

<p>Institution: University of Bristol</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: Drama: Theatre, Film, Television, sub-panel 35</p>
<p>Title of case study: Performing the Archive: Bristol research projects make live art and performance archives accessible and inspire their creative re-use in performances and exhibitions</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Two strands of research were developed within the Performing the Archive portfolio of projects, focusing on conservation, accessibility and the creative use of culturally significant and unique archives of live art and performance. These have impacted on professional artists, curators and producers working in live art and contemporary performance, on archivists and conservators and on the general public. Through a range of events, workshops, exhibitions and performances held between 2008 and 2013, partner arts organizations have also benefited, including Arnolfini, Bristol Old Vic Theatre (BOVT), In Between Time Productions (IBT) and the National Review of Live Art (NRLA). The influence of the research has been felt regionally, nationally and internationally.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The two strands were addressed across four related projects, involving three groups of non-academic beneficiaries identified above, both in carrying out the research and in its dissemination.</p> <p>Conservation and accessibility: Two projects (see P1 and P3 in Section 3) researched existing methodologies and developed a best-practice model for the digital preservation of the audiovisual archive of the NRLA, one of the UK's foremost performance festivals (1986-2010), held in the University of Bristol's Theatre Collection and consisting of over 1,700 tapes in various video formats. This research into the conservation of fragile analogue videotapes, some of which were becoming unplayable, led to innovative approaches to storage, ensuring that no data was lost from the original recordings and securing their long-term preservation. P3 completed the preservation of the entire archive and made it accessible online to registered users through a website, which integrated the Performance Art Data Structure (PADS) and Semantic Tools for Arts Research (STARS) [5]. PADS had been developed in P1 by Stephen Gray (technical lead on the digitisation project, now Research Fellow and Senior Data Librarian) and Paul Clarke (Research Fellow on <i>Performing the Archive</i> (P2) and now Lecturer in Performance) as a way of structuring, cataloguing and describing data designed specifically for performance archives [1]. STARS, created in earlier JISC- and AHRC-funded projects hosted by the University, were further developed by ILRT (the research and development division of Bristol's IT Services) and Angela Piccini (Senior Lecturer in Screen) to produce an online workspace for users, including new tools for adding descriptions, annotating videos and making and visualising links between works, both within and beyond the digital archive. Case studies, made available through the website, detail models of best practice for documenting performance and conserving and managing its digital documentation. These case studies also contain findings on the online accessibility of performance documents and how digital archives can facilitate the research and re-use of such documents [5].</p> <p>Creative re-use: Two further projects (see P2 and P4 below) focused on how to engage as a creator or curator with these performance archives, modelled through dialogues and workshops with professional practitioners, curators and researchers. For P2, artists (Franko B, Robin Deacon, Mike Pearson and Martha Wilson) were invited to screen material from the archives in public dialogues. With Performance Re-enactment Society (PRS) and Arnolfini, Clarke explored curating documents from Arnolfini's archive alongside exhibiting a series of public, participatory re-enactments (<i>The Cover of a Book is the Beginning of a Journey</i>, 2008-09 and <i>Cover-ed</i>, 2011). In P4, three workshops each explored a particular engagement through creative practice: <i>Remake</i> focusing on artists working with the archives of others, undertaken by Clarke with Every House Has A Door and PRS; <i>Redux</i> on artists returning to their own archives, undertaken by Simon Jones (Professor of Performance, Bristol) with Bodies in Flight and Blast Theory [6]; and <i>Replace</i> on curators and producers working through exhibition, undertaken by Nick Kaye (Professor of Performance and co-investigator, University of Exeter) with Arnolfini and IBT. Findings resulted in articles [3&4], public talks, performances, installations [2], exhibitions, symposia (September and December 2012) and a conference (April 2013), producing the first systematic consideration of the theoretical, methodological and curatorial implications of these questions around creative use and re-use of archival material.</p>

3. References to the research

- [1] *Capturing the Past, preserving the Future: Digitizing the National Review of Live Art Video Archive*: visit <http://dedefi.ilt.bris.ac.uk/>
- [2] *Performing the Archive*: Clarke, Paul and Gray, Stephen (ILRT), with Uninvited Guests and Lewis Gibson (2011-12), surround sound and video installation, Tate Britain, part of the *John Martin: Apocalypse* exhibition, visit <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/exhibition/john-martin-apocalypse/john-martin-room-guide/john-martin-room-5>
- [3] Clarke, Paul (2008) 'Archival Events and Eventful Archives' in *Arkive City*, ed. Julie Bacon, Belfast/Newcastle: Interface and Locus+, pp. 162-173.
- [4] Clarke, Paul and Warren, Julian (2009) 'Ephemera: Between Archival Objects and Events', in *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Taylor & Francis, Vol. 30, No.1, pp 45-66.
- [5] *Into the Future*: visit www.bristol.ac.uk/nrla/online-archive
- [6] *Performing Documents*: Jones, Simon (2012) *Do the Wild Thing! Redux*, with Bodies in Flight, Edward Dimsdale and Tony Judge, Arnolfini (Bristol), performance installation, visit <http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/live/details/1508> and www.bristol.ac.uk/performing-docs

Research project and grants

- P1** 2006-08: *Capturing the Past, preserving the Future* (PI 2006-07 Barry Smith, PI 2008 Jones, AHRC, £297,000).
- P2** 2007-10: *Performing the Archive* (PI Jones, Research Fellow Clarke, Great Western Research, £105,000).
- P3** 2010-12: *Into the Future: Sustainable Access to the National Review of Live Art Digital Archives* (PI Jones, CIs Clarke & Piccini, AHRC, £115,356).
- P4** 2011-14: *Performing Documents: modelling creative practice and curatorial engagements with live art and performance archives* (PI Jones, CIs Clarke & Kaye [Exeter], AHRC, £453,581).

4. Details of the impact

The projects shared findings with three distinct groups of non-academic beneficiaries:

- i) professional artists, arts organisations, performance curators and producers
- ii) archivists/ conservators
- iii) the general public.

To reflect the research's practice-based methodologies, which involved creative-industry collaborators, dissemination was predominantly achieved through events. These were mostly open to the public, although some targeted specific groups, e.g. training opportunities for emerging practitioners, museum/gallery-based archivists. Collaborators' practice was directly influenced by working alongside researchers within projects, while others' practice was indirectly influenced by the events. For the Director of Live Art Development Agency (LADA, London), the research was 'ambitious and influential. [...] [It] addressed and advanced many [...] issues and took the debates about the relationship between performance and the archive to a new level.'

Strand one: conservation and accessibility**i) arts professionals/organisations:**

P1: Richard Layzell, collaborator on P1's case study around his 1996 NRLA work, *I Never Done Enough Weird Stuff*, wrote: 'My thinking has changed in relation to earlier works and especially seeing them within their own historical context. [...] As a result I performed and designed a new piece called *Assisted Power* (2010), which engaged directly with video work from 1980/1. This was shown at the 30th Anniversary NRLA and Whitstable Biennale.'

P1/P3: Curating Artistic Research Output (CAIRO) delivered data-management skills tailored to the requirements of arts professionals in a four-day summer school (2011), attended by 23 professional artists, curators and practitioner-researchers, and in an online postgraduate teaching resource, with 1,280 visits and 68 module downloads by July 2013, thus introducing many professional artists to the value and uses of online archiving.

ii) arts professionals/organisations and archivists/conservators:

P1/P3: raised the Live Art Archives' profile and resulted in high profile new archives being deposited by artists and organisations, such as Franko B, Greenroom, Hull Time Based Arts,

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Queer Up North, and What's Welsh for Performance?

P3: [5] the 'incredible online [NRLA] archive' (artist, Search Party performance company) was launched in November 2012. It already has 682 registered users, including 132 freelance artists, 35 from arts organisations and 26 from museums/galleries. Feedback has been entirely positive, enriching practising artists understanding of live art, with one contributing artist thanking the team: 'for your work in constructing and safeguarding this special archive [...] [I]t's brilliant that [the resource is] interactive and so will continue to be live.'

P2: The curatorial workshop, *Conserving and Archiving Ephemeral Artworks* (2008), involved 24 invited participants from significant cultural institutions, e.g. Bristol Museum, FACT, the V&A. *Digital Documentation and Performance* (2009) comprised three days of workshops/seminars for 37 researchers, artists, curators, archivists and collection managers. The events shared findings and exchanged best practice for archiving and digitizing [1], with attendees stating: 'On a practical level, Bristol's approach to the digitization of analogue videotapes fed into the Library's then-nascent policy in this area.' (Lead curator, British Library, Drama and Literature Recordings). For Professor Sarah Whatley (Siobhan Davies Archive), Clarke and Gray's input was 'valuable in our early stages [...] in the area of digitization formats, curatorial processes [...] taxonomies for performance/ephemeral content, data storage methods, metadata [and] user-generated content.'

ii) archivists/conservators:

P1: In *In Time: A Collection of Live Art Case Studies*, published by Live Art UK, Arnolfini Archivist discussed P1 as a model for their approach to conserving audiovisual documentation: 'As a commissioning and presenting organisation, Arnolfini is keen to trial PADS from the beginning of the research and development of a new piece of Live Art work through to its presentation.'

Strand two: creative re-use

i) arts professionals/organisations:

P2/P4: For the director of IBT: 'Research around live documentation and performance archives has been invaluable in informing my professional practice as a curator of performance. [Performing the Archive] has acted as an important catalyst, [...] which has resulted in the creation of *We See Fireworks*, a large-scale memory project [touring] to the US, Europe, Australia and Brazil to critical acclaim. [P2] has created a wealth of inspiration for professionals, academics and audiences and the work the department continues to lead in this area resonates across the world.'

P4: Two one-day symposia and one three-day conference (September and December 2012, and April 2013) were held to disseminate the findings around creative engagement with archives [6], as well as facilitate knowledge exchange between arts practitioners and scholars. Attendance figures were 76, 89 and 113 respectively, of whom 55 were artists or practitioner-researchers and 11 were from arts organisations including Theatre Bristol, Cube Cinema [Bristol], Plymouth Arts Centre, Live Art Development Agency. The director of Arnolfini says: '*Performing Documents* was an exemplary research partnership, which culminated in a series of internationally-significant live art commissions, a major group exhibition entitled *Version Control*. [The] project had a direct impact in providing an extended period of inquiry into these practices, in the context of a shared research culture. It has enabled the institution to examine its own assumptions and conventions in relation to the archive and live art ... [and] led to a continuing strand of research looking at the changing relationship of performance and exhibition.'

P2: Jones was invited to share findings [1&5] at *Making Artistic Enquiry Visible*, an international project based in Thompson Rivers University (Canada 2009-11), and in the *Intercultural Performance Project* (National University of Singapore 2009), speaking on archiving performance and the role practice-as-research can play in developing academic-creative-industry exchange.

ii) archivists/conservators:

P2/P3/P4: Clarke and Gray's work [1,3,5] fed into consultancy on Battersea Arts Centre's (£2.5m) Heritage Lottery Fund project (2012), part of which was devoted to creating a publicly accessible digital and physical archive, and into Asia Art Archive's development (Hong Kong, October 2010).

iii) general public:

P2/P4: Knowledge developed in both projects was applied by Clarke and Gray in partnership with theatre company Uninvited Guests, who were commissioned by Tate Britain to produce *The Last Judgement* audiovisual installation [2], as part of the *John Martin: Apocalypse* exhibition (September 2011 – January 2012). Visited by 150,000 people, 'The show pushes at the boundaries of conventional gallery experience and will create, we hope, fresh insights into this singular figure from art history.' (Tate curator, *Daily Telegraph*, 2011.)

i/iii) arts professionals/organisations & general public:

P2: Models for creative re-use of archives [2-4] were disseminated through a series of public exhibitions and performances by Clarke with PRS: *The Cover of a Book*, at Arnolfini (2008-09) attracted 16,415 visitors, toured to Leeds Met Gallery and was seen by 45,418 at New Art Gallery, Walsall (2011). *Cover-ed* (Arnolfini, 2011) remade Ed Ruscha's 1969 photo novel *Crackers*, selected from the archive, as *Salad Dressing*, a new bookwork, installation and event, attended by 7,543 people. *Salad Dressing* was included in *Ed Ruscha Books & Co* at New York's Gagosian Gallery (2013). Commissioned for *The Pigs of Today are the Hams of Tomorrow*, curated by Plymouth Arts Centre and Marina Abramovic (2010) with Clarke as curatorial advisor, *Untitled Performance Stills* enabled public participants, scholars, curators and artists to remake moments from past performances to camera, with photographer Hugo Glendinning.

P2/P4: *Memory of Theatre*, Clarke's Heritage Sandbox project for Bristol's Knowledge Exchange Hub for the Creative Economy (REACT), was a collaboration with the artistic director of BOVT, producers MAYK (Mayfest), Pyxis Design and mobile software company Calvium. A new archive was created of audiences' memories of theatre and made publicly accessible in situ. The software innovations made it possible for Calvium to 'offer this solution to other customers interested in an indoor location-aware app.' MAYK director wrote: 'We are excited by the potential of the project to transfer to other heritage contexts and developing the business model for how this might happen.'

P1-P4: Presentations disseminated findings [1-5] to wide-ranging audiences of arts professionals, archivists and researchers: Jones at NRLA (Glasgow 2009), the *Digital Echoes* symposium on online archives (2013), attended by organizations including V&A and BBC; and Clarke 'Remembering Performance' (NRLA 2010), *re.act.feminism*, Berlin (2009), *Archiv/Praxis*, Tanzarchiv Leipzig (2009), School of the Art Institute Chicago (2009).

P4: Clarke worked with collaborators from PRS on *Group Show*, and Jones with Bodies in Flight on *Do The Wild Thing! Redux*, producing performances and an installation (Arnolfini 2012) inspired by archival documents [6]. These were conducted in dialogue with professional artists from Every House has a Door and Blast Theory, who produced their own new works, *9 Beginnings* (two performances) and *Jog Shuttler* (installation), which 3,463 people saw. Arnolfini's curator of performance wrote: 'The project successfully brought unique debate, discourse and performance commissions to Arnolfini that would not have happened otherwise, bringing many stimulating ideas to the table that will go on to resonate with the artistic and curatorial performance community.'

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[a] Freelance curator, formerly Plymouth Arts Centre, co-curator of *The Pigs of Today Are The Hams of Tomorrow*.

[b] Archivist at Bristol Record Office, formerly Arnolfini's archivist, collaborator on *The Cover of a Book is the Beginning of a Journey* (quoted above).

[c] Lead curator, British Library. Attendee of symposia/workshops (quoted above).

[d] Freelance artist whose work was a case study on P1, presented with Clarke on 'Remembering Performance' panel (NRLA Festival 2010) (quoted above).

[e] Curator of the John Martin exhibition, Tate Britain (quoted above).

[f] Freelance curator, previously artistic director of NRLA, collaborator on P1 and P3.

[g] Director of Arnolfini, collaborator on P2 and P4 (quoted above).

[h] Curator of performance, Arnolfini, collaborator on P2, now at Lancaster Nuffield (quoted above).

[i] Artistic director of In Between Time Festival, collaborator on P4 (quoted above).

[j] Artistic director of BOVT, cultural-industry collaborator on *Memory of Theatre*.

[k] *Memory of Theatre* reviewed in *Wired*: <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2012-05/03/heritage-sandbox/page/2>