creatives from across all communities within the province and was charged with reflecting the giants of Northern Irish history and inspiring the giants of the future.



## THE SITE...

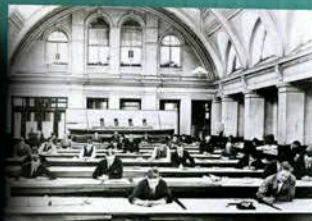
Hallowed ground for anybody remotely interested in *anything* let alone historical gold. But also a unique staging challenge with a long (250 metre) but narrow site one would expect from the slipway that built and launched the HMS Titanic. In addition the new Titanic Visitors Centre anchored the bow but also crucially for me, inspired flight and my imagination with its wing and book-like facade.



## THE IDEA...

3 months of fact finding and research uncovered an ideal linear narrative.

The consensus that the nation was a sleeping giant gave me Gulliver's Travels which then led historically to linen making, a glorious musical heritage, of course ship building and a photo album device that enabled the show to flick back and forward in time.



Most powerful of all were the people of Northern Ireland and their words. Poetry and prose ran through the country like the river Lagan that snaked through the site. Seamus Heaney led me to the T.S. Elliot Prize winning local poet Sinéad Morrissey who wrote poetry and prose that ultimately formed the backbone of the entire show.

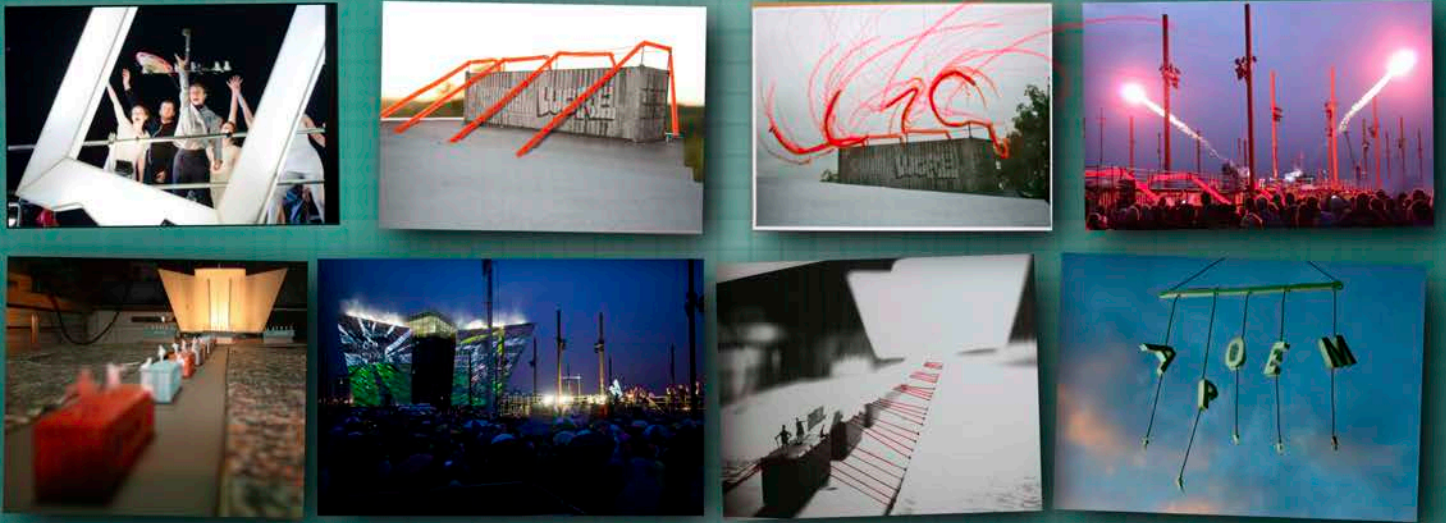
Our main character was then born - a young girl called Grace - who caught a letter **A** that fell from space - and planted it in the ground.



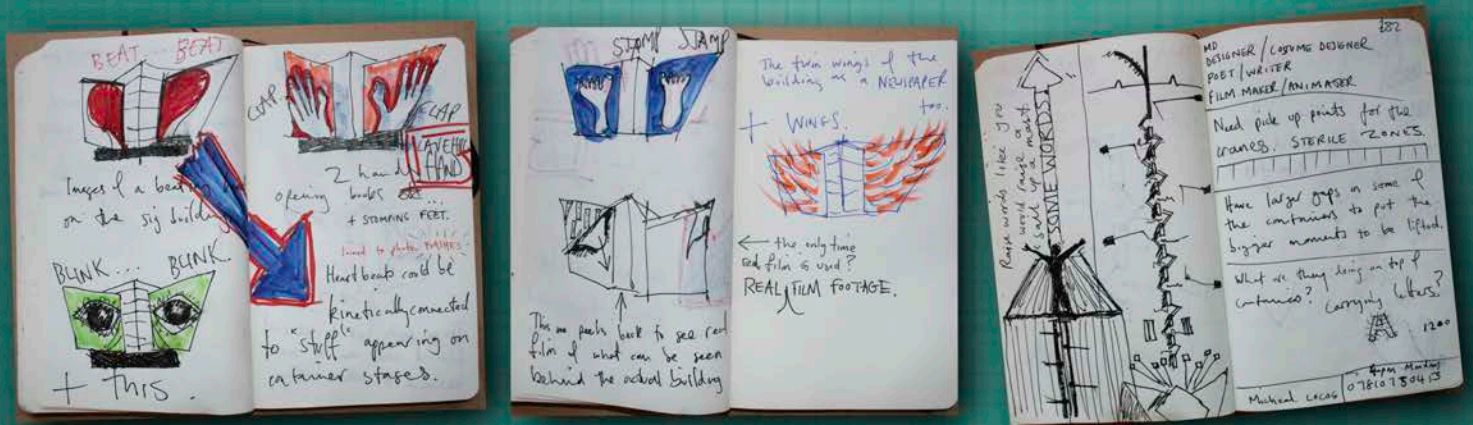


# THE ARTWORK...

The visual identity leapt out at me as concept became reality. Reflecting the maritime history, shipping containers then naturally formed the backbone of the set.



My notebooks are always a crucial part of any project.



And ultimately letters that became words that became ideas - drove the show.





# THE POEM & PROJECTION...

## LETTER A

(part 1)

In the beginning, a shining white letter  
hurtling out of the dust and the ether  
through stratosphere, atmosphere, layers of weather-  
a comet, a meteorite, spark from a star, seed-coat, ovum, germ head, spore  
from where the spooling darks of deep space are-  
the sea's blue huge, the sky's blue sliding away on a curve and the hard earth  
rising

at double the rate of the speed of the falling-  
it tucks in its wings, douses its fire, to land-like a coin-on the palm of her hand-  
get buried, like treasure, deep in the ground-  
blackness below sunlight above-  
to flourish on Warmth Water LOVE-

+++++

## LETTER A

(part 2)

Deep in the ground, bewitched by her wishing,  
the letter's unsettled, cracks open its casing  
and breaks into two, into four, into blooming unmapped and unwitnessed,  
expanding, expanding... The cell in the dark womb splits.

Finger by finger,  
like fretwork or frost, mothers make daughters  
who turn into hosts for their own sons and daughters and for those daughters'  
ghosts.

The river that runs through the city carries their mark.  
The giant come down from the mountain is gifted their work: factories and  
furnaces, rope, motor parts,  
bolts of stiffened cloth that cover half the earth  
in linen's tracery, and a single magnificent ship  
-avatar, princess, weather-bearer mystic-  
He's gifted finer materials forged in invisible workshops: street-songs and  
choruses, lullabies, flute music,  
poems scrawled in margins about blackbirds, myths- He's gifted postcards sent  
by husbands lost at sea,  
stories of gain, stories of ruin, stories of you and me- He's gifted the endless  
changing stream  
of letters and words that make us human,  
that cannot be believed-  
that a small child planted like a pomegranate seed and then hid her face in her  
sleeve...

And the shaft that shatters everything is GRACE  
Longer than life  
Higher than space

Sinead Morrissey





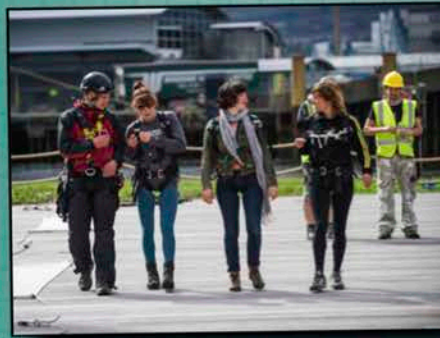
# SOME FACTS...

402 days from start to show

24 drafts of script

22 days of rehearsal

400 volunteer performers



"In a busy week of making history with handshakes, floods and world class Golf, Belfast has pulled off another headline grabbing feat: Land of Giants. Within minutes it is clear that Land of Giants is something very special indeed".

The Huffington Post

