

The Documenting Crew arrive!

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I had a quick word with some of the documenting crew who arrived last night to cover another year of the NRLA. I asked them about their experience of documenting the work – and how they decide who documents what...

How has your experience of documenting the NRLA changed over the years?

Stuart Simpson: In terms of technology, obviously the first forms of documentation were on pneumatic tape, then VHS, and now digital - so the whole format has changed throughout the years.

Richard Graham: In the five years I've been documenting the NRLA, I've worked to make the process of documenting more discrete, and more subtle in the very intimate works. As the work gets more intimate, you try to become more invisible. I've done pieces of work where you record a cast of 300 and then you get invited to document a one-on-one. You have to adapt very quickly and almost make the camera work from an audience point of view.

So you are making decisions in the moment?

Richard: Exactly, and obviously this makes you more of an audience member. Over the years, I've learnt to be more discrete in the documenting of these one-to-one situations.

Are you very conscious that you are documenting for future audiences?

Stuart: Yes. It's a totally different experience you are having to the audience. As an audience member you can immerse yourself more. I think – because I've never actually had the experience of being an audience member in the eight years I've covered the NRLA!

Ian Finley: For me, it is just a case of documenting it without being stylistic. We have a huge amount of work to film – shooting anything from 160 to 200 hours throughout the five days of the NRLA. The main thing is to remain discrete as Graham said. I do quite a bit of documenting work, and I'm really happy to cover the NRLA because with live art it could be the only time the work is seen.

Stuart: It is interesting to see certain types of performance coming back and to see performances being re-performed! I like that. In the documenting, there is the negotiation between yourself as the documenter, and the artist. We are artists in our own right and therefore sensitive to the requirements of each piece whether it is an installation, a one-to-one or a small group being taken around a space. We really know how to respond in a sensitive way, which is why we are a good team.

How do you decide who will cover what performance?

Stuart: Actually, it's very interesting. You will have people, 'Can I do that one?' There is a little bit of consensus and if you want to see a particular artist, you will get that artist. The thing is you are not seeing the performance because you have this interface, this technology, between you and the performance!

Any particular performers you are looking forward to seeing this year?

Stuart: Even though I've been involved in the documentation of the festival for eight of the thirty years, this particular festival includes artists whose work I've seen through archive material only: people like Ian Hinchliffe, Kirsten Lavers – names of people I've seen, but not live. There are a lot of people I'm looking forward to seeing in real time!