

The Big Surround: Nancy and Tarra talk Immersivity on Texas Stages



TARRA GAINES

Since we (Nancy Wozny & Tarra Gaines) have an ongoing conversation on what defines an immersive performance, we decided to share some of our adventures and to make some of our endless road trip banter public.

Now Now Oh Now **Rude Mechs**

Of all of our plays, Now Now Oh Now probably best fits someone's definition of immersive theatre. It is definitely the hardest we've ever asked the individual audience member to work – lots of walking around and some puzzle-solving... but we never drop wholly into any fiction, so it's hard to make anything truly immersive, if that is the goal – to forget where you are? Is it? It has always been important to us to keep the audience active and engaged in the work – even if it is as small a gesture as yanking them out of the fiction occasionally to notice we are all in the room together.

-Lana Lesley, Co-Producing Artistic Director, Rude Mechs



NW: On the theme of escape rooms, we were more or less in one during in the first half of Rude Mechs *Now Now Oh Now*. In our discussions we kept returning to this experience. Why do you think?

TG: Experiencing more Texas immersive theater these last two years, I realize how successful I find the show depends a lot on balance, that fine balance between the immersive qualities, audience agency elements and theatrical aspects of a production. *Now Now* gets that balance almost perfect. The escape room/puzzle middle section of the work gives the audience an opportunity to join in on the play of the play but it never overwhelms the dramatic, scripted nature of the show as a whole.

It also contained that one so important element for the hippest of immersive theater shows, a few minutes dedicated for the audience to drink their shot of included-in-the-ticket-price alcohol.

NW: A delicious concoction of Tequila and grapefruit juice to be exact.