

## PARIP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Case Study: Sarah Rubidge; 20th May 2004

Jem Noble (JN) Parip Case Studies .... Sarah Rubidge, Tape 1, 20th May 2004 with Sarah Rubidge in London

JN Just so you know, case studies will be incorporated in the PARIP database in transcript form and will be a material resource for the Practice in Research communities. A case study outlines a particular example of your practice as research or aspects of your practice as research that you consider maybe of benefit to other members of practice as research communities. Your case study is structured in such a way that others will benefit from your experience. The interview will be conducted in conversational style using the following questions.

What is your current practice as research?

SR I make interactive digital choreographic installations.

JN What are your research questions?

SR They vary from project to project, but initially I was interested in the dialogue between choreography and technology and later, in the body in technology and I was thinking that maybe choreography could be extended through the use of technology and I ended up doing interactive installations. When I first started out I wanted to make ..... this is a bit ambitious for a first time around ... I wanted to make multiuser interactive installations that would generate emergent choreographic forms amongst the participants. That was a piece called 'Passing Phases'. Multiuser installations are incredibly difficult to create because you have to make them legible for the individual user but also sophisticated enough to go beyond the one-on-one response. It was a gorgeous piece to be in but failed as an installation because you couldn't 'read' it. So that led me to the first major question I had which was: how can you make multiuser interactive installations that would generate emergent choreographic forms that were legible? So the last big piece I did (Sensuous Geographies 2003) ... which is going up in Chichester in June and has been played in Glasgow and Los Angeles so far ... that piece was a direct result of Passing Phases and of the fact that I couldn't get the results I wanted from that work because the interactive interface was illegible. So that was one big question that gave me the AHRB fellowship. [These AHRB Research Fellowships were the first fellowships awarded by the AHRB for the Creative and Performing Arts, and the first that acknowledged artistic practice as a valid research methodology.]

Inherent within Sensuous Geographies is another strand of my work that runs right through everything .... and that is how to make installations that are read

through the ..... what Gibson calls the haptic senses, in other words touch and the kinaesthetic ..... that are read through the physiological world of sensibility rather than through the eyes. So I was much more interested in getting people to *feel* the spaces and to actually understand them, or to find their way around them, through feeling. So *Sensuous Geographies* was also about that. We blindfold people before they go in so they have to find their way around the space using their ears and their haptic senses rather than sight. I found, and this was another strand of my research which I suppose is not quite so technologically 'whizzy' as the other - but I think is equally important - which is, that in order for people to stop using their eyes (if they do have their eyes open) you almost have to make images that sit on the threshold of perception so you they can't quite make out what they are.

The images in my work are all derived from human movement but ..... I think this time I will give you an example..... [shows an image from *Passing Phases*]..... you can just see something here ..... So this is another strand of my research - which is: how can you make images which are ... liminal, if you like. So this image here [shows an image from *Time & Tide* (2001)] which you can just about see on the small screen ... if it's blown up bigger it becomes more and more diffuse. It's entirely grounded in human movement (this is a body, this trace here, just rolling backward and forwards in water). But in addition to the abstraction, the whole image was distributed across several pyramidal projection surfaces, so the image was broken up and even more diffuse. That was one of my first experiments with creating images you can barely see but you can sense. But there's something human going on in them. That strand has run through all my work since then, even though it wasn't my first research question, if you like, when I started out on this trip. *Hidden Histories* (2001) was also a piece that dealt with imagery. It was put up in Winchester Theatre Royal and brought the inhabitants of that building from the 12th century and 18th century back into the present by using very, very liminal imagery.... where I took away the shape, I took away the definition of the body of the monks (in fact, priests) and they just kind of flickered into the walls and then out again so people would say .... 'What was that, Ooh! It's gone'. And that liminality means that people actually stay - and this is the marvellous thing - that people will stay in the installations I make (... which I always make in collaboration with other people all the time, so they are not 'mine'...). But they stay in them for 20 minutes, an hour, sometimes longer, which is quite impressive for an interactive installation.

So this idea of not quite being able to capture what's going on is another of my really strong research concerns. It goes back to my interest in understanding things physiologically. I've just received a Wellcome Trust grant for a project with a neuroscientist where we're actually using physiological responses to images you can't quite grasp as the means of changing the images.

So my research has two strands; one is multiuser installations, generating emergent choreographic forms for people watching them from outside - usually they're the people waiting to go in, and the other is this idea of trying to get people to understand through feeling.

JN How did you devise these questions?

SR I've sort of semi-answered it .... they came out of unresolved issues from previous works. The first one was devised because when I started doing this kind of work in about '94 the only technological programme available to dance people at the time was Life Forms, which was in a very early stage of development. I wasn't terribly interested in making animated figures that danced but what I *was* interested in was trying to break through the technological surface, if you like, of the digital images that came out of work from the visual arts at that time ... from digital artists. It's all boys stuff (sorry!) but it was all lines and everything else 'computer graphics'. So that was the first question: how to get the sensual into the digital domain. I discovered in Passing Phases that the images that really attracted people's attention were the ones that they really had to get very close to to see because the images weren't quite clear enough. But Passing Phases didn't work at the level of multiuser installations. And that led to the other question. So each time, the research questions come out of the previous work, so it's one long floating process ..... I'll have another question by next year!

JN ... How appropriate do you feel the institutional demand for research questions is with regard to talking about your research.

SR ... Let me just read that for myself. ... Well I don't find it a problem actually, because I consider my research to be artistic research anyway. I practice my research as an artist and the fact that I happen to be mediating it through an academic institution didn't really make a great deal of difference to me. I have these artistic questions. They are my research questions. So I just sort of go ... "Thank you very much" and address them as I make work.

JN How does your practice engage with issues of professionalism?

SR ... I take issue with this question actually. What do we mean by professionalism? Let's get all philosophical about this. All my work is made with a view to being presented in the professional arts world, and ..... if that's engaging with issues of professionalism then I would say that's it - because I'm a professional. But what am I? I'm a professional artist, I'm a professional ... *was* a professional ... *am* a professional academic in a way. I am ... have been ... am a professional teacher. I do workshops all over the world. And everything I do has to be good. So therefore that's engaging in professionalism.

JN How does your practice engage with issues of pedagogy?

SR Not at all, not deliberately. There are spin-offs obviously, because I do give workshops for artists, for university and dance teachers, and for people ... but I don't, as a researcher, engage with issues of pedagogy ..... it just kind of comes out.

JN In what context or contexts, higher education, professional pedagogic research etc is your practice devised and presented.

SR Actually in all of those – higher education, professional arts, pedagogic. \_ I think to a degree a lot of the workshops I run give me insights into ways of doing things that I wouldn't have thought of myself – which is why I've been a teacher most of my life. A teacher of arts and dance in community contexts to begin with because I find that, like Rosemary Butcher, teaching feeds you, it's not all giving out. So it's all research. As I say, I do have a difficulty in splitting up the PAR and artistic research: it's all research. As far as being presented, my research is primarily presented as works. That's the major output. And it's mainly installations. I also write papers in which I ponder on philosophical ideas which have impacted on my practices .... and it always does. It's not contrived, kind of .... 'this is academia therefore this is what I *have* to do'. I've always had a philosophical bent since I was 18, before I knew what it meant. In everything I've done I've always asked the questions Why? How? What does this mean? What other context would it work in? So the papers will engage with that kind of debate. I also give workshops. I give artist's talks. I go to conferences and talk to people. So it's not only presenting. I'll show my little CDs to all and sundry at conferences ... that's the way my research is presented really.

JN And what are the funding contexts, departmental, faculty, research board, arts council etc?

SR Departmental funding initially. I got half my AHRB fellowship money from the dance department [at University College Chichester] and half from the AHRB. So that's two funding strands. And now I've been taken on as a research fellow, a senior research fellow, so the funding is departmental essentially at the moment. But inevitably that's coming via the AHRB through the research capability funding they're giving to certain university departments to increase their research count. Faculty? Not really, although let's call that departmental too, as the departmental funding is partly from the Faculty Research Board, which draws on money from the AHRB capability funding directly, and indirectly services that money quite a lot. Also the Arts Council of England. But some of my research is funded by commission. So *Hidden Histories* was done via a commission funded by Winchester Theatre Royal (which indirectly came from an Arts Council). And I've just got a Wellcome Trust grant, as I said, to work with the neuroscientist. So I've got money coming in from that. I think that's really those are the main sources of funding at the moment. But I tend not to go (this is the interesting thing) I tend not to

go to the Arts Council if I want to make a work (and this will come back in another question later) because I can't say what work I'm going to make before I make it. I have an idea and but I have no idea what's going to happen with it. I usually start with: "I wonder what would happen if" - I've got a little artistic niggle and I want to push it. Actually I think the academic world is the only place I could practice as an artist because Arts Councils want to know what you're going to make before you've made it ... and I couldn't tell you – ever. But it's always gorgeous!! But if you ask me to describe what I'm going to do first, before I have started, then you've stifled me and it not really research any more, of any kind .... it's just 'I've thought of this idea and now I'm going to make it'. (This just happens to be my take on the practice really.)

JN. What are the resource/plant context - so in-house support, overtime staff, equipment platforms, working spaces or brought in technical assistance etc

SR Some technical equipment is provided ... out of our research funds. So I've got a stormingly big computer in there [points to study] that has actually enabled me to do a lot of the work over the last 2 or 3 years. What is 'plant context'? Flowers! They can be flowers. I think they mean big equipment don't they? Equipment.

JN Yes, things like projectors, you must hire in for your research.

SR, Some from the college and some are hired in. It depends again on where the research is. In-house support is tremendous at all levels. I've got technical support from the theatre technicians. Whether or not they actually work in the space I'm going into, they'll come out and help me put installations up in funny little places. So they're fantastic. Department staff in general are tremendously supportive. If I need to be away somewhere then somebody will find a way of standing in for the small amount of undergraduate teaching that I do now, teaching that requires me to be there week by week. Overtime staff? Well we all do that, don't we? But we don't actually get paid overtime for it. So I think that's a funny question. Equipment platforms? The University will lend me anything I need if it's available. And if it's not available then I'll have to hire in. So projectors, sound equipment, etc. But for Sensuous Geography we bought our own sound equipment, speakers MIDI boards, stuff like that, as we have to travel around with it. Brought in technical assistance? In the final 4 months of my AHRB fellowship I got a research assistant [for three years]. (It took that long.) It was fantastic though, because I got a research assistant who is a programmer and she is (and she is a she!) fantastic. She does all that hard-edged programming stuff which goes over my head. But our relationship is probably more to do with artistic collaboration – we'll come back to that one.

JN How have these...

SR Oh! Marketing as well. I get marketing support. Most importantly I get time. That's the best support I have. I have time to make my work. I don't have to be at the University 4 days a week, sitting there. I actually can just do what I need to do and that's brilliant.

JN That sounds great

SR Aren't I lucky?

JN You're very lucky.

SR But it has taken a while coming, hasn't it? Oh dear, if you are around as long as me it'll happen to you too!

JN How have these resource contexts influenced the scope and actuation of your research.

SR ... Time again ... and as I said, it's the attitude to research that you can have in this [academic] context which means that, while they want output they don't actually want to know what you're going to put out in detail before you do it. So I think for people like me, and actually for the arts in general, this context is providing what the arts bodies are only just beginning to provide for, which is actually time for artistic *research* and not simply artistic *product*. So that whole university context allows proper, proper artistic investigation to take place and I think that's immensely important, really important. It's one of the things about academia that if you are full time you get a day's research a week – but you are so tired that you can't really do anything with it. You've got to get your mind out of the teaching mode and get down to the research and by the time you are ready for research (clicks fingers) the day's gone. That doesn't work for real research. I think that's the main thing really. Influenced the scope of my research? I think I would have done what I did anyway ... Sensuous Geographies? We got the money from the Scottish Arts Council through my collaborator who's a composer ..... and I think regardless of whether I was AHRB fellow or not we'd have done that work, we would have just not got any money for the making of it. I would have been a poor artist. So I don't think it's actually changed the artistic scope of what I'm doing but it's allowed me to live without continuing to live on the bread line.

JN How does your current PAR practice relate to past and future practices i.e., to notions of networks, of citation.

SR I'm not sure what this question means. Are you? I'm a bit lost on this one.

JN I guess where it's come from and how it will inform your future work. Do you feel it has a broader scope.

SR Well, it is my work so it's necessarily going to inform my future work..... But 'relating to my past practices'? The whole area of research I now engage

in (digital installations) was quite a radical shift for me ... and this happened way before PAR was a twinkle in people's eyes .... It wasn't from anything else ... it was a radical shift and I found that it was as if I had come home. It was fantastic. Finally I knew what I wanted to do as an artist .... and I had to wait until I was nearly 50!! Future practices? No idea. Again, no idea because I find myself in places now that if you had asked me 2 years ago I wouldn't have said that I'd be doing what I am doing now. So, I don't know about that .....and networks of citations? What is that? I'm confused.

JN I think that's just a ..... a

SR An AHRB thing. But I think what's quite interesting is that I'm beginning to realise the more this field grows – and it's growing immensely, it used to be a little tiny group of us and it's now growing exponentially – I don't think there are many people who make installations that they want to generate choreographic events; events which are not choreographed, not performed, in which the actual choreographic event emerges from the audience's use of the installation. I can probably think of about three other people who are even playing with this idea. So the relationship of my current work to past work is that it is quite a shift from what I did, and from what installation practice often is. Choreographers tend to make installations that they can perform in or they can make performances in. I make installations in which the audience become performers, – in one the participants actually have to put on costumes to go into the installation. It's a very strange piece. This is a piece that I have no idea where it came from [this is *Sensuous Geographies*], what its precedents were ..... but it came. Future practice? I'm very bad at reading the future, I have no idea, not in terms of me or indeed in terms of any one else, but I'm sure it will filter through.

JN I think you may well feel you've already answered this question, but what is your devising or actuation process and how does that relate to the broader contexts in which you work

SR So the devising actuation I talked about way back: I start with nothing and then something emerges. That's important to me. But there are other strands to it. So *Sensuous Geographies* is a piece that looks like ... this. Right ... this is an interactive choreographic installation. [Plays a DVD recording to the interviewer showing examples of different levels of participant expertise in *Sensuous Geographies*] These [points] are people who've been in the installation quite a while so they know what's going on ..... but these [points again] aren't. This [points again] is a mixture of people who are just general public and people who know the installation quite well.

So this piece emerged out of, in fact, a technical problem. When I was starting work on *Sensuous Geographies* I wanted to resolve this issue of how you could make an interactive interface that was both legible for all the participants and could also produce a sophisticated art work. I wondered what would

happen if 'this' happened in the installation or 'the other' happened [that is, beyond the obvious 'click and go' relationship between participant and installation] ... but usually nothing legible happens in a sophisticated interactive installation, as there are not enough obvious clues for the new participant to go on. But if the responses from the installation are too simple the work itself is simple. So the devising usually starts out with solving a technical problem like this, and then the piece emerges from it. So the devising/actuation process relates to the broader context in which I work.

So I suppose one of the terms I'd use for my devising practice is that it really is organic. Sensuous Geographies dealt with emergent choreographic forms. The new research that I'm doing now (Fugitive Moments, The Wellcome Trust Research) is to do with the scientific concept of emergence. I'm working with three computer scientists who are building me an, actually gorgeous, little ALife programme. It's doing fantastic things ..... so the next piece is going to be emergent, an emergent piece, but with constraints built in by me. As were the events that came out of Sensuous Geographies. But I have taken this into a biometric project ... so the work grows organically. That's the important thing. It's not planned. Whatever happens leads me to the next bit of the process ..... until suddenly a work begins to just emerge. That's the point when I think "Ah-ha!, *now* I know what I've got and now I'm going to start refining that as a work." It's a frightening way of working, and absolutely terrifying if you've got a deadline coming up.

JN And is it your specific relation to that, the organic nature, that feeds the rationale? Is that what you would say would be the rationale for the process?

SR Yes

JN And in terms of production and evaluation strategies.

SR Production strategies. I am usually trying to make something that needs £10,000 before production strategies become relevant. Whatever's needed in production terms does emerge from what the nascent work requires, Sensuous Geographies was a big one, a really big one. Since its 'premiere' we've had to rework things several times (well twice!) and needed more funding to get it so it's somewhere near to what it needs to be as a work. So ... production strategies are a problem because there isn't ever enough money in the early stages, as it is not directed to a production.

Evaluation .... Because everything I do is to do with participation, not to do with people looking at something from outside (they've actually got to enter into the space so they make a kind of commitment as they come in) I listen to people a lot, to hear what they're saying and thinking about their experience of the piece. As I said, people stay for a long time in these installations and for me that's part of the evaluation process... how long participants have been there. I also have a little book that we invite people to write things in as they

do in art galleries. I also invite ... I hate to use the term 'experts' ... but I invite people who know this kind of medium in and I ask for responses from them. And of course, the critics are there as well. But the evaluation of the process ..... this is quite a nice one..... I know what works and what doesn't work in terms of what I call the "work of the work". Passing Phases was the first installation I made .... and I say that it didn't work. It was a fabulous space to be in. People hung out in it and had a wonderful time. There was a carpet on the floor and they sat down. There was all this audio-visual material going on around them, and the images were really sensuous, and they got quite 'off' on that. But the installation itself didn't do anything legible in response to them, it just sat there and sort of played *at* them. So for me it didn't work as an interactive installation.

So as far as evaluation is concerned ... it's not only to do with artistic intention, it's actually to do with what the *work* was intended to do [in my case in terms of its interactivity]. So a lot of the evaluation in these works is about saying: What was it we set out to do in terms of this technology? Did it work? Yes/No? Could it have worked better? Yes/No? Every time I put something up I rework it later. As I said, we reworked some things on Sensuous Geographies to refine the interface, to refine the musicality, to refined the imagery. (I think that process actually comes from my dance/performance background. And that's quite an interesting thing, because in that field you don't think 'Oh lovely, we've got it up, it's done' You actually think, 'We're going to put it up again. Right, we can make it better. That bit was a bit 'iffy'. We can refine that.') So that whole process of responding to first manifestations of the work goes into the manifestations of the works as they are re-presented. The evaluation is therefore self-evaluation, as well as outside evaluation .... all the time. And I don't actually care whether people like it a piece or not because you can't get 100% of the people liking your work, you'll get a lot who do ... but 'liking' is a funny thing...

JN I suppose it's more an issue of the way they engage

SR Yes! Absolutely! That is another source of evaluation. With most of my installations, as an artist you actually have to be there with the participants because there's a certain amount of dressing people up to go into the installation, etc. And then, after about 3 hours of being in a darkened place doing all this, you go out for a drink and then you can listen to people talking. So you actually hear people talking to each other about their experience [evaluating it]. And another thing came up. A psychologist pointed it out to me (he wanted to do a proper social psychology evaluation of it but it would require funding to do it properly). He said he found it interesting just listening to people and watching the way they engaged with each other not only in the installation, but outside of it as well. So other people's perspectives are brought into the evaluation process as well .... anecdote as a mode of evaluation.

JN You've obviously spoken about the audience participation as integral to the work. The next question – who are the makers of the work? What do they play? Sorry, what roles do they play? And how are issues of ownership acknowledged?

SR In general I work, as I said before, with collaborators .... always with this kind of work. People can do it on their own, do do it on their own, but I just love the action of different people's minds working on other minds. You get ideas coming in from different artistic perspectives, philosophical perspectives, historical perspectives, theological perspectives. These perspectives all come into the work ... we are equal as makers. Also with 'ownership'. When I talk in this [interview] context, I tend to talk about my work because it's difficult to keep saying 'our work and the 'our is' ... ding, ding, ding, ding [indicates list of names]'. In fact, every installation I've made so far has been an equal collaboration with most of the people who've been involved in it. So from the beginning: Passing Phases was developed with digital artist Tim Diggins first, then a guy called Garry Hill, a programmer, came in [who's not the Gary Hill of Tall Ships fame], and Nye Parry, a composer. Now in this piece the composer was less equal than the programmer and I, and the digital artist and I. In Time and Tide I worked with a sculptress, Jane Reece. As with Passing Phases we were both there at the beginning and the piece developed from the ideas that emerged from us both. Hidden Histories: I worked with a digital artist Joe Hyde. We worked equally right from the beginning. Sensuous Geographies was a collaboration with Alistair MacDonald. But for Sensuous Geographies we also had a physical environment designed for the piece, and costumes, which meant recruiting a set designer and costume designer. They were not equal collaborators, but were of vital importance to the piece. For people who were equal collaborators we usually order the billing alphabetically, which means my name usually comes last. So it's Alistair McDonald, Sarah Rubidge [unless we're doing it the piece in a dance context then we'll change it around]. But there are secondary credits, if you like, the person who did the costumes of Sensuous Geographies got secondary credits as did the person who did created the environment because they came in to make something for a piece that had already evolved. Also, in a work like Sensuous Geographies, we worked with four performers consistently over the last two week-long research periods. Although we worked with people all the time in the first two research weeks , I got some professional dancers in from London, Glasgow and Edinburgh to work with us for the last two. Therefore they got credited as 'in collaboration with .... list of their names". I do that with all my work if I'm working with performers in that way

JN What's the place of documentation and how does it relate to process performance and multiple outcomes?

SR For me documentation is just a way of helping people to understand what I do and get sight of what I do. In something that is huge .... I mean some of these installations take up complete rooms, massive things.... they take over

a theatre for a week so they don't go up very often. This means that not many people can access them. Documentation for me is about dissemination, it's not part of my practice ... I try my best to do it as well as I can but ..... it's just to find a way of sharing my ideas. I made a website in about '96 (in appearance it shows that it was me who made it, needs a bit of reworking now!). That's just to disseminate the fact that this kind of work is going on and the kind of thinking that goes beneath it. But that is that kind of documentation. I also talk about the work. That is a form of documentation and dissemination. Since I finished my PHD and the first year after that, which would have been 2001, I have gradually stopped only giving papers that are theoretical cogitations on my work, but actually give papers *about* my work .... where the work is primary and the cogitations come up from underneath.

Also it is difficult to document these installations. How can you document the experience of being in something that you as a viewer are making happen? It's not easy! Now it would be nice to have someone who wanted that as a research project, wouldn't it? How do you document interactive installations that you have to feel to understand?

JN Caroline and Angela could talk for hours about that.

SR I'm sure they could .... come play with me!

SR As well as the website ... at the moment it's CD Rom documentation, but now I've got something to burn DVDs on it will be DVD documentation. I've got two documentation CDs, one with works from '94 to 2001 and one with Sensuous Geographies. The new (potential) piece, Fugitive Moments.... I haven't got any documentation on that yet, as it is so early in the research process. Papers: some of them are on my website, some of them are in conference proceedings, a lot of them are just sitting around in my computer waiting to come out ... not really that accessible yet. (I haven't yet found a way of making the papers work on the web, they all come out looking almost unreadable.) I haven't yet found a way of distributing the CD/DVD documentation widely ... I just take several of them with me wherever I go and hand them out to everybody I meet at conferences, etc. Everybody has a right to copy them and pass them on .... which is one of the ways I disseminate my work. I suppose another form of documentation I have is notebooks for each work... great chunky notebooks which have everything in them from the reading I've been doing, to the process I've been going through, to the changes that happen to the process. So I've got process documentation. Whether anybody can understand it is another matter – but it's not publicly available. But when I'm dead, somebody can get at it if they like.

JN So there are no plans to put it on the website then?

SR No – I don't have plans to put the notebooks on the website. I've been talking with Val Briginshaw and Emily Claid who got this really big AHRB

grant to do *Embodying Ambiguities*. They did put some of their process notes on the website. They're paying for somebody to do the website, which is fantastic. But as an artist on your own you can't make the work, *and* write the papers, *and* do the documentation, *and* make the website.... and somehow or another do the teaching and supervise PHD students .... all at the same time. I think it's becoming kind of quite an issue, but it costs money to have somebody to build you a decent website. So I'll have to put up with the little bits I've got at the moment until finally I can get someone to help me.

JN What are the artefacts of your PAR and where are they to be located and for what purposes?

SR The artefacts are installations, obviously ... therefore, located whenever they go up ... which can be anywhere. But I also write papers, quite erudite papers as well. I do still write papers that deal with the philosophy about my work but I tend not to present at conferences in that way anymore. I tend to talk about the work as work now and show of lot of (not very good) video documentation of the events.

JN How are possible modes of assessment conceived and how might assessment relate to or problematise relationships among multiple outcomes?

SR ... I think I answered a bit of that in the evaluation section. Obviously papers are refereed or commented on by one's peers. For the work itself it has to be public response, I think. I don't know, I always find these questions difficult because so much of the evaluation/assessment I do, I do intuitively....and don't pick this out as assessment and that as not ... it's just an ongoing process. But I do try all the time to get people I know who have got very rigorous minds in to see the works, either during the process or during shows, and comment on them. Just as I go in and look at other people's work. But I suppose it is critics' reviews in the end with this kind of work that are part of the assessment,.... did it work and in what way? I've had some quite good reviews.

JN Do you think there are many people doing similar kinds of work or that you see as similar whose opinions you seek

SR Yes. Unfortunately one lives in Canada, one lives in France and another one lives in Australia, which makes it a little bit difficult. But whenever anything [work] is up I invite everybody who's involved in the field and invite them down to it (if they can get themselves down to it, which is not always easy, *Sensuous Geographies* is in Chichester at the moment, the last piece was in Chichester, another one was in Winchester). I had a lot of people when *Passing Phases* was in the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall (oddly enough!). A great many people came to that and offered their comments. But I think it's something we really need to formalise a little bit more. For example, saying to peers "I am in the middle of making a piece and I need feedback". I think

AHRB have begun to do that in this context. I recently went down to see a production rehearsal of Carol Brown's new piece that she was putting up the following Saturday. She called and said "Will you come down, I'd like your opinion on what's going on". I gave a few suggestions, something I thought they might like to think about. So I do it for my peers and they do it for me really. We're good enough to critique each other's work, not just say 'Oh, it's lovely', 'Oh, it's nice' 'Oh, that felt good'. It's more .... 'Why did you do that - then?'

JN What are the contributions to knowledge, new understandings of work in production, new understandings of period, new understandings of teaching etc.

SR I think one of the contributions to knowledge is that the form of work I'm doing at the moment is concerned with reconsidering (or extending perhaps) notions of what choreography means. I am asking questions like: What does it mean if you don't have performers but you're saying it's a choreography - of sorts? or: You say that it's an emergent choreographic form, what does that mean? I have had people say 'But how is this dance, Sarah?' and I say, "Well who knows?" but really, their question is the question I am asking them to address. I also think that some of my work is informing people working on sound installations from the perspective of music practice. I think it is also informing people who come to making large-scale digital installations of this kind from visual arts, because I come to them with a very clear choreographic sensibility. Through the collaborations I do with people from other disciplines there is constantly a spread of ideas, of thinking. So there are contributions to knowledge within the broader field of installation art and music, just as I'm getting knowledge and insights in from them and from that work

I am also working towards developing an understanding of how people understand. (This is where I'm moving towards next.) This is quite difficult .... I am trying to understand how people understand imagery that's derived from human movement but isn't actually a representation of the human form. That is something I'm really interested in and is what I'm exploring now with Fugitive Movements. New theories have recently emerged about mirror neurons ... that is, how, when you watch somebody move, or watch anything move, you get the same neuron response watching somebody move as you do doing it the action yourself. That's quite interesting to me. I don't know that I'm going to be dealing with mirror neurons specifically but I am going to be seeing whether abstracted movement that has come from a human body generates similar physiological responses in people watching it. So that's an area that's really quite new, that scientists are just beginning to touch on.

There's an awful lot more to look at. But I often forget how much people don't know about the finer details of my research, so I'm always surprised when people say ... 'I really don't understand what you're doing here?'. I always think 'Oh, it's perfectly clear, isn't it?', but it's not. So I think I must be working

with new ways of thinking about what a choreographic environment is. It is interesting, I stopped saying at one point that I had anything to do with choreography because I just wanted to place myself in a much broader artistic context, but it is becoming clear to me that that choreography and human movement is at the root of everything I do. So, even though there's no dancing my work is choreographic. So that is a contribution too - offering new ways of thinking about the separations inherent in the notion of genres.

JN How are notions of dissemination conceptualised, how the knowledge is passed on?

SR I think I've talked about this quite a lot ..... Putting up the work. Talking about it to other artists through giving academic papers at conferences from different disciplines. I really work quite hard to find a place for my work in other artistic contexts, so that disseminates this practice further than our own small world of performance. (I gave one at a multi literacy conference in September last year which was quite interesting.) Also CD ROMs, DVDs. I just talk about it a lot. Then there is the website. Eventually people get into trying to find out what this woman is talking about after all.

JN What are the positive benefits or outcomes for PAR communities?

SR I think it's up to them to judge really. I think I contribute, just as anybody else who does PaR contributes. For me personally the positive benefits of my research, and dissemination of it, lie in the benefit to the practice as research communities not only here but also overseas. I do a lot of traveling, giving workshops for university teachers and artists overseas (I'm engaged in a university exchange between Chichester and Taipei National University of the Arts under the auspices of the British Council). I also do a lot of non-university work for the British Council, artists' workshops and so on. I'm asked to give keynote papers, conferences all over the world ... and am increasingly asked to talk about my work and to talk about practice as research. I'm giving a paper at a dance research conference in Taipei in July (2004) this year, and I've been specifically asked to talk about practice as research for a practice as research conference for the dance performance community in Australia, also in July. However, all that international work has not come out of my practice as research, if you like it's come out of my history in the profession. I've been doing work for the British Council for 15 years now so I've got contacts everywhere .... so I think I make quite a big contribution, in my own sweet way.

JN What's been your experience of having to represent your practice as research within an AHRB context and a RAE context?

SR Not a problem at all. As I said my research is my practice and my practice is artistic and I just don't make a distinction between the two really. So I don't get concerned if people ask me to justify my work in an AHRB context. As I

said earlier, my philosophical thinking is embedded in what I do as an artist. It's not something I do outside of my artistic practice, and then do this 'art' work somewhere else. Therefore, I don't have to validate my artistic work through that philosophical underpinning. It's just all part of the same practice so it's not an issue for me at all.

JN How close is the relationship between your own thinking about your practice as research and this interview context?

SR What's been quite interesting for me is that, because it's being asked in this way, I've had to talk about it my work in a different, that is differently to what I would do if I was just in the flow of things. But I don't change my way of talking about things to make it sound good in this context or any other. But my thinking about my work in the AHRB/RAE context is obviously something I've been pondering on .... you know, how does it relate within the academic context, and so on? But I suppose I'm enough of a thinker not to feel threatened by this kind of questioning – environment, evaluation and assessment, etc. I just don't find it threatening. I do what I do and I get paid to do it within the context of the academy. I wouldn't get paid as much to do it outside but I'd do it anyway.

JN Well that was the last of the questions .....Thank you very much.