

Annika Andersson

Artistic Statement

I am a hopeful pessimist who will rage against the dying of the light in the ways I can with the time that is given to me.

I remember planting myself in the corners of rooms. **A wallflower.** The fresh vines of curiosity twisted past the ends of my fingertips, the blossoms of hope unfurled themselves from my eyes, the roots of my voice stretched down my spine and into the ground below. I longed to take a step into the fresh earth before me, but the thorns of fear rooted themselves into my skin. I had once left a trail of petals behind me with childlike abandon, but now, I found myself planted on the sidelines. **Why?**

It is the “why” that brought me to storytelling. It is through the power of others’ stories that I was able to find community and discover new paths. Shared vulnerability is where I was inspired to pick up my pen and chisel away at the indescribable world that infects us all.

My stories often find themselves in **magical surrealism.** I love physicalizing sensations that seem impossible to express. The relationship between the past and present, the birthplace of an individual’s belief, the ruins of a system that trapped a generation... these are my creative inspirations. A monster cloaked in sentimental mementos, a woman masking her scream with a laugh, generational ghosts that haunt abandoned American alleyways... these are my untrustworthy friends. I believe in sharing these stories with audiences **not to give direct answers, but to spark introspection and action.** I believe the “work” does not end with the curtain falling. Instead, the “work” is sparked there, and the audience carries their ignited torch forward on their own. What was the wind whispering when the heroine exited the stage? I want the individual to decide for themselves.

Alongside this encouragement of self-empowerment, my stories emphasize the **healing power of community.** I do not believe in open-ended finales that have over-emphasized despair. Creatives hold the hearts of people in our hands, and I believe it is irresponsible to squeeze someone dry with no intention of giving them water. In a world where shared spaces are decreasing, loneliness is an epidemic, and it is easy to feel invisible in a world overflowing with information... **an audience should not be taken for granted.** The theatre is inherently a communal act. It is a gift to captivate an individual’s attention, and a priceless treasure when we can stretch that moment of connection into a lasting relationship. I am not afraid to sit in the darkness with my audiences, but I will not abandon them there.

It is in the sowing of these creative seeds that this wallflower discovers she’s standing in a **rich garden.** My garden has taken root within **Chicago,** my identity as a **queer woman,** my work in the housing program at a **disability rights organization,** my love for **hosting** friends and events, my heart for **family,** and my motivation to keep fighting for a better tomorrow.

In my stories, we will exercise empathy together, leave the space with our own conclusions, but know we are not alone.