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# Disability Arts

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## Alice Holland

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### 'Figures' Production Report / 7 April 2015

Staring vaguely into the middle distance in a chalet in rural Wales, it's hard to process that for the last week I've been on a tidal schedule; a wind-burnt face and a sleep-deprived sense of befuddlement my only souvenirs of a week on the bank of the Thames helping Liz Crow bring her 'Figures' project into being. Was it only a few days ago we stood outside Parliament giving interviews to Finnish news channels and to Occupy? The BBC DID show up, didn't they?

The human cost of austerity as a theme for a project is one I'm totally behind and the value of humanity in arts production has featured heavily in lessons learned this week. Working under tough conditions, be they battling 60mph winds or a being in a group of strangers thrown into a flat



Liz Crow making clay figures outside Parliament

together, is par for the course in production, but the ability for a team to pull together and play nicely is key to success.

3am rarely brings out the best in anyone but we managed, by and large, to bring a little gallows humour to our early starts and heavy loads.

Every court needs it's jester, and when I realised I was unable to help with a lot of the physical aspects of the performances due to a back injury I took my role as Production Support to be in part serving as a cheerleader for physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing amongst the team. Yup, a bit of mucking about whilst loading a van can go a long way, I feel, as does the timely application of bacon sandwiches, so I hope I was able to contribute a little to the team.

None of this would have worked without excellent planning, and commendation must go to Producer Jess Edge for preparing the most formidable schedule to help us keep on track! I've worked with complicated scheduling before as part of the production team of the Unfairground at Glastonbury Festival, and the skills of good resource- and people-management are totally transferrable in all outdoor arts endeavours. If everyone is clear on their roles and know exactly where they need to be at any given time it allows for much better problem solving in the moment.

I tip my hat also to Liz's PA Jess Keily; her amazing skills and patience really highlighted the importance of skilled and properly funded assistance for disabled artists. Without her we would have struggled to keep the project afloat, and her excellent communication between the team and Liz helped us to adapt to Liz's energy levels and requirements.

Liz herself has been a joy to work with; even freezing her fingers and toes in the clay and wind for hours at a time she always came back from the shore smiling and kind. Endurance work really is a test of the body and will, and Liz's commitment to her work has been unshaken throughout. She's a very impressive woman who's work I will be following from now on.

Please do have a look at the [Figures twitter account](#) for details of the project and the stories behind the sculptures. We live in uncertain times and I will be watching the results of the general election closely for movement in funding to arts and disability.

It's nice to be back in the real world, and to not have to wear four pairs of trousers to keep warm, but there was something magical about being the only people awake on the riverbank watching a lone figure making many small ones, making a quiet but powerful protest for vulnerable people in society. Let us strive to take care of one another and keep up the pressure on government to be accountable and fair to us all.

Keywords: activism,disability activists,disability art,liz crow,performing arts,sculpture

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James says "I understand the need to gain experience. My objection is the way they've gone about it" - [figr.es/546](http://figr.es/546) [#WeAreFigures](#)

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Alice Holland blogs on the production of Liz Crow's 'Figures' project outside parliament [In.is/org.uk/2CmZc](http://In.is/org.uk/2CmZc)

Tweet to @disabilityarts



Dao is a partner of the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive. To find out about this important project as it develops [please click on this link to go to www.ndaca.org.uk](http://www.ndaca.org.uk)

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