

Case Study  
Fiona Wright  
27<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Tape 1

3:31

AP

It's Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004, the PARIP team is here in Newcastle speaking with Fiona Wright for the next case study, the PARIP case studies. So thank you for agreeing to talk to us and brining us into your home... I'll just go through, as we discussed before the cameras were rolling... the one camera was rolling... it's quite a formal, self-consciously formal procedure to gather a range of answers to the same questions by a range of very different practitioner researchers in order that the community at large has some resource of cross comparability. So the problematics involved in such a, sort of, empirical data collection activity notwithstanding... that's the process that we're going through. You've given me key words, and your key words are: performance, dance, documentation, writing, representation and visuality and the way in which you organised the questions were under the headings: context, dissemination, knowledges, citation and archiving. So I'll start out with the context questions, and the first one is how does your practice engage with issues of professionalism.

4:54

FW

Issues of professionalism... how does MY practice engage with issues of professionalism... well, it happens in a professional context.

AP

And what do you mean by that?

FW

... I make performances... quite often funded through... public money... Arts Council, commissions through venues... and... those get performed in public spaces and... there's a professional context... it DOES happen in a... in the academic context but only if that is a venue, professional venue, anyway but make-... writing and submitting my PhD I'm actually... quite deliberately going to make a performance that is for the academic context actually. So I mean... really BAsically I'm engag-... it happens in professional context and I get paid for it, normally.

6:13

AP

Is that how you're defining "professionalism" then? 'Cause I mean it's...

FW

Well I'm sort of thinking... through it and it's also it's what I do, it's what I work at. It's also what I teach, so it's kind of, it IS my... it is my skill. My practice is... actually, in a set of round about ways, how I live. So... it IS my profession, yea, even though I say to younger... artists "Don't expect to live by it" but I think I mean "live by" completely only performing. I don't know how else to answer that question, really, that's how I kind of...

6:59

AP

'Cause that set of questions is XXXX the next one is XXXX about pedagogy, but there's also the one about... research epistemologies which you had under third heading of knowledges rather than context which is quite interesting, so you split off the research epistemologies question from the question of professionalism and pedagogy... so I was just wondering, maybe we need to talk about research epistemologies... first...?

FW

Yea. Whatever makes sense.

AP

Yea? Would you... OK.

7:34

FW

Yea, 'cause I think... and the questions aren't MY questions, so I kind of... I put them under headings quite quickly, actually quite... sort of fast and intuitively, so I thought... and I could see... yea, and I did have lots of moments of "Well... where's that going. Put it there."

7:55

AP

And I think also hiving off those three areas of research, professionalism and pedagogy, that in itself, setting up the questions like that I think is meant to allow people to sort of say "Well that's a really problematic way of thinking about it because I can't hive off those different activities... Just wondering if maybe you wanted to talk a bit about the research practice you're doing at the moment.

8:23

FW

OK. Well... the research practice is... well the reason I'm talking to YOU is because I'm doing a PhD and also it also relates to that because I'm a lecturer... that's my connection to PARIP... so my research practice is, at the moment, a practice-based... PhD thesis... and that is partly written but there will also be a performance... with an integral relationship to the written thesis.... But my research practice also exists outside of... the context of the university that I'm doing my PhD at. And that is on-going and that existed before it, and it will exist after it and... that is solo performance making... not only solo performance making but mainly... mainly. Do you want me to describe it?

AP

Yea. Yea.

FW

Do you want me to sort of say actually what it is I do... Well I make... small-scale solo performance and in the last few years and what is of relevance to the current writing about it is particularly these solos that are made for very small audiences, either one person, or sometimes two people at a time view them and the stru- and the main structure is... typical structure at the moment has been... it's a five-minute piece... and I do the piece for hours. Hours or XXXX sometimes, or a whole day. So for me it's a long work, but the audience come and visit it as a short work, one after the other, constantly.

Usually in a small space, but not always and... sometimes in a performance venue space but not always... And they don't happen very often. They're quite long, that's... I'm going to do one in March that's goes... takes place over... more than two days, so it's quite a lot of hours for me it'll be thirteen hours all together in one weekend. So I'll see a hundred and fifty-something people... each for their own solo spectator experience with me... And... other relevant things are that it... the work's... well therefore quite intimate... but at the same time it... it maintains audience-performer contract. The audience usually are asked to come in and they sit on a chair and they're not asked to do anything other than be there as an audience... so it actually works on... are different positions so the work is clearly about spectatorship in some... sense or in many senses but it... it isn't actually work, I think, that's... trying to say... it's about the reciprocity, the sort of reciprocal relationship exchange... and the kind of... identification or... subjectivity going on... in those relationships but I think... it's quite... it feels quite important that... it's it's not actually work that's... it's questioning theatrical conventions and dance conventions and visual conventions and it's engaging mainly with visual... visual... theorising and visual... experience and histories of visuality and... so I kind of read... read about painting and photography even though my background is largely dance... and even I don't... some of this work gets programmed not in dance context, so it's mov-... already moving quite a lot in terms of context of sources and research and then the places where it actually manifests and outcomes happen... But it's quite important to me that it's not... then kind of... I suppose the reason why then... it's useful to engage in quite a careful analytical research experience in an academic context with support from kind of critical thinking from XXXX (13:14)... 'cause I could just carry on making my work and seeking more funding... in other ways, but the PhD has given me a nice context in which to kind of be with the work... and it has been appropriate because... I'm quite enjoying trying to sort of go "Well, what actually goes on in these performances?" and actually spending time with it and its working through writing... but I... I don't want... it... to... seem like it's work that is... too easily saying "Oh, there's a division between audience and performer and that must be blurred or melted" and actually it works on the fact that you're there and I'm here and if you're performing for me I can see you but in fact my body is in my visual frame, in my visual field, as well... or in my experiential field and it's actually the difference between us that makes this... moment happen. It's actually kind of... it's sort of... yea... actually working on that contract rather than... trying to... and also dealing with the problems in that, and the issues in that and the sort of histories in that... but it kind of matters... so I've got to the sort of moment where it really matters that that's the kind of work I make and that's how it happens, but then it really matters to be... spending... very particular energy analysing that, you know, which I would do anyway as the artist working.

15:02

AP

How is it different, then.

FW

Literally in time and support and context... libraries... feeling sort of validated to go to places and speak in slightly different arenas... yea, it's a kind of... it's another community that kind of loops into the live art or independent dance community that I might move around in or visual art community I might enter... intersect with, so it gives... yea, to be in the academic context gives me context... gives me framework, gives me feedback, also gives me a way to contribute... as well, so... yea.

15:45

AP

And how does it then fit with issues of pedagogy 'cause I know that you're a teacher but... so how does... 'cause it's quite interesting that you do seem to have this creative bleed between the research epistemology and the... your role as a professional performer, and how those divisions may or may not be useful. So how does that work then with questions of pedagogy.

16:12

FW

Well quite literally I teach, usually to live ... some... more or less, you know, I've gone in and out of jobs... but also, yea, just a slight tension in prac-... in practicality, yea, a slight tension with whether to sometimes stay in a job because of what it takes. It feeds... to be involved in... pedagogy and with students feeds the XXXX practice and research... but it takes one away from it, so there's an immediate tension and that... that has always been what I've experienced in it. I've gone... yea... where there's... there's only so much... stuff... you can have in your head... so, to be in a... in a permanent lecturing job, even if it's not full time, actually... a lot of one's life energy is about that team and about those students and it does... yea... it does take one away from... the making of one's own work, but then it has fed that research and I feel like to... in order to research to teach... I've done really... it's taken me to really important... revisions or... finding new... yea, I've experienced it, in terms of the teaching itself, not so much the scheduling and timetabling and pastoral work but... I experience it as... not dissimilar to how I re-... how I... just have always worked since I was a student or when I started, you know, thinking of myself as a practicing artist as what I do it's... I have to read, I have to talk to people, I have to try things out, I have to go and see things, it's kind of like... it's the same activity, but also... yea, in terms of, I suppose, yea... Shall I skip on to dissemination for a moment? (laughs)

AP

Yes! (laughs)

18:14

FW

Why not?! (laughs) I have really strong mentoring relationships with quite a lot of people who've either been my students or there's... they're younger than me or even older than me depending... in terms of where they're at, in terms of years' experience, you know, I've been kind of doing... stuff for nearly fifteen years... which isn't long, really... but they... yea, I wouldn't actually hold the pedagogy... only within when I'm teaching a module or a degree course, actually, at all.

18:54

AP

And it also... I mean it does... although theories of pedagogy are strictly about teaching, you can't talk about teaching without the other context of admin and curriculum planning and assessment and how, also how those more prosaic activities feed into and impact on what you... what it is that you're doing.

19:10

FW

Yea. But I also experience myself as... working with other people's learning and

development completely outside of... those institutions... you know, if I meet some artist to artist... in a cafe, you know, some situations they might give me a fee for mentoring them 'cause it's part of their... application they put in to something, but actually have lots of those... I was thinking recently... I do have lots of those relationships anyway... so it... it kind of keeps going out. And I have other people who are those, kind of, mentor teachers for me still... and that is part of our research, that is , that's part of our work, that we have that and... I think they're very valuable because typically you don't have a lot of them... you... you don't have... they're like good friends, you don't... have hundreds of them... they have their kind of... and they have histories of their own...

20:15

AP

But it sounds as though, the way you're talking about it, it sounds almost as though what is characteristic about the particular research practices that you're engaged in, is this... the way in which... it's very difficult to draw boundaries between different kinds of activities, that they're all... very much linked and perhaps, certainly in conversations with people who are involved in perhaps more traditional academic research practices, those distinctions do seem more sharply delineated...

FW

Right...

AP

Would that be...?

FW

Yea.

AP

Is that a fair... comment from what you've been saying?

20:52

FW

Yea... Yea... Yea, I think there's sort of... yea, activities transposed into different... in the same way as... specialisms and disciplines transpose across each other, but I read live solo performance kind of in terms of painting... I... you know... so I don't... and that... and again it's... it's because of... it's actually because of the... some of the boundaries and the differences between things and actually moving across them that... that... that they... that you can talk about... things "bleeding" or being "inter"... or transposing, it's the difference.

21:54

AP

OK. I want to talk about...

FW

Does it sound alright?

CR

It's absolutely fine...

FW  
It's OK.

CR  
... I mean there's... we've got background noise but your... your level is very good.

FW  
'Cause I can close the kitchen window, I've just realised it's still open.

CR  
Is that where it's coming from, from that?

FW  
It's coming from the car park.

CR  
Maybe you could just shut the door, or... OK?

FW  
Yea, I'll do it. You stay there.

FW  
Is that alright... Has that changed the XXXX a lot? It's better, isn't it.

CR  
It's changed the sound a lot...

FW  
Oh, OK.

CR  
... which is a good thing!

22:24  
AP  
As we've changed sound, we may as well change to the next question.

FW  
Yea! I was... going up some alley there!

AP  
I wanted to just talk about funding context, and that's quite, sort of, fairly straightforward, perhaps, question, just if you could talk about the various funding contexts within which you work.

22:44  
FW  
Well it's probably... it... well yea... you could talk to me at other times, you know, years ago or years hence and I'd be like "Humpft! Don't talk to me about funding!" But at the

moment you can talk to me about funding because actually it's really quite nice (laughs) and I'm really very lucky! But it's not... you know, I'm not fully supported but... yea, the PhD gave me a funding context as well... it's happened kind of full time and part time but... yea... a... a living allowance for three years...

23:20

AP

Was that from the university or from...

FW

Yea... yea it was the university, yea, not AHRB... and... but actually I have worked all the way through that, so I've... self-funded in a lot of ways, as well, and also... fees from commissions from venues during that time have contributed... to... the work which will... you know... contribute a PhD thesis to the university so, yea... I've moved between different funding contexts and I've got Arts Council funding at the moment for new research, like for a block of time... and that... that's Arts Council North East. So I've got a combination of funding contexts.

24:29

AP

And is there a conversation happening, 'cause you were talking about how XXXX funding that you get for commissions, the fees you get for commissions will feed into your PhD process and so are other aspects of your PhD process then feeding into the work that you're doing for commissions.

24:46

FW

Yea. Yea, I would say that... I would say that... if you wanted to, kind of, start quantifying it in an Arts Council application form type of way of like who... you know, how many audience and of what type of audience have benefit and how many artists are involved and... the XXXX. XXXX we do is something equivalent, you know of, kind of... there's a feedback loop going on, yea, and it's because I had that, kind of... a baseline income that I could think "Actually, I won't carry on this job because it really is taking me away from this at the moment" and take the risk of stepping out of that and maybe taking a bit less work and then spending time making... the Arts Council application that I've just heard I've got so... It's all very small... it's very small budget with me it stays... it stays really kind of... yea... manageable, yea, it's very... it's small but... yea, yea... I think... it's kind of like... I think... yea different agencies are actually working together through someone like me and I think they... they know that, but it's actually, kind of, not acknowledged, is it?

AP

No.

FW

Yea. But in a way to have fees to do other jobs and to have fees... quite frankly saves me... what I perceive as the more difficult route of trying to get... apply for m-... compete for more money within the research unit in the university that my bursary comes from. I feel... I feel happier and really pragmatically, I feel happier just getting my bursary from that research unit and what their... what they want to know about me is... that I'm a PhD student THAN when I was, coincidentally, formally employed by the same department

and within the same research unit and constantly having to submit RAE information and trying to work out "How do I compete for this money which I know I am, in some small way, earning for them through the RAE process" and I find it deeply untransparent. But I'll... I prefer my position now to have it clear... in the same way in which I always longed that we had a rotating sabbatical... system and just a way that it was shared and people could take or not take or ask for a different form if the sabbatical wasn't... or if they weren't actively making work outside of the course or... I find the competition... I find it... MY experience of it is that it has been so problematic in terms of that competition happens... within a team of people who are trying to work with large numbers of quite young people... in quite a stressful... teaching and pastoral and... bureaucratic situation, and I... find it... it's... it's quite difficult competing with other artists you know for... regional money, but I found the situation, competing inside universities, enough to make me... be very careful about being... held in that context again... partly because I don't actually understand it... REALLY what is happening. I found the Arts Council easier to kind of understand... how it is thinking and functioning. I don't actually understand... the organisation of research... planning in the university departments I've been at... it's like constantly trying to read... because I think they're trying... yea..., I think the people XXXX those units and departments are constantly trying to read... the bigger picture and how to... strategise, really.

28:37

AP

And keeping up.

FW

Yea. So I suppose, I've just kind of... I like to go where... I like to be... where I feel... I've been invited or... it works to be there. Yea, so in terms... I... I need to feel like the context is OK. So I don't mind applying for money, but I don't actually make many applications... I don't... yea, I usually make things where I've... I've set up a conversation with a... curator or a programmer and it's looking like the right thing and then it builds... quite naturally and I feel invited. This... this competing to be allowed to make one's work... and to be spending a lot of time making applications and to be knocked back a lot... yea, so I'm... I'm fortunate at the moment that... I happened to've ended up living somewhere again where there's not a lot of people doing what I'm doing and there're some... the new small grants, so I feel quite well-supported at the moment.

29:52

AP

And have you ever... applied for AHRB funding or...

FW

I did for the PhD and didn't get it.

AP

Right

FW

... Or was it for this actual... it might've been for when I was going to go somewhere else. I can't remember which one it was. But anyway, I definitely applied for one and... and I didn't get it. And then I got... and then I applied for this... bursary that was at Nottingham and Trent, so yea... so I've been through doing all of those. Yea.



30:28

AP

OK. I wanted to talk about resource and plant contexts now, so the situations within which you're working... technical issues... technical support, equipment, space, nurturing environments, all of those issues, sort of the landscape context in which you're working.

30:53

FW

It's a bit similar, actually I've kind of... I've taken the part of least resistance... so I haven't... I don't... I don't use... in terms... as a PhD student I don't use the university facilities very much at the moment... but there is going to be a point when I'm near the end when I need to... yea, stage a performance so... I don't know, I kind of... I only use resources when I... need to... in very short bursts... What I'm doing sometimes it needs a rehearsal studio... but it's mostly this... it IS mostly that... But having said that I haven't... there isn't... there isn't much for context for the post-graduate students at the university in the school that I'm in... they exist, but there isn't much of a community made and... me and another student... year before last, presented a seminar... of... just what we're doing... we kind of booked the room and sorted out this... and, you know... yea, just kind of physically did it and no one asked us to and no one asked us to again, so it was a nice session, it was useful, but it was kind of like absolutely what I would have thought was the least that they might want from people they are... PAYing... bursaries to... to share that with the rest of the school, what they're doing, you know, for twenty minutes, but, apparently not... of interest, particularly, so... (laughs) Yea, and we went to another faculty, another school elsewhere in the university for a seminar course on research practice. We went to... we went to Humanities, we went out of our design to Humanities 'cause Art and Design have no... yes, sem-... yea... kind of, input... so that was really good.

33:36

AP

So this is...

FW

I'd like a studio!

AP

I was going say, the issue of studio space, I mean...

FW

I'd love a studio! In my house, but I don't have one in my house. I think if I had a studio I would want it in my house.

AP

Right. So you don't regularly... or you don't have a regular hire of studio space.

FW

Oh, right. What I do is, I've got a thing going on... it's complicated 'cause I haven't... I live in... I've been in Newcastle for a few but I've been working away a lot, but at the moment, what I do is I... the National Dance Agency here, Dance City, I use their studio

space as support in kind, but they don't have very much space, so I kind of... you know, just about get what I need to do what I do, but, actually the pieces I've been making for a while, if... either it's been a residency so I've occupied a space, in an intensive period, or... or I can literally make them with very little studio time at the moment, yea? But I'm just about to make... more choreographic work where I am, yea, finding studio space. But I'm not where the university is so I... I couldn't kind of be demanding them what... of them. I think if I lived in Nottingham I would be trying to tap that and I think I would be in a similar position to an undergraduate who was... who was wan-... who was... very highly motivated in that I would be... I'd be probably get quite good at getting what I wanted... and negotiating the system but... and just, yea, booking and taking initiative but there wouldn't... there probably wouldn't be enough of the right sort of space that I need at the times when I'd need it and it probably would be an issue. Yea?

35:23

AP

'Cause it's quite interesting 'cause of course people who are not doing PhDs and are full-time lecturing in institutions... despite the curricular priorities that there may be, they seem to be expressing, I suppose, a closer, healthier relationship with the institution in that there's more provided, in some way.

35:45

FW

Yea, there should be, yea. Yea, you can... yea... I mean, yea... as... in the role as a lecturer you can usually access... things, but not usually as much as you would really need... to work, you know, seriously and intensively for periods of time, 'cause it usually falls at the wrong... you know, you have to work in your holiday, to make your piece in your summer holiday ... things like that. And I think increasingly spaces are being rented out, for money, and being lost at exactly those time-... or going to conferences or... I suspect, I don't know. But I think, yea, I think most people have... GET, kind of, what they need in those terms and cameras and other people who can, you know, technicians who will... collaborate with them so... the context of university can be really useful. It is, and it HAS been for me, on and off, but, like I say, I kind of slightly take... I just kind of... it's a bit like... 'cause I'm usually... 'cause it's usually just me... I can just, kind of, get... just about... at it's u-... it's quite low-tech... and low-resourced, I can usually kind of just get what I need, but I think I tend to cut the cloth to suit... you know, I think I make the work I make because I like all the resources kind of close to my body and... you know, if I can't get it in a ruck sack I tend not to use it... sort of... yea... so it's self-sufficient, a lot.

37:21

AP

OK. I'm gonna move on to the next heading: dissemination and find all the number twos. Perhaps you've already answered this, but I just wondered if you had anything else that you wanted to say about how your current practice as research is positioned as research and is the obvious side of "You are doing a PhD, therefore it is research" but are there... are there any other ways in which you actively contextualise what it is that you're doing as research in its... in its formal academic connotations.

38:04

FW

... Well I suppose... well, in its formal academic connotations it's... it's manifested itself

in... well, yea, in a couple of publications and a few... conferences and symposiums...

AP

I mean that's a question...

FW

I've always thought what I do is research...

AP

I mean it's a question around how, I suppose, how you deal with that question 'cause sometimes people answer it... when I put it in those terms they start thinking about writing and presentations and conferences. Then there's the issue of... I mean the work that you're doing for commission I know that it's... it's all tying in with the PhD and how you create PhD at the end but are there other situations, I suppose, that you place some of those performances as research not necessarily through other kinds of writing practices but, I suppose an example would be, if it's... if it's appropriate, would be sort of for the previous RAE did you submit a particular performance as opposed to a piece of writing around a performance.

39:27

FW

Yea. Yea. When I was in a position as... a lecturer to be counted in the RAE it was live performance... that were my... that submitted my outcomes that were listed, yea. Yea, so it has... yea, it has manifested in that... in that sense. Yea, it's been called research in that context... yea... yea, I kind of assume it is... as research.

40:06

AP

OK...I guess this moves in to more specifically to what it is that you're doing, really, and it sort of, in some ways it's going back to... it's the question about what you're devising... process is and how does that process of dividing relate to, I suppose, other working contexts that you're in, and I suppose that's how it relates to the work that you do lecturing and how it relates to the other kinds of activities that you're involved in with doing a PhD, so it's how... how that devising process for... for performance works relates to you other activities... if at all.

40:50

FW

... How the devising process of my performance work relates to other activities?

AP

Yea, in terms of how... I mean I think with the... with the work that you do that I'm familiar with, the relationship between your movement-based work and your writing is very, very clear and very carefully worked out. That may not be the case for other people who are doing practice as research, there may be more of split there, so it's the question of how the devising and actuation process of... of that practice that you do, how that relates to the other practices in which you're engaged... are there sort of formal relationships there in terms of methods, I suppose.

41:41

FW

... Well, yea in that... well, there's different activities. I spend time in studios and I perform physically in front of other people... and I have to figure out how to write about that for... publicity applications... programs... and then there's the writing that I do... kind of, yea... in the kind of study nXXXX studio, which is actually here, in my living room... so it's different activities but I... I kind of... I WAS thinking recently, and I was trying to write about it... when I was at art college, in the late eighties... I knew that... I understood that there was different things that I did, like I wrote my dissertation and I... worked visually and performatively, but I read all the time and I... so I knew... certain activities and... and ways of working were... different experiences, but I didn't see them as... yea, I couldn't see them as separate and I was really used to the notion that artists were reading and writing and one was even theorising through one's installation or photographic work... I... it's much later on that I encountered this kind of split, or different sorts of splits... yea, I think I... I think I kind of took a ... I think what was a... it's a bit less used now... critical practice is assumed... I kind of... you know... and that might have more or less, kind of... strength to it, or conviction, or integrity, or rigour but... that is... I... you know, I kind of assume that that's... just taken as sort of obvious, really.

44:15

AP

That's what you... and that's quite interesting 'cause with this question... obviously some people find it difficult it to answer because of that issue that there is an assumption there that one does a range of things... but they're all exploring similar ideas, just in different sorts of ways and... but there's other people who are working who see that there is a big split between how they devise or create a performance practice and then the other kinds of activities that they engage in around that.

44:47

FW

Yea. Yea, and it IS different and sometimes you only get to show some of it because... like I... I think I... I sort of stopped working so much... kind of, with drawing or printing or photography gradually over the years since I left college 'cause I kind of didn't have the context or it's hard to kind of do the performance and keep a visual arts studio maintained and supported and fun-, you know, funded and... and there was less of a... audience to look at it. When I was in my undergraduate degree I... it was part of the course, and I had an audience of the tutors and the other students to kind of engage with my strange writings I was doing, my... my printing and... and image-making... and so I... I kind of... yea, honed down over the years towards being about live body practice, so, sometimes I think it's quite simply about whether you negotiate a forum or you suddenly find yourself in a situation where people are like "It's relevant to read the things that you're writing" and so it's relevant to write more, rather than just, you know... so probably for years I kind of had things half written in notebooks, but not thinking "OK, I'm going to make this into two or three thousand words and it's a piece of something that somebody can actually read" or "I will speak it... to a live audience at a conference" so... it... it's that functional, I think, sometimes, I think it's going on and I think it's a resource and people... different manifestations and that they... they link... and it makes sense to me... and sometimes it's simply... yea, whether you find your way to that... it's me it's kind of always kind of been the... even in the phases when I haven't been writing very

much... you know, a few years might pass where I... don't really write... it is... it is actually... to me an assumed part of a way of working, or a set of ways of working... but the dir-... now I'm in this thing where I've made a direct explicit link because of the demand to articulate it... but that COULD've happened without doing the PhD... and it could've happened NOT in a university context.

47:28

AP

And what about the process of that making, I mean, do you see... are you engaged in similar, I suppose, thought processes, making processes, IF you are making a performance or if you are writing.

47:44

FW

Yea. Yea, I can be writing and I think about a body weeping and I can be in the studio and I think about a body weeping... yea, they... yea, I think iss-... I think... concerns and issues open up in the different places in different kind of sites and locations... and activities and behaviours, so... and yet, something different comes from different media or form, so you... you... it's like "Well what does reading give me?" "What does choreographing... give me? What does it bring?"... but actually none of it is definitive, so in a similar way to read different... other writers or theories... of... theorists... I can't actually perceive... any... any one as definitive. I can't read everything through XXXX... but... I get great entertainment from reading other people trying to write about XXXX ... so... it's not it's all the same stuff and it's not could be doing that just as easily as doing that, I think there's absolute reasons why you land on certain kinds of... strategies and methods and means and processes. And writing does have... a strange equivalence with... with... organising movement and actions and organising bodies in spaces, particularly in terms of actual stylised physical choreography. I think that's why there has been a writing the body link going on in dance and that's why I think... I think, yea, dance studies went "Ooo! That's interesting! Bodies as writing, as well as bodies as speaking" and there's... they... they can both take a really long time... XXX and time... but then that's something, you know, in the same ways people would write about their writing practice, some people write from the beginning to the end, some people... you know, all those different ways that people write. Some people write very quickly, but I think that most people find that writing is slow... in terms of crafting it, and I think there's... there's something about other processes like editing video or... painting or drawing or sculpting or choreographing that... I think there's an equivalent experience even though they're really different... materially, there's an equivalent experience of kind of... a kind of labour over time, and so it doesn't surprise me that people are drawn, you know... yea, that a ... yea, that a sculptor might be really drawn to writing as well, they also might completely not be but... I think you can... I think you really can compare... what they are... as experiences.

51:31

AP

There's something quite muscular about the honing of word.

FW

Yea. It's work. It's work. And a lot of what you do is work. It's not all... inspiration... it's not all this kind of special... it's... it's sort of... yea, I think it's... it's XXXX for the... XXXXXX Oh yea, I was watching a video of an interview with Kiki Smith in the exhibition

at the Baltic and she spends the entire interview... sculpting a clay cat... that she knows they're coming to interview her, and she... puts this clay cat on this table and she does this all the way through the interview, she's working on the cat so her hands are dirty all the way through the interview ... and that's how she, kind of, negotiates doing the interview. But she does... there's ano-... there's another documentary about her in that exhibition as well where she's... she's really... that becomes really important to her, that it's this... she probably says something like "It's ninety percent of it is... yea, is... is just trying to file down the thing that's wrong on the wrong sculpture"... you know, actually most of it is filing out your mistakes and reworking that and... and literally the labour of it, the work of it... and I suppose she's slightly speaking against the thing that the... yea, that the artist is in this sort of inspired genius state all the time... and I think that's a bit of an issue in these sorts of... yea... where people are trying to talk about what they do, and because these situations that have... arisen in the arts and in... and in the educational context and in the university context, this kind of articulating what it is that you do, you know, which for an artist like Kiki Smith is clearly, she can talk, she can talk about it because she clearly has worked out ways that she will talk in a way that's appropriate to her about it, and this sort of having to explain one's work... I think it... I think it puts a lot... I think it puts a lot of people, or a lot of us, into quite a strange place... "How am I going to articulate it in the terms that I'm being asked to?"... and it's not that it's unartic-...ulable, it's not that it's unspeakable, it's not that you can't... say it, but I think after a lot of the ways that people are saying it is that they do these different things, you know, so even if some people find a great split, like I go in a studio and make my theatre piece... with my company and then they also write these articles and then I prepare my teaching... if that's actually how they experience it, then that's kind of... then that's quite real, that is... that is real and I think they're right, it is different stuff... a lot of the time... but trying to say how... how it's... how it's linked and how it... yea? Whereas I... I probably can say that, yea... like it's... it makes sense that there is writing about the performance... you know, because it's about saving it and losing it and remembering it and forgetting it... and making it even more... and making it again, as well... so it's... it's... yea, it's tracing it and document it, but it's making it... yet again... and differently, so... the connection to me, yea... but I could have approached a PhD and... and actually resisted... writing at all... but, to position the writing in the thesis submission... is a way of speaking to that situation, for me, so it's slightly strategic, it's a way of kind of going in their and speaking to the languages, you know, and kind of a way of dialoguing with the situation I'm in... so it's slightly strategic as well...

56:07

AP

Which actually strangely brings us to what seems like quite an operational question 'cause it's about evaluation strategies and knowing what I know of your practice and how it is that feedback loop, do you have formal evaluation strategies that you use to think about each piece of practice and how it will be feeding then into the next.

56:35

FW

No. No, there are not formal... but it exists, eva-... the evaluation exists and I could... if I think about it for a moment, we could take a break and I could think about it... I... I could probably name... Yea, I could probably describe it, but it's not like "OK, we'll work like this... for this many months and then we sit down and we evaluate". I mean I'll do that for my Arts Council evaluation form, you know and it will be useful... yea... but I evaluate as I go and actually... yea, I do... I do DO it but... it's in the grain of the work to

be doing that.

57:18

AP

Is that...? Right. A process of informal reflection, or...?

FW

Oh yea, constantly, constantly, yea. And also in the moments when you have to, kind of, tell someone what's happened and what you're going to do next. And THAT happens to artists, that happens to students, that happens to lecturers... that happens to everyone all the time... because you keep getting to moments with someone where you've GOT to give them a piece of paper with something on it, or you've GOT to have the conversation... about... about that residency or you have to... submit that next bit of writing... of draft... you know, to have the tutorials, so...

58:01

AP

So you actually have a ... but there is that formal level of assessment or valuation there because of the process of being PhD...

58:09

FW

Yea, and the process of applying for public money outside of universities as well, so it IS imPOSEd on one and... i think that can be really difficult for people... yea... I mean we know because people say it's difficult all the time, don't they.

58:25

AP

OK

CR

It might be a good time to... change tapes.

## Tape 2

0:26

AP

This is tape number two on Friday the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2004 talking with Fiona Wright in Newcastle. We've... we're just about to start on the next heading with is "Knowledges" so... I'll just go through the questions that you have circled in... for knowledges and it... this really takes us to those specific questions about research questions, so... what... what have been your research questions and how did you devise those questions and... the subtly different issue of... how that relates to a notion of a research impulse... as you might understand that. So, if we start with the easy things, what have been your research questions?

1:13

FW

... Are they XXXX written differently in a few different places...

AP

Well that might be quite interesting to look at... the writing of them.

1:26

FW

Well what I usually say is... with regards to the PhD, to be specific, 'cause I wouldn't normally... normally frame things outside of the university, kind of, demands, as research questions... sort of, couldn't really call them that, really... I think more of them as issues... so, yea... it's very much... about... how... how my writing work as... productive... as a... yea, useful, productive, generative... way of documenting and thinking about documenting... live performance... but that is specific to solo... performance and so how... how might... not solo performance but actually a solo practice, this solo performance practice... work with questions of spectator ship and... I suppose destabilize that, really... yea, I'm kind of playing with saying them differently, slightly differently ... XXXX 'cause I don't actually know them by heart. I deliberately... keep rewriting them. But... and... there is... I think there is a specific research question about reading that through theories of the visual. And I think that's... that's completely there in performance studies... yea, the i- ... kind of spectatorship studies... but... it's what I'm actually writing about at the moment, I've got a real, kind of, interest in this idea of... the... the... the body that is seen, either the audiences body or the performer's body as... sort of somehow reading that through the... idea of the viewer standing in front of the picture, kind of, apprehending of the picture... which is... yea... been going on in performance studies in a big way but... there's this kind of crossing over of... questions about... what happens when we look at another body, yea? it's quite simply, kind of "What happens when I watch someone dancing? What IS actually going on?" and this sort of... and that... and that's a way of getting into some of the current debates about... or new... looking at ascetics... so there's a kind of... somewhere embedded in that... but there's a crossing over of... I think some of the issues about "looking" with some of the issues about documenting and archiving and memory and keeping and... there's something going on with it... so it's kind of in that... it's in that but I've... I've... I haven't been... now that I'm... now that I'm... further into it I think it really is also... 'cause the name of the thesis is currently still... "Other Versions of an Uncertain Body"... Writing Towards an Account of a Solo Performance Practice". And that was kind of like... "That's the working title, that'll do it", but that IS actually what it is. It really IS actually a way of saying... and that seems to me now... it seems a bit kind of... I get slightly worried about... things that are about creativity and "What artists do" (mock academic speak) and I get slightly nervous around that but it really is becoming that and I think that isn't a bad thing to insert into the universities' consciousness, just kind of what... what... and through the actual writing, and that might become contentious... as... a PhD, I think the writing itself is in peril, really, possibly, in that context, I'm not sure... but... yea, I feel... I feel like it is actually becoming a bit kind of "Well, how DOES... an artist, if we call her that, research?" if we want to call it that, and we can put a capital R on it or not! I don't mind. So it really is kind of like "Well..."... it is... I mean I'm starting to think of it... as like "Here's a window on... really, what I do" it is... it's kind of, that is the research question, "Can I show that?"... So it's actually become... a bit more straightforward, really, than I think I thought it was a few years ago. I don't think I would've talked about it like that... quite.

7:28



AP

And how appropriate have you found that demand for research questions to be, in the context of doing a PhD? ...'Cause you were saying you think of them in other contexts as... as "issues", that "questions" doesn't resonate.

FW

... Yea. Yea. Well I've heard quite a sort of... I've quite enjoyed this kind of... sort of process of going through... like when I first started it a couple years ago, kind of like "Oo! So what's a PhD, then?" you know, "I'll read a few" "Oh no I won't!" "I'll flick through a few" "I'll read other...", you know, I got, kind of, quite engaged in... you know... and particularly through this contact with the humanities school, I kind of got very engaged and so... yea, what do academics mean when they say "theorising" and what's... why do they mean when they say the word "methodology" and what... what are the canons... and I got quite into this 'cause I already knew the kind of canons of performance studies and... visual studies and dance... and I got quite, sort of... and... and this kind of... "What will be my relationship to... Philosophy?" this is kind of... the whole thing about my proximity to philosophy! and how am I gonna to deal with it, and all the writers in between... me and it... "it"... but I did... yea... I... it... so it did become useful. In the end I've... I've sort of quite... because I've kind of... because of it becoming an intensive, sort of, reading, writing phase... because the reason I did... the reason I did do the PhD was, yea, it's a context in which to work, but... one of the things I wanted to do in my work... and in my life was... was spend some more XXXX time to reading and writing... which isn't to say that that's what a Ph... I really, really strongly don't think that's what a PhD actually has to be. I really strongly... and I do wish more people would start trying to through out fully practice-based ones... but like I already said, it kind of suits me to kind of investigate what these languages... and I think it is changing, as well, I think it really is mutating what one might submit as a PhD and I... and I really don't think it can be defined. I really don't know. But I've... I HAVE found it quite an interesting place to occupy for a while, and I had... what I was working with was the aims, I was trying to get down to three aims, 'cause it's certain hoops you go through that may or may not be useful, like the transfer... the registration and then the transfer document... so that ... Oh dear!

But it's actually fairly recently... that I really actually then wrote these things that I called the research questions... that were the sort of slightly digging into what the aims were. But it seems kind of useful and relevant, and in that kind of trying to articulate, you know, different moments... and thinking about the audience that you're articulating to and does it... and would it make sense to so-and-so on that... research committee from Blah Faculty... and it's kind of like... it's... you get this weird imaginary audiences, but you get that anyway... as an artist, there's lots of imaginary audiences and who might see this like this and... so... it's really easy to be an ar-... an artist practitioner and go into that... and get really defensive and upset by it. But I think, you know, other academics do, I think, English students do, I th-... yea, it's a very strange thing, but i quite like the way that no one really knows what... well I said this in a discussion, actually, at the PARIP conference, I said to... in a small discussion... I don't think anyone knows what a PhD is, and someone got REALLY upset...

11:58

AP

Really?

FW

... and thought that was a ridiculous statement...

AP  
REALLY?!

FW

... but I actually DO feel... I've started to wonder if... there has been this long history of people kind of... almost spending their whole PhD process trying to divine... from their... their lecturers... (almost whispers) "What a PhD is, then." And so I found it really refreshing that I hit this moment when the Humanities Faculty were running this research practice course, we looked at some... they shared their knowledge... we identified "these are certain things"... It was quite, kind of, functional and real and...yea... ja' know what I mean? and it was quite useful to talk about them as these objects and... "Here they are" and "They do this" and "Why would you do this" and "Why does it matter?" and they're all quite, kind of, politically driven... yea, they actually DO think that it makes a difference that they do all this research in these universities! And that's quite nice to be around, so I had quite a nice time... with all that... kind of geographers and... English and sort of historians and... so... I found it useful but I DID... I KNOW that some years before when I was being a lecturer and started to get asked to write... a side of A4 about a performance outcome for the RAE... the guidelines for that were... non-existent, I think. We didn't workshop it, we didn't work on it at all what that might be about, we were... we were alone with it, you were just reading someone else's and guessing... and THAT felt like, sort of "What are your research questions" and that felt like this abs... this... that DID feel like... "Justify your work" and it was kind of the worst possible thing to do to practitioner-lecturers who were already kind of... feeling quite... sort of like... well, someone like me who's...yea, always loved reading and writing and...but I did a mainly practice-based BA, I didn't do an MA, I became a lecturer because I was an artist... 'cause I was inVited to start... doing it, and I'm largely self-taught in terms of... major theories, it's really a self-read and self-taught... I haven't sat in lectures that... I never had a lecture where someone delivered to me... "This is XXXX (?Fucoe)", you know, it's kind of all been like this... and working with colleagues on it and... you know... so... THAT was diff-, THAT... yea, in terms of how appropriate... What was your question? How appropriate was...?

14:40

AP  
The institutional demand for research questions.

FW

...this idea of research questions, yea, they're great, but I can completely... I could've given a really different answer...

AP  
Right.

FW

... six years ago... and felt quite, kind of... "Well I know there's issues and I know there's things that matter..." and I could articulate something fairly OK... but I didn't understand why they wanted it, or what purpose it would serve, and I never got any feedback on it, other than "Do it again". It was just like...! And it's completely different language to what you would write on an Arts Council form, because the Arts Council want you... want to

know that there's this artistic development going on... and it SEEMS like, in the context of the research unit in the university, no one CARES that you're developing!

AP

Yea.

FW

It's not about you and your artistic process! It's about this other thing that you're supposed to giving... to... the world. (Laughs) What is that?!

AP

Well, this is the...

FW

That's not a context!

15:34

AP

This is the next question, about contributions to knowledge and, you know, how closely do those research questions then map onto what you understand by your contributions to knowledge.

15:50

FW

Yea...Uhm...

AP

'Cause "contributions to knowledge" is such a formal... formulation, but obviously it's open to redefinition.

FW

Yea. I prefer it to "originality". God!

AP

16:06

FW

But then I might go back to using the word... I might start using the word "originality"... and see what happens... you know...

AP

But do you see a close relationship like... how... how are you thinking about your own contributions to knowledge... which is about a contribution, I suppose, to a... practice-as-research community... somewhat.

16:27

FW

Well when I was talking earlier about where I... mentor and the link between my research activity and... pedagogy... and teaching and that... that... I think that's sort of a key dissemination point and... I happen to be operating in a way where... I'm quite

networked...so yes, similarly I think there's lots of forms in which it will contribute... and the strategy for... the current strategy for the... actual thesis is... that... I'm going to do... I originally wanted to write... entirely write the thesis... I didn't want to actually... I actually, yea, you should know this ! I actually started off, and I know a few other people who have done this, who are practicing artists and work in professionally and lecturing who decided not to do... a practice-as-research PhD beCAUSE of the thorny place it's in, or has been in and actually... and also because they had a XXXX articulation with... theories and... and kind of... it made more sense to them probably in absolutely real terms, but also slightly in not wanting to... deal with... the problems. But I wanted to write, like, eighty thousand... and then there was this moment, really, early on in it where, like, the predictable, kind of like, moment where me and this supervisor just went..."Well..." you know, I think there might be some denial going on here! about what your actual work is, you know! Duh! You're a dancer! So...but I'm going to submit... a forty-thousand word written bit, but that is not the thesis. I'm gonna submit very much that the thesis is THAT and then a performance which... which is... designed in relation... to it and in relation to the viva, and in relation to being staged at the university... and there might be other lecture performances that are part of it or edit... bits of it that've worked towards it and I do after it that happen elsewhere and in other places, but it's absolutely... and it's gonna be based on a reading of the thesis, of... a speaking... of the thesis...originally it was gonna be the whole thing in one day which I figured I could maybe do in ten hours... and then I thought maybe I wouldn't have any voice left to do the viva the next day, which I thought would be rather good... have to whisper the viva !... but actually now I think what I might do it like a lecture series that happens over two days or something...

19:11

AP

Right

FW

...so... But the idea of that in terms of... contribution... with us it's dissemination, really, isn't it...that COULD then be open to...undergraduates... in a way that PhD thesis aren't usually...So that feels like a direct contribution right in the site, you know, on the pin-point that the PhDs should be happening in... THAT feels quite useful to me...and then it CAN ripple out, I think. I mean it already has, some of the writing has kind of gone out, you know, and... I give it to people who aren't "Yea, quite a few people have read this..." and... I can feel it, yea... going... going out in small... in this... in this... in the ways that my work ever does. You know, it's small... yea... but I think it IS, in contribution to knowledge I think... in those terms, it isn't a moment... it's hitting lots of the issues that are mattering to the performance community and to the art community at the moment like "What is aesthetics, again then" and "What is documentation" and "What do we..." "What do we do with archives" and "What..." you know "What is history" and... so I think...I feel sort of quite in tune with the issues... if not knowing where they'll go... so...I've sort... I suppose I've felt kind of OK about that... but I realize that if... there was a certain point where, if I was going to feel like "Uuugh! What's contribution to knowledge? Uuugh! Is it a PhD, then I'll just have to stop" you know... so... there's a certain point where it XXXX... there is a certain moment... it's rather like being... like when you give something in teaching and where you give something...as a performer. And there is a certain moment where it's up to the audience to kind of figure out whether it's doing something and what is it doing. There is... I think...yea, you have to know what you're doing and you take responsibility for it, but I do sense a... in... if you want to talk

about the context of the academic... there IS a kind of like thing of "I can control and know exactly what this is all doing" whereas the artist actually does have a moment where it's kind of like... "Ffff... now it's you" and it's only happening because you're reading it. Ja'see what I mean? So there's slight control-freakery in academia that you can actually really understand every inch of what you're doing AND its effect... you know, that's really arrogant!... to think that you can KNOW... SO thoroughly... what something is... I just... you know... I don't... think that you can... know that... not that much... trying to write it is... fun, you know, it's quite... amusing... So was that that question... what was that? Was that... somewhere near to that?

22:16

AP

Yea. No... that... it is near to that. No, I think it brings us to the next section on citation because you were talking about... rippling out and, sort of, the first question that you have under this... citation section is how your current research practice relates to past and future practices, i.e. to networks of citation and I wonder if you've probab-... if you feel that you've answered that question already... or if you had...

22:43

FW

...Yea, yea... I feel like... well I've been thinking about actually writing at the moment about... there's one way of putting a, you know, some sort of special citation X-ray machine on it and actually the whole thing is citation, the whole thing is quotation, the whole thing is referencing... so potentially the whole thing is really, really about that... and there's a whole question of... bodies getting written into it... there's a moment where I'm sort of quoting Monica Ross and she was one of my... original lecturers when I was young... and then there was a moment where she came to one of my performances... So there's this kind of... there's a potential moment where I can cite Monica in a variety of different ways and she's written into the work, and so she's kind of like an exam-... you know, quite an articulate... an articulate sort of example as a presence in a... and I think in terms of something like how... how do you... without pausing to do a philosophy degree (laughs)... how did you relate to this history of philosophy, and I do now have this feeling like... like I'm saying "No, no... there are actually loads of people in between me and that" and... and THEY are that history of it as well... of... of that... those... those thinkings, and I kind of think... and I think that the... this must be an issue for the practitioner... what... you know, what we call the practitioner researcher, you know, the kinds of people that you're interviewing... for this research and... how are you going to stand in relation to all... to all these bodies of knowledge and quote them... with confidence and therefore then what is quoting... and how does it even function, so it must actually be starting to question... not question but change... some of the ways of... writing, you know, literally what kind of an essay writing, what... what kind of a practice, what kind of... ways of structuring the use of quotation because... because people will have these... these truly cross-disciplinary and multiple specialisms... ja'see what I mean? And so how is it... so I could... yea... so I lit-... I actually starting to think that literally my relationship to citation is quite particular... because of what I am compared to the English student in the humanities research practice seminar next to me who's come through an English literature degree-MA-into-PhD about particular author. I mean that's wildly... interdisciplinary as well, you know... very diverse... to read English but... much more XXXX down than my backgrounds.

26:14

AP

But I think what's interesting with... research... these particular kinds of research practices is that perhaps it will raise the issue how do you talk about citation in... in other kinds of research practices and subject fields because...while there is the tradition of going to books and referencing them, of course that's not how knowledges are exclusively developed, so that with practice as research, that's bringing that, perhaps bringing it to the fore, because it's creating that and putting that at the forefront.

26:44

FW

Yea... yea... I think by its very process, yea...

AP

Questions about ownership, now, which is also... you've also got under the heading of citation...

FW

Does that seem like a good place for it? (laughs)

AP

No, I think it... I think it's an interesting place for it because there are other questions about... that... deal with citation that I think... that you have under the heading of archiving, which is coming next, which is also very interesting... yea, so who are the makers of the work, what roles do they play and how are the issues of ownership acknowledged, which might be an odd question to ask... of you.

27:27

FW

God, I don't remember that question. Who are the makers of the work?

AP

Mmm. I'm thinking you must have been thinking of something quite complicated.

FW

Yea, no, that's one of the more straightforward... that's one of the questions that makes more sense to me actually! (laughs)... that's alright, yea.

AP

Well I figured 'cause you put it under citation that... that actually you're talking about something other than...

FW

Yea! I think it's a bit like what I was just saying about Monica, actually, I think I've just said it, that... that... yea, this kind of... it's not like... "It's not mine" you know, I can say... you know, I'm kind of the director, you know, I can take responsibility for the thesis but... I talk a lot with other artists about... yea... I mean I literally... you know...yea... just yesterday had an e-mail from Kiera O'Reilly (?) in Hong Kong going "I'm doing this performance and I'm going to quote you, 'cause I'm in a dressing room and... I do the performance in a dressing room and... and... I'm gonna use the bit that you did in order to set up this image and... it's like "Yes, do quote me" and... I have the same thing Mark Jeffery in Chicago (Goat Island). It's constantly kind of like...so there's this little tiny

micro thing where... between a few... few other solo artists that I know we kind of have this... little sub-histories where we're citing each other and...there's a kind of sampling... knowing... referencing and sampling going on, which doesn't matter because it's not all kind of known about enough, it's between us ...and I think that happens on a larger scale. It's difficult, though, because it's a clever thing to do in writing... it's quite... it can be quite a... 'cause that's how a lot of... I suppose post-structuralist writing has been happening where people are kind of writing... into almost a community of voices and talking to writing without directly quoting it, talking back to other writing so... but then there's this kind of presupposed knowledge of that cannon for the reader and there's all kinds of issues about... knowing this... but I... yea I think... I think... this question of... I think for me it's more an image of these... these other bodies are written into and through the work and... and also... I hope there'll be kind of something quite important about... that I manage to say... which I'm reading a lot about... about this "othering" of bodies, so this question of how do I look at an artist as an object of study, and how do I look at my own work as if it's an object of study, and that's a really important, kind of, ethics in it... which I think is already in the kind of... important in the ethics of... yea, particularly in humanities, academia. But it seems... sometimes it seems to stop at the PhD... artifact, that suddenly some one could be reading experimental writing, James Joyce, and... and then they have to write... in this other way that... that doesn't... yea... that kind of suddenly XXXX...writing that might be questioning authorship even...

30:55

AP

But doing it in a XXXX...

FW

... "othering" it and au-... and making it... authorly, or som-... you know, this kind of... how do you study... people and the things that they do... and then that's very... that's very important in terms of questions of narrative and history and archiving so... Did I HAVE it under archiving, or where was it?

AP

No, you had it under... under citations.

FW

That is still under citations. Yea. Mmm.

AP

But I think that... No, I think now we've come really to that issue of archiving... and question... the first question under that, really, is the big question: What's the place of documentation and how does it relate to your process... what you do in performance and that notion of multiple outcomes and multiple practices.

31:52

FW

... Well, yea, it's quite deliberately dealing with that and it might... it started off, actually, this PhD project did... did start off actually wanting to have no visual documentation. I kind of wanted this written documentation to be the thesis submission, and it's quite important to me that one of my actual solo performances that I might perform next month in Portugal or last year even in the University Gallery at Nottingham, that that isn't submitted as the thesis, as part of the thesis, but that is the research, that is part of the

research map, and the research... source and process and it's part of the writing... and integral to it, and the writing kind of couldn't happen if that performance wasn't happening and... so...but I don't want to present this written thing and then... "Here's one of the performances in the example..." and it doesn't even matter if the assessors of the PhD haven't seen one of the performances that gets talked about in the written work, but then I do want to make this live work that's in relation to it, so I've got this idea that this... this live...event is itself a documentation of this written thesis because it gets spoken... and that the written... the written part is a documentation of this performance... just to kind of draw attention to that writing, speaking...

33:50

AP

And when you say you didn't want the performance in Portugal to be submitted as part of the thesis, do you mean the documentation from that performance, or you didn't actually want the live...it were examiners.

FW

Well, I COULD get the examiners shipped out to Oporto next March, I mean you COULD be in an institution and do that, and decide... and decide "This is..." ...yea "This is ..." ... "This has..." "They have to see this" 'cause there's other... I know other people doing... that...or I could stage one specially in relation to the Viva. But the sort of another performance that I think needs to happen to show this kind of... document... documenting... this... process out of it... 'cause then there's the danger that... there's something about the relationship between the live... if you're doing what I'm doing with it... in that context... there's... there's something bothersome about what the relationship between the live work... or the artwork, and the written essay is and how they speak to each other and how he talks about it. There's something like, yea, difficult about it being explanatory or as if the performance is... is just these experimental tests of ideas, and then there's this writing up of these experiments, and there's something that doesn't make sense to me about that... there's processes, so I don't really recognize that, really...

35:35

AP

And of course positioning a performance at the end of it, you are making very clear that your body is a collection of... marks from the other work that you've done through that period of time.

FW

Yea. Yea. It feels sort of important... PARTly because of this existence of this thing called "the Viva" which is, sort of, this... this living voice... event, so it feels... I quite like the idea that... that the performance I MAKE... and actually the performances I'm making... have been making through the years, during which I've been writing this PhD, it so happens to be non-verbal, 'cause I used to speak in performances but I haven't spoken in one... for years... so there's something about, actually, the voice that's a very particular strategy... so I think it will be a piece of its own and this lecture performance idea, which I can't define, which is a bit weird and... yea, so... I haven't... I haven't really got an answer to the issues of documentation 'cause part of me also, kind of... I think there MIGHT be some video material with it now, 'cause it might feel kind of like "Here's another element of this..." it MIGHT be that it... it... it isn't water tight to deny that... in it, and I kind of don't mind, 'cause some video material might feature in the live lecture



performance. So it COULD sit alongside the written... thing... the written element. It might... it might be OK that it does, it might not be... it might be that I can't work it out, but my original thinking was to resist this visual documentation because I think... it's kind of the first thing that happens to performance all the time, the video, the performance, it's assumed that that's how it exists, and that isn't actually my experience of it, you see. I've got boxes of videos and I don't watch them, you know... I'm just about to go through a process where I AM going to make myself watch them 'cause I am trying to kind of go back and scavenge... scavenge and... and reuse choreography from those, so I'm going... I'm sort of finding this reason to go back, but uhm... I think...it's just a...yea, an absolute assum-... this... this... it's part of the sort of problem of this predominance of the visual, you know, which is part of where a lot of the questions came from, which has led me to a great love of the visual or, kind of, reengaging with it, you know, rather than a kind of "Oh, dear... this is a problem. It dominates"...but I haven't really got an answer to the kind of...about the, sort of, problems of documen-...I mean part of me... I document my work fairly badly generally unless other people point cameras at it... well. And I'm quite happy to do performances that aren't photographed or filmed, and I think, I think, probably, after this I WILL do, specifically, some solo projects of which there is no trace, absolutely deliberately, yea... and I can't... I don't know... I kind of...yea, I wonder sometimes if I should position that... well I AM slightly positioning that in... in this PhD context quite deliberately, that there's this live thing and there's this written thing and... maybe video document or visual document gets... still visual document gets talked about, and it's in there somewhere that... it's problematized.

39:27

AP

It's not XXXX

FW

Yea, yea, yea there's something about... OR I go "Look it's standing in..." "...for..." you know... "Look, it's standing in for, it's not me!" "Look, it's a projection. Here's me." projection, you know, what's... "Here I am next to my projection. What happens?" You know, very deliberately, which is what I did in the PARIP one, very deliberately, kind of... yea... video me and live me and... I haven't resolved that, I don't understand it... properly... at all, and ah... but it's quite often... where I find other examples that I see...are... unconvincing or... or confusing to me... but I suppose in different... I suppose in different research projects so that they operate really differently... but, yea, the... the whole issue of... the document... yea... and for the university archivers... I don't think it's going to get sorted out, unless there's going to be a lot of clumsy... stuff going on.

40:49

AP

I mean that's the other issue, 'cause the second part of this question, really, is about how you're conceptualizing the artifacts of practice as research and how does that tie in with the notion of an institutional... archive.

41:03

FW

Yea... I kind of XXXX (don't mind?) these thing being on a shelf, really... but I need it to be talking about that... a bit... a bit in some way... but it's me that is part of the dissemination, you know, and I think it's... but you see I just can't see the work as

ending there. I can't identify with when I've spoken to people who've done PhD's in whatever area, not the Arts, and there's this kind of "I did that, and now it's sitting on a shelf" see I don't... I can't perceive it as dead in that kind of a way, it is, but, I don't really... it's not... I think it's kind of like all the boxes of video in my cupboard, it's kind of a problem but it's a sort of interesting problem. Uhm...

42:10

AP

Well this question about artifact is also about... I suppose in some ways it's revisiting that question about dissemination because... can dissemination and artifact be conflated... certainly when we ask... when I ask about dissemination to some people...there's a reference to...

FW

Oh, right...

AP

...object and artifact and that trade that goes on, but of course...

FW

Oh I think it more is like, it's like... it's ME that's disseminating it ...not just in... in that I... it's me in the performances, but I actually think of me... speaking and working people is actually carrying it... out... of... here... yea.

42:52

AP

And in that way, does that make you...

FW

And the writing. I think that's what the writing is.

AP

Does that make you think about artifacts in different ways, 'cause of course even the term "artifact" can be problematized 'cause... is that something that's merely a physical object.

43:07

FW

Yea, no I think I've... I kind of... well I think... I think... and I think a lot of other people are writing and thinking this, and I think I'm kind of picking up on... on them, on following something that is going on about... renegotiating what... what those museum traditions are, yea? What is the museum-ing of things and what is the archiving of things and what is the institutionalizing... and... it might be something that I kind of go "Ugggh!" a bit later on, just like "Oh dear" but at the moment I do th-... I do like to think as the thesis as an event and the writing as an event... yea, and maybe the speaking of it from my body as a document and actually put those words onto the opposite thing, yea, what is the artifact, an object or a pile of paper, or... 'cause the trou-... 'cause this is an issue in performance 'cause quite often you're talking about the artifacts but it's not even there, I mean it REALLY isn't there, it's not just it's in some museum on the other side of the world, it's like it really isn't there. It's gone. So that's kind of the core of... the kind of current, or recent, cannon of performance studies, really, that absolute issue that is

ephemeral and it is gone... 'Cause out of my kitchen window there's the back of the Discovery Museum which is one of the kind of old kind of Newcastle museums that actually has all the local history and archives in it. I've never actually been in the museum but I've lived here about four years and uhm... but you can see on... I can see all the boxes... you can look in a minute...you can see in all these windows the boxes of the archives? You can actually see all the little kind of... drawers in...that they're sat up on the back... top... floor of the museum. And then there's a bit where you can see...the stairwell and there's a... yea, an electronic XXXXlight where the words go along, whachacallit?... electronic display and... and sometimes at night, they haven't shut down... I don't know, sometimes it's not there but sometimes at night on... several floors, obviously above the stairwell, it says "The museum is now closing" and I can read it from my kitchen, those words: the museum is now closing. And it's repeated on four or five flights, you know... it's very weird, you know, I'm writing looking onto this "thing", the museum, but uhm...yea, I feel sort of like part of that discussion about well... and it's come up really big in performance art now, this really looking at old...older work and realizing...and I think part of it actually that the artists are getting old. There's this slight re-looking at work because literally people have realized that... that... bodies that made them... are going. And I think that's partly what that... that... that rush to look at it is and I think this is going on in the Nancy Sparrow exhibition at the Baltic, where there's videos of her, and she's in her seventies and she's quite crippled by arthritis, which she's always had, since her thirties, but there's this... the great pleasure in that exhibition is... is actually... something to do with her body, actually, even though it's all her work that's covered in all these other bodies and images of bodies and that's what her work's about, but there's... something quite, kind of, significant... it's not quite a retrospective, and it's... the exhibition's in relation to another artist, Kiki Smith, and that's deliberately what the exhibition is doing, working with both of them, different generations of women artists... but uhm... yea... I feel like there's something about... going on in contemporary performance work that's to do with ageing or coming of age and how we're gonna talk about it and all these... yea... but I read in different areas and I get slightly different things, yea? from kind of... performance studies that's come out of theatre and then also... what I read coming out of... visual... theories and... more of the kind of fine art, performance art...I read slightly different feelings, I think, about it or...

47:41

AP

So (whispers) performance meets heritage studies... that is a XXXX and a souvenir.

FW

Completely! Yea, yea exactly. And there's so many people writing like that and about that and I'm not sure where I...yea, I think that must come into... what I'm doing, 'cause I suppose I've got to a certain point where I can look back... at my own history of making... you know... but I don't necessarily want... I don't think it's... that's what this thesis is, it's not retrospective, it's actually... it's actually more present tense... a making that's now... but it must start to kind of look... you know...to something a bit further away as well, I'm talking about current work, mostly, but I can feel it might start to pick up on... this work that's further away and gone and mis-remembered...so this thing of "How is that told?" yea... maybe not "How is it documented?" but there's this sort of thing about "telling" ...what are the ways of telling.

48:43

AP

OK. Which brings me to the last question, really.

FW

Really?

AP

Yea. About ways of telling... because the question is, how have... how has this experience, this context of being in this very formalized interview situation mapped onto how you think about your own research practices. That's the first part of that and the second part of the question is really... what... what's absent, other than of course the movement.

49:19

FW

...Well it's different to writing, and it's different to performing...

AP

It's a question about how have these questions... have these questions touched on how you think about what it is that you're doing.

49:39

FW

...Well, it's sort of... it makes sense but I think... I'm sort of right inside the issue because of this peculiar thing of... being in the thing of trying to realize this artifact of the written thing of the thesis... I think... I think... I think at the moment it's sort of... yea... thinking about it before you came and... coming... doing this is sort of... I don't know, I think I realize that I... I don't, kind of... I think there's questions of being intimidated by the institution or the "academia" (mocking tone) that are running through... a lot of the conversations and probably the interviews and the conferences and stuff around something like... yea, PARIP, that has kind of brought people... yea... or focused on the conversations and the experiences that are going on, so... it's... it's somehow... it's a way of manifesting... this interview could be a way of... which may be what I'm writing... is trying to manifesting some KIND of conversation with... the academic and cultural traditions that we're all kind of working in and with and through... and similarly I was... I was looking at an advert for a conference in Cork, The Rediscovery of Ascetics and it's the Department of Philosophy and Art History and I thought... "Now how would I send them a paper?" 'cause there's a few people on the keynotes who I read and there's, you know... it's kind of "Well..." and I was thinking... I think I was thinking that if I sent an abstract for a paper... why would that be interesting to do... to quite deliberately put myself kind of where I don't belong in a way... or what is their perception of whether... there is any kind of belonging or relevance and also... and I could imagine writing a cover letter saying "You might not think this would work..." and, you know "...but what if... you put me in this alongside..." you know ...given that I can't... I could talk about my... my thinking and reading about ascetics at the moment, but I can't... I can't... trace it back... fully research and understood to "can't" ja'know what I mean? but I can kind of show how I'm working with all these other citations and references that are between... me and "can't" in history, you know, and more recently, and I was sort of wondering about what if I construct something that's only on... drawing on contemporary reference... that's about this, so without kind of... so... so what would be grounding my ideas, what would, you know, what... what... how would we... how

would we perceive me as... well-researched in that context and well-read and knowledgeable, what is... what is MY knowledge, then, in that context... given that I read kind of as much as can cope with, you know, in life, like, there's a certain amount of books on that wall and I know I can't read them all. So it's like, what do you do? (laughs) How am I reading those books, then, 'cause I know that I can't read more, even those, and I'm gonna buy that many again, probably... in the next decade or two, you know, so it's kind of like... "What is that?" and I... it's... so yea, I feel like... I feel like this has made... has come at a moment when I'm thinking about... how do you talk to and how do you tell...your kind of... your body of work and the work of your body... into all these other places and why do you bother, why would you want to...and it...so it makes me think about putting myself into those contexts and maybe... and maybe being less...being able to kind of... say "These are the places I'm coming from"... without falling into the trap of going...totally trying to define "This is what I am" do ya know what I mean, without trying to fix my identity as "this practitioner-researcher who's done this, this and this and knows this much... ja'know what I mean? it's the sort of... when you feel like this is the kind of "What are you?" and "Should you be here?" there is THEN the trap of "Oh, OK so now I define myself"... if you see what I... yea...so it made me think... it makes me think about that, yea...

55:37

AP

OK. I'll let you go now. Thank you very much... again for spending so much time talking to us.