

Institution:	GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Unit of Assessment:	35: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts [THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE]
Title of case study:	<i>The ART of A.R.T</i>
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)	

Professor Anna Furse's Practice-as-Research on Assisted Reproduction Technologies [A.R.T.s] incorporates artistic design and educational materials to raise awareness of medical, ethical and emotional issues surrounding subfertility, addressing public ignorance, prejudice and taboo. When she published her bestseller *Your Essential Infertility Companion*, A.R.T.s were rarely discussed from the patient perspective, debate being dominated by media sensationalism and misinformation. Her subsequent critically acclaimed production projects, articulating subfertiles' plights and rights, contributed culturally to shifting public understanding. **The Peach Child** became an internationally popular children's play, while **My Glass Body** (a commissioned drama for BBC Radio) was broadcast twice – additional outputs extending the reach of the project to multigenerational lay as well as academic publics.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)
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As an A.R.T. user (1994/5), subject of a BBC series *Making Babies* (1996) and author of an innovative book *Your Essential Infertility Companion* (Thorsons HarperCollins, 1996), Anna Furse became a media spokeswoman for the patient perspective on infertility. In 2001, when she joined Goldsmiths, she began addressing the topic as a theatre-maker, blending biomedical and social questions artistically to enhance public understanding of science. Research included a variety of works for nursery school, sixth-form and adult audiences. It included performances in a science museum and two hospitals. Outputs ranged across puppetry, multimedia performance, installation, radio drama, education packs, workshops, talking in theatres, universities, schools, discourses at conferences and public events. Academic publications include [1–2], as well as peer academic writing about her projects (for example, Jozefina Komporaly, *Theatre and Motherhood*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

The Peach Child (2001/2): This multimedia puppetry adaptation of a Japanese folktale for young children addressed childlessness, adoption, ex-utero birth and older parenting [3]. The Little Angel Theatre commissioned its development with funding from an Arts Council England (ACE) Writer's Award. It premiered in 2001 with the National Children's Theatre Festival and Japan Festival, to critical acclaim: 'accessible to very young children while being hugely enjoyable for their parents' (*The Evening Standard Hot Tickets*, also reviewed in *Time Out* and *The Stage*); interview article in *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan's largest broadsheet and the world's best-selling newspaper, circulation over 10 million. It was restaged by popular demand in the following season.

Yerma's Eggs (2001/3): Two productions intersecting emotional, bio-ethical, and medical issues. Drawing on Lorca's play *Yerma* about a childless peasant girl in pronatalist 1920s Spain, it explored A.R.T.s via multimedia physical theatre, with cutting-edge biomedical video projection, including 3D/4D ultrasound *in utero*, never before seen in public [4]. Outreach impact included talks and twelve workshops in secondary schools, supporting science teachers in broaching In Vitro Fertilisation (I.V.F.) in multicultural science classrooms against faith resistance, with students attending performances (approximately 300). Furse's co-authored Education Pack was distributed to Science and Drama teachers in schools in London and Bristol [13].

GlassBody: Reflecting on Becoming Transparent (2006/7): This immersive interactive performance installation addressed scientific and artistic portrayals of the interiority of the human body, questioning implications of imaging technologies used extensively in A.R.T.s. [5]. Commissioned by the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, the directors of the Assisted Conception Unit and Hospital Arts noted that Furse pioneered transforming arts in to arts with the hospital. It was funded by a Wellcome Trust People Award, an ACE Social Inclusion Award and the London Arts

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and Health Forum (LAHF). Critically acclaimed (by, for example, *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *Time Out*), it premiered at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital with 23 subsequent performances including at The Nuffield Theatre in Lancaster, Leicester's Xchange Festival, and Guys & St. Thomas's Hospital (2007). Again Furse wrote the Education Pack [15].

My Glass Body (2007): This radio production, written and directed by Furse, compressed Art of A.R.T. themes into a patient's point-of-view drama for BBC Radio 3 *The Wire*, with a soundscore by Graeme Miller, starring Barbara Flynn and Jack Klaff ('Powerful radio debut', *Radio Times*) [6].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

All outputs listed below are available from Goldsmiths Research Office.

Evidence of the international quality of the research: The four productions at [3–6] are cited as practice-as-research whose international quality is evidenced both by the venues at which they were performed and by their critical reception, enhanced by the peer-reviewed outputs at [1–2].

1. Anna Furse, 'Performing in Glass: Reproduction, Technology, Performance and the Bio-spectacular', in (eds.) Geraldine Harris and Elaine Aston, *Feminist Futures? Theatre, Performance, Theory* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 149–68.
2. Anna Furse, ['The Art of A.R.T.', GenderForum: AnyBody's Concerns 6 \(2003\)](#).
3. Anna Furse, [The Peach Child](#) (2001) Published in *NT New Connections 2008: Plays for Young People* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 377–416.
4. Anna Furse, [Yerma's Eggs](#) (2001), available from [ArtsArchives](#) (2011, catalogue p. 3 at 'Furse, Anna').
5. Anna Furse, [GlassBody](#) (2006), available from [ArtsArchives](#) (2009, as above).
6. Anna Furse, [My Glass Body](#) (2007) with sound composition by Graeme Miller (BBC Radio 3 'The Wire'), produced by Karen Rose, Sweet Talk Productions.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)
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An A.R.T. user herself, Furse followed *Your Infertility Companion* ('A useful and sensitively written reference on all aspects of human fertility': Jane Coad, *Anatomy and Physiology for Midwives* (2nd edn, Elsevier, 2005), 139) with creative outputs intended to counter media sensationalism with enhanced public understanding of social/scientific issues. The impact of her research persists in the form of performances in theatres, schools, cultural festivals, on BBC Radio, online screenings, and in bookshops. It continues to raise awareness of subfertility and collateral issues such as adoption, the implications of imaging technologies within obstetrics, and the rights of minority groups to A.R.T.s. This work has brought the arts into dialogue with medical professionals via her research methodologies, performances and discourses.

Following the success of post-show discussions including LAHF's sponsored special event for health workers, chaired by King's College Professor of Arts and Medicine, Brian Hurwitz, Furse has contributed to several public 'sciart' conferences and debates, including in June 2011 participating in the Science + Culture forum as part of Creative Scotland's *Creative Futures* programme at the Glasgow Science Centre. Her address to an audience of artists, scientists and the public was followed by round table debates with attendees. This talk was subsequently published online [7].

The Peach Child

Furse's play was selected by the National Theatre for its annual youth theatre scheme *New Connections 2008*, alongside projects by distinguished British playwrights including Abi Morgan, Mark Ravenhill, Nigel Williams and Timberlake Wertenbaker, reaching a very wide young audience nationally and internationally.

The most popular play among the eight selected by the NT, sixteen schools and inclusive theatre groups – with approximately 350 active participants – chose to produce **The Peach Child**, including the disabled theatre group Razed Roof [8]. Their productions performed to sell out audiences at eleven regional theatres including the Theatre Royal Bath and the Arcola Theatre, Hackney. According to the *Guardian* reviewer: ‘In the hands of five young actors from Skelmersdale College, Anna Furse’s play *The Peach Child* was a living Manga cartoon. As interpreted by a cast of 37 key stage 3 students in Sutton, it was a triumph of shadow puppetry and chorus movement’ [9]. The best were selected by the NT for the *New Connections Festival* at the Cottesloe Theatre [10].

The play has enjoyed national attention through NT sponsorship and the anthology which the NT distributed to all secondary schools in the UK: *NT New Connections: Plays for Young People* (Faber and Faber, 2008). The NT bookshop alone has sold 782 copies since April 2009 [11]. It continues to be produced within the UK and internationally, for example by the City of London School for Girls, Cairo American College (both 2009), the Garden International School, Kuala Lumpur (2010) and Ruamrudee International School, Bangkok (2012) [12].

Yerma’s Eggs and GlassBody

The **Yerma’s Eggs** Education Pack has continued to be available to schools [13], while *ArtsArchives* published a production DVD (2011) as part of a collection of Furse’s production archive [4]. **GlassBody** was regarded as exemplary high quality ‘sciart’ by Arts Council England’s Social Inclusion department, inviting Furse to present *GlassBody* to interdepartmental arts officers (2008). The live, digital and recorded work has reached an increasingly wide and international audience through several routes. *ArtsArchives’* digital publication of the production DVD (2009) [5] was livestream broadcast to an international audience to celebrate International Women’s Day (8 March 2011). It attracted online viewers for a total of 267 hours, with screenings also at venues in London, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia [14]. The Education Pack has continued to be available to schools [15], and the work has taken several different forms as outlined in the next section.

GlassBody Fragments

The Bernie Grant Arts Centre, London, commissioned a digital installation for their multicultural festival *The Gathering: Bodies and Memories* (2008). Furse reconstructed *GlassBody’s* video, while ongoing online resources include *The Reproductive Toy* that tests awareness of the male and female reproductive system as a puzzle of parts to assemble online; Furse was a panellist in the festival’s public forum [16]. A similar installation was exhibited at Goldsmiths’ *Making a Difference* event, February 2013.

My Glass Body was re-broadcast on BBC Radio 3’s *The Wire* in 2008 [17]. The production’s artistic adventurousness led to Director of Drama, Kate Rowland, using it in her in-house BBC dramaturgy sessions. **Your Infertility Companion** has been republished in 2011 as print-on-demand by Thorsons HarperCollins. Durable remains of **The Art of A.R.T.**, including video and the interactive *Reproductive Toy*, remain accessible to the public on the Athletes of the Heart website [18].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The materials below are all available on request from Goldsmiths’ Research Office.

7. [Furse’s address](#) on *The Art of A.R.T.* at the Science + Culture Ideas Exchange, Glasgow Science Centre, June 2011.
8. Among UK schools and theatre groups that performed **The Peach Child** in 2008 were St. Mary’s Calne School, Wiltshire; [Harlow Fields School](#), [Chelmsford New Model School](#) and [Razed Roof](#), a disability/inclusive theatre group in Essex (a statement from Razed Roof’s Artistic Director is available from the Research Office); [Arts One Performing Arts School](#), [Glenthorne High School Sutton](#); [Kennet School Newbury](#) [for reviews, see 9–10].

9. Performances of **The Peach Child** reviewed by Lyndsey Turner in [The Guardian, 8 April 2008](#); [follow up article](#) in 2011 by Lyn Gardner, including an image of students from Skelmersdale and Ormskirk College performing their adaptation of **The Peach Child**.
10. At the [New Connections Festival](#), Cottesloe Theatre, National Theatre, July 2008; previewed as sold-out by [Time Out](#); Kennet School Newbury performance reviewed by Mark Trezona in [Performance-Marks, 6 July 2008](#).
11. National Theatre Bookshops Manager contact details provided.
12. Relevant school website articles: [City of London School for Girls](#), [Cairo American College](#), [Garden International School, Kuala Lumpur](#) and [Ruamrudee International School, Bangkok](#), with a detailed interview.
13. [Yerma's Eggs Education Pack](#).
14. [Slet 080311 event, Performance Klub Fiskulturnik 2011](#).
15. [Glassbody Education Pack](#).
16. [The Gathering Bodies and Memory Festival](#) at the Bernie Grant Centre.
17. [My Glass Body](#) re-broadcast [26 July 2008](#).
18. <http://www.athletesoftheheart.org/past.html>.