

October/November 2020



Tara Stewart Photography  
Documenting Artwork Workshop

Tara Stewart is a fine art photographer based in Newcastle. Having graduated from Napier University, Edinburgh, in 2008 with a first in Photography & Film BA (Hons), Tara returned to the North East to complete her MA at Sunderland University. Her most recent body of work *Final Act* was showcased at the Reg Vardy Gallery, Sunderland, in October 2010 as part of the group show *Works of Revelation* and part of the series was subsequently chosen as part of the *Persona Art Festival* in London's Rag Factory, Brick Lane in May 2011 and shown at the *Whitley Bay Arthouse* exhibition in September 2012.

The work that Tara produces concentrates on autobiographical representations of past and present moments, most recently her research has centered on notions of artwork and trauma. *Final Act* deals with loss and the relationship between the body and space, investigating the vulnerable state of the artist following the suicide of her closest childhood friend. Previous projects include *Past Recedes* and *Age of Discovery?* which deal with childhood memory and the interaction of memory space and collected objects/images. Her current work is an investigation of unexpected motherhood and the complexities of having a disabled child in an ableist world.

Documenting Artwork – installation examples

Anish Kapoor, *Taratantara*, 1999  
Toma Saraceno, *Spider Web*, 2010  
Damien Hirst, *Pharmacy*, 1992  
Jenny Holzer, *For Chicago*, 2007  
Susan Hiller, *Recall*, 2004  
Graham Dolphin, 2002 & 2007  
Mike Stubbs, *City Stripline Industries*, 2004  
Candice Breitz, *Working Class Hero (portrait of John Lennon)*, 2006-7  
Matt Stokes, *Canata Profana*, 2011  
Other installation photographs by Eoin Carey

Equipment

- Shoot with a decent quality SLR camera – at least 8 megapixels + a good lens (e.g. Zeiss)
- Set your white balance using the lighting and space in which you will photograph your work
- Always use a tripod or shoot with fast shutter speed to prevent camera shake
- Shoot with good natural light or use continuous lighting e.g. Tungsten lights or gallery lighting
- Never edit or delete images in camera – transfer to a computer first
- Always shoot on RAW or if that's not possible a large quality of file for versatility of image use
- Use Adobe Bridge to view, organise and edit your images before doing final adjustments in Photoshop

Practical Advice

- Document all work throughout its creation
- Ensure that the area you are shooting in is clean and clear of debris/ paints/ plugs...etc (unless this is an intended effect of the presentation of the artwork)
- To show the scale of the work include either an object, e.g. a chair or person in shot as reference, or accompany the work with this detail in the text
- Keep in mind the meaning of the work when you choose how to photograph it
- Always light 2D art-work evenly on a flat surface to avoid shadows
- Shoot both wide and detail photographs to show all aspects of the piece

## Technical Notes

### Aperture

The aperture is an iris or method of controlling how much light actually gets into the camera. It is measured in f-stops, which are calibrated to correspond with the camera's shutter speed. The f-stops run in the same sequence on all lenses from wide open at f2.8, f4.5, f5.6, f8, f11, f16, f22 to f32 which is a very small aperture. As the light around you gets darker you would tend to open up the aperture, and vice versa. Each full stop change in aperture results in either half as much or twice as much light being allowed onto the film plane.

The aperture also has another function in the act of making photographs, that of controlling the 'Depth of Field' or your area of sharpness. This operates on the principle that the smaller the aperture you use the more area will be in focus or the greater the depth of field.

### Shutter speed

The shutter is the mechanism, which allows light into the camera for a given period of time. You have this control so that in very bright conditions you can have a very fast shutter speed of say 1/1000 sec. or in dull conditions a speed of say 1/15 sec. At shutter speeds of 1/30 or less it is advisable to use a tripod.

The shutter speed relates directly to the aperture in that one stop change in the aperture is the equivalent of one stop on the shutter e.g. f8 at 1/60 would become f11 at 1/30. This would mean that you had more depth of field but less ability to control say the movement of your subject.

### White Balance

When photographing artwork, in order to get a true representation of the colours that you have chosen to use make sure you set the white balance of your camera prior to shooting. Take a photograph of a pure white sheet of paper under the exact lighting conditions of your chosen subject and set your camera to refer to this image when determining the whites within the photograph. It is essential that this is done before shooting, it is quick and easy to do and saves hours of post production to end up with a true representation of your work.

### ISO

The sensitivity of the sensor in the camera to light. Always shoot as low as possible. For this shoot on a tripod and at ISO100, this will produce crisp images, to the highest quality avoiding "noise" and grain, which can be an issue when shooting in low light.

### Adobe Bridge

This software works hand in hand with Photoshop and can be used for the following functions:

Review your photographs

Organise

Rate

Examine metadata

Process Camera RAW

Basic Edits in Camera RAW

Export Images

### Photoshop

Use Photoshop to do the following, more complex editing:

Advanced image editing

Work with filters and layers

Control Printing

Exporting for different media

### For the postproduction session:

Following viewing the presentation and demo videos and before the *postproduction* session, you are required to produce a series of images of your own artwork. This artwork may still be a work in progress but please still work with this as if it is a finished piece. Produce the following of your own work:

- 'Straight' front view photograph
- Detail shots, playing with depth of field and focus
- The work within a gallery/ exhibition setting (exterior or interior)
- Images with reference to scale and/or the viewer

Download these photographs to your laptop for the next session so that we can screen share, within Zoom, and discuss your work. Please make sure they are just the images you took and that no editing has been done yet.