

Figures: a mass-sculptural performance to make visible the human cost of austerity and urge action against it

Press Enquires

Please direct all enquires to: Producer Jessie Edge

jessie@roaring-girl.com

+44 (0) 7786 344984

[@WeAreFigures](#)

www.WeAreFigures

Figures Overview

Figures is a mass-sculptural performance that is making visible the human cost of austerity and urging action against it.

Using excavated raw river mud and taking up residence on the streets and foreshore of central London, artist-activist Liz Crow sculpted 650 small human figures, each one representing an individual at the sharp end of austerity. Coinciding with tide times on the nearby Thames, at the incoming tide, the newly-sculpted figures were moved to safety. At each low tide, the artist returned to sculpt more figures, in an endurance ritual that spanned 11 consecutive days and nights.

Though made in the same form, each figure differs in its detail, representing both common humanity and the individual. Their number echoes the 650 constituencies throughout which the effects of austerity are felt, as well as the number of MPs whose choices determine the choices of others.

Once dried, the figures were toured en masse in a mobile exhibition that visited

locations from London to Bristol over five days, including Trafalgar Square and David Cameron's constituency office, the figures creating a talking point for members of the public to confront the questions raised by the work.

In Bristol, the figures were returned to foreshore and raised into a cairn. A bonfire burned into the night, firing the figures, while their corresponding stories of austerity were read aloud until the returning tide doused the flames. The figures, fired, burned and broken, were reclaimed, gathered and ground down to dust.

In the final phase of the performance and on the first day of the new government's tenure, the ground remains of the figures were scattered back to water, taken out to sea as a poignant reminder of the human cost of austerity and a call to the international community to take heed.

Rooted in symbolism, ranging across worldwide 'mud men' mythology and the cycle of life, the firing and crushing of human aspiration, the bearing witness of the cairn and the dispersal and forgetting of stories of social injustice, *Figures* is a work that is multi-layered and uncompromising, yet simple and tender in message.

The 650 stories of people at the sharp end of austerity are drawn from leading-edge research, Parliamentary records and campaigns in the field of social justice. Covering a range of topics, including benefits reform, local authority spending, homelessness, malnutrition, NHS rationing, and so on, they have been selected to represent a spectrum of experience. Volunteer stewards, from campaigning and arts curatorial backgrounds, will attend the performance, drawing on these stories and supporting members of the public in conversation about the issues raised by the work.

Liz Crow says, "*Figures* sets out to make visible the stark human cost of austerity and to urge action against it. It is avowedly a political artwork, but intentionally not party political. In performing and exhibiting at such a crucial time, I am setting out to involve the widest possible audience in the work and the questions it raises about how we treat each other, what kind of society we want to be, and what role we might each of us have in bringing that about."

As a disabled person, Liz knows the impact of austerity and is undertaking this mammoth task to reveal its human cost, invite strong connections with difficult facts, and encourage deep debate that will continue long after the work is over.

Figures is supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, Awards for All, and crowdfunding.

Schedule

Figures takes place across several key phases:

Excavation (completed)

Dates : Tuesday 17 & Wednesday 18 February

Location : Shirehampton, Bristol

Purpose : Excavation of the clay to be prepared for the Making phase

Note : Not a publicly accessible event but press access can be arranged.

Making (completed)

Dates : Monday 30 March to Thursday 9 April

Location : Central London and the Thames foreshore, plus exhibition space on the plinth@OXO

Purpose : Sculpting of the figures and the publishing of 650 narratives of austerity

Note : Public engagement encouraged and press access can be arranged in advance.

Drying (completed)

Dates : From Friday 10 April

Location : Ibstock Brick, Cattybrook, Bristol

Purpose : Allow the figures to dry in preparation for the tour and firing

Note : Not a publicly accessible location but press access can be arranged.

Mobile Exhibition (completed)

Dates : Friday 1 to Tuesday 5 May

Location : London, Trafalgar Square as part of May Day march; Witney, outside David Cameron's constituency office; Swindon; Chippenham; and Bristol

Purpose : To engage the public with the work and the conversational themes raised by *Figures*

Note : Publicly accessible mobile exhibition and press access can be arranged in advance.

Firing (completed)

Dates : Election's eve Wednesday 6 May (completed)

Location : Ladye Bay, Clevedon, near Bristol BS21 7TU

Purpose : Firing of the figures and the reading out of the 650 narratives

Note : Not a publicly accessible event but press access can be arranged.

Milling

Dates : Wednesday 20 May (completed)

Location : Ibstock Brick, Cattybrook, Bristol

Note : Not a publicly accessible event but press access can be arranged.

Scattering

Dates : Wednesday 27 May (completed)

Location : Bristol Channel, launching from Portishead Marina

Note : Not a publicly accessible event but press access can be arranged.

About Roaring Girl Productions

Figures is produced by Roaring Girl Productions (RGP), a creative media company working in performance, film, audio and text. We combine high quality creative work with practical activism. RGP was founded in 1999 by artist-activist Liz Crow, who continues as creative director, and is based in Bristol, UK.

A primary theme in our work is the representation of hidden, marginalised and misrepresented stories, sometimes historical, often contemporary. Our productions range from the pictorial to the confrontational. Woven through are themes of identity, resistance, survival and hope. We create counter-narratives and communicate new meanings in order to move audiences to recognise the need for social change and to discover their own role in contributing to it. Underpinning all our projects are questions of what it is to be human, what kind of society do we want to be a part of, and how do we act collectively to bring that about. Working in this way, we take audiences beyond spectatorship to become a part of creating sustained and sustainable change.

Selected Productions

Roaring Girl Productions' award-winning work has been presented to audiences around the world, including at Tate Modern, British Film Institute and Washington DC's Kennedy Center for Performing Arts.

Highlights include:

- [Frida Kahlo's Corset](#), screened at Tate Modern alongside the retrospective of Kahlo's paintings
- [The Real Helen Keller](#), made for Channel 4, with Ann Pugh and Redweather Productions
- [Nectar](#), which won prizes across the board at Milan's International Cinema and Video Festival of the Deaf

- The four combined [Resistance](#) projects, including an interactive installation, currently touring, and Liz Crow's controversial and celebrated appearance on Antony Gormley's Fourth Plinth.
- [Bedding Out](#), Liz Crow's live durational performance, which has toured the UK raising awareness of the on-going welfare benefit reforms.

Further information about the individual projects we have worked on can be found at www.roaring-girl.com/work

Selected Press

- www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/apr/09/liz-crowbed-disabled-rights
- www.newstatesman.com/culture/2012/11/bedding-interviewliz-crow
- www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/give-channel-4-realitycheck-3112602#.UvHz5Sh5hn9