

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Wolverhampton
Unit of Assessment: Main Panel D/34: Art & Design: History, Practice and Theory
Title of case study: CADRE research cluster -, Critique and Social Practice (ACSP): Investigations into the conditions and possibilities of collaboration and participation in art
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study focuses on three areas in relation to the social impact of art, across the categories of 'cultural life' and 'public discourse'.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Artistic collaborations with non-artistic specialists in order to generate new interdisciplinary pathways 2) Artistic collaborations with non-artists within a given community or non-artistic institutional setting in order to create new forms of artist-audience participation 3) The sharing of knowledge/skills between either non-artistic specialists or a non-specialist audience and artists in the production of a shared task or project. 4) Performance-based practice inside and outside of the gallery <p>The outward facing nature of this research, then, addresses the way such work tests the prevailing competences, boundaries and identities of artist and audience alike. This means researchers are involved with both artistic and non-artistic funding-bodies and agencies as the basis for work on a range of critical issues affecting the borders between the art institution and non-artistic settings and contexts.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The School of Art & Design at Wolverhampton has a long history of involvement with the social engagement of art, specifically, in the development of a specially designated degree, Art & Social Practice, which ran from the late eighties to the early noughties. This was one of the first of its kind in the UK, and placed a direct emphasis upon art's extra-artistic relationship to the world. The recent expansion of participatory, relational and post-relational practice, has confirmed the significance of the training the course provided, in period where the notion of 'art in the expanded' field was limited largely to the museum installation.</p> <p>In the 2000's this platform provided the basis for the development of a new art and social practice research culture in the School, in which the cluster 'Art, Critique and Social Practice' has played an important role. The forms of practice outlined in Section 1, therefore, represent a research programme that covers both interdisciplinary artistic practice and interdisciplinary curating practice. In this respect the pursuit of such practices across the art/science, art/performance and art/non-art divide, establish the artist and the curator (and the artist as curator) as facilitators of new routes and pathways into art's social engagement.</p> <p>These questions around the production of audience, the public and public sphere are explored in the practices of the artist Rona Lee, the recent curating fellow Monika Vykoukal, the artist Andy Hewitt, a member of the group FEEEE, and the performance artist Dean Kelland. These questions are also addressed theoretically in the writing of Hewitt (as one of the editors of <i>Art and the Public Sphere</i>) and the cluster leader, the art theorist Prof. John Roberts, who has written extensively on art, collaboration, and art after 'art in the expanded field'. His recent work on skill and deskilling has had an influence on recent international debates on art and value after post-conceptualism, inside and outside of the academic community. For example, the exhibition 'Art in Labor: Skill/Deskilling/Reskilling' organized by Octavian Esanu at the American University of Beirut, May 2013, and the discussion of the significance of his writing on skill-deskilling-reskilling in 'The Editorial Introduction', to <i>The Journal of Modern Craft</i>, Vol 5, No. 2, 2012.</p>

In addition the cluster has just made two major appointments that expand this commitment to interdisciplinary research and collaboration: the philosopher, art theorist and member of the internationally renowned Russian art collective, Chto Delat, who has been appointed Reader in Art, and the Turner Prize nominated filmmakers Jane and Louise Wilson, who have been appointed Professors of Art. Both add a historical and archival dimension to the interdisciplinary research model of the cluster. Penzin's collaborative practice in Chto Delat, (co-authored articles and film scripts and group performances) have linked the repressed legacy of the early Soviet avant-garde and Moscow conceptualism of the 1980s (Collective Actions) to the production of new post-Soviet avant-garde research programme. The Wilson twins' archival film work on the ruins and remnants of Cold War landscapes involve extensive research with professional historians and archivists, and have been shown to acclaim in various international film festivals. Like Penzin their commitment to a practice of historical recovery provides an additional focus for the general work in the cluster on art, the public sphere and collaboration.

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

Lee, R. 'Envisaging the Deep' (2012), *Architectural Research Quarterly*, Spring (peer reviewed)
 Grant: Lee R, (2012) Arts Council England, Grants For the Arts, *That Oceanic Feeling*, £10,000.00

Kelland, D 'Living Room Series (Episode One)' (2011) *Comedy Studies*, Vol 2 Issue 2
 Intellect (peer reviewed)

Hewitt, A., Jordan, M. 'Exploring the function of art in culture-led regeneration: reflections on Futurology, in Culture & Agency Contemporary Culture and Urban Change', (2009) eds., Degen, M. and Miles M, *Culture & Agency: Contemporary Culture and Urban Change*, University of Plymouth Press (invited contribution)

Hewitt, A., Jordan, M. 'I Fail to Agree' (2005), in eds., Miles M. & Hall T, *Interventions: Advance in Urban Futures Volume 4*, Intellect (peer reviewed)

Roberts J, and Wright S. (eds) 'Art and Collaboration', Special Issue (2004), *Third Text* No 71, Vol 18 Issue 6, November, Routledge (peer reviewed)

Roberts J. (ed), 'Art, Praxis and the Community to Come', Special Issue (2009), *Third Text*, No 99, Vol 23 Issue 4, July, Routledge (peer reviewed)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Below are four short case studies of different models of collaborative impact:

1) In 2008 for the show 'How to Be Hospitable' at the Collective Gallery in Edinburgh, Hewitt as part of the group FREEE, proposed an extended democratic conception of collaboration in community participatory art, by emphasizing the need for communities to take control of cultural projects themselves, in order to promote 'bottom up' creativity and regeneration. In this FREEE attempted to facilitate a non-affirmative consensus through participation. To often 'top down' participation with artists, Hewitt, stresses, "pathologizes dissent and critique." In this sense more broadly, Hewitt/FREEE have pursued a collective participatory practice in which the utilization of the skills of non-artists on various community projects produces an *esprit de corps*, that defines the collaboration between artist and 'community' as a form of democratic 'theatre' (recently, for example, in 2010 the group formed an amateur choir to sing various political slogans). Hewitt, is also an advisor to the art and the public sphere think tank ixiia.

2) With the appointment of Rona Lee as Reader in Fine Art in 2010-2013, this question of collaborative art as a form of 'expanded theatre' – quite different from the theatrical as such or art as theatre – has pushed the discourse on impact in quite a different direction. Lee's ongoing research is concerned with the geographical, environmental and epistemological function and identity of water, and over the last two years has worked closely with oceanographers in the development of new modes of sea-floor visualization (National Oceanography Centre), as a reflection on existing models of knowledge production. Since 2008- Rona has been invited by Dr Henry Ruhl of the National Oceanography Centre (NOCS) to act as a consultant on a large-scale National Environment Research Council (NERC) funded research project involving the compilation of highly detailed images of the seabed. Affiliation to the NOCS has provided her with a platform to profile her enquiry to researchers from the GeoData Institute, Centre for Maritime Archaeology, Institute of Maritime Law, Maritime Energy and Complexity Science groups. In the light of this her work has been widely discussed in the geo-scientific community and she is increasingly called on as a contributor to debates around seabed resource management. In 2009 she received a Leverhulme Trust Award: £12,300.00 for the exhibition Mapping, Howard Gardens Gallery (Nov-Dec). <http://www.ronalee.org/notebook/130/mapping-howard-gardens-gallery-12th-nov-18th-dec-2009>

This science/art interface is yet another strand of what drives the legacy of 'art and social practice' in the cluster, and across other subject areas: what are the means and ends under which art's powers engagement, can be made active, and legible and purposeful?

3) A key project underwriting collaboration between artistic specialists, non-artistic specialists, and the public (point 3, section 1) has been Black Country Creative Advantage (2010-11). Initiated from within the cluster this project involved an extensive model of exchange and collaboration between artists, designers, planners, architects and various arts organizations and funding bodies in West Bromwich in order to research into possible urban regeneration in the area. With a primary emphasis on public involvement and assessment of 'specialist solutions' the project established forums for public consultation and collaboration. This process was facilitated by the research associate Monika Vykoukal. With an artist and architect she set up a workshop for young people and children to create their own imaginative models for regeneration in the area, and established a regular market stall in the centre of the town, which became the main focus for public discussion about the issue of regeneration. She also produced a newsletter and blog. The project also involved establishing contact with various agencies and bodies to facilitate the project. These included: Multistory, Longhouse, Housing Dept., Sandwell Council, Community History & Archives Service, Sandwell Council, Spatial Planning Department, Sandwell Council, Black Country Society, West Bromwich Town Team, Sandwell Primary Care Trust, Sandwell Community Information and Participation Service, Sandwell Libraries and Archives, Transform Sandwell, Sandwell Council, and Neighbourhood Manager, Communities Unit West Bromwich.

4) Photography, after a period of re-organization in response to the ending of social documentary as a general programme of technical expertise on the Fine Art degree, has placed an increased emphasis on photography's 'post-media' social engagement. This is central to the work of one of the younger researchers in the cluster, Dean Kelland. In his research on 1960s British comedy, he combines performance, image and text, as a way of transforming photography and video into a space for the reclamation and re-visitation of popular cultural memory. In this sense Kelland's work also looks to theatre for a model of expanded practice. In 2012 he had his first solo show at the

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Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. He has also been invited to contribute documentary material to the online publication 'Reframing Photograph', Michigan University Press, and was invited in 2011 to speak as a performer at the 5th Annual Conference on Comedy, at Salford University.

Overall, then, the terms and boundaries of collaboration and participation have established a research programme that operates across disciplines, in and outside of the gallery, and in multiple social settings, contributing to both advanced critical debate in the artworld (Hewitt, Lee) and to debates on cultural policy (Hewitt, Black Country Creative Advantage).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**Reference for the impact of Monika Vykoukal's research**

1) Vykoukal. M, (2011) *Neither Shoreditch nor Manhattan: Black Country Creative Advantage* (contributors include: Neil Gray, Munu Luksch, Thomas Bratzke, Leo Singer, John Dummett, Asnne Francis), Multistory, West Bromwich <http://www.multistory.org.uk/>

References for the impact of Rona Lee's research

2) Testimony by Karthyn Yusoff (lecturer in Nonhuman geography at Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University) on impact of Lee's work in area of oceanography and social geography http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/sci-tech/departments/lancaster_environment_centre/

3) Works from Lee's John Hansard Exhibition *That Oceanic Feeling* were exhibited at an international geography conference at Nottingham Contemporary Sept 17 2013, (alongside Allan Sekula's *Forgotten Space*), (curated by Professor Philip Steinberg, Durham University, author of *The Social Construction of The Ocean*) <http://www.nottinghamcontemporary.org/>

References for the impact of Andy Hewitt's research

4) Sullivan, L. L (2013) *Get Real! Art, Regeneration, and Resistance*, Metamute (culture and politics after the net) www.metamute.org

5) Macmillan, D, (2005), 'Ideas Grown From the Seeds of Revolution', *The Scotsman*, 15 April

6) Geldard, R, (2009) *Generosity is the New Political*, Map Magazine, November
<http://mapmagazine.co.uk/>

References for impact of John Roberts's research

7) Iles A., & M. Vishmidt, M (2011) 'Make Whichever You Find Work', in *Variant*, Number 41, Spring 2011 <http://www.variant.org.uk/>

8) Esanu, O (2013 'Art In Labor: Skill/Deskilling/Reskilling', American University Gallery, Beirut, 2013,
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Culture/Art/2013/Jun-01/219042-octavian-esanu-on-skill-deskilling-reskilling.ashx#axzz2I7VIHiOK>

9) On influence of work of deskilling-reskilling in craft community, see *The Journal of Modern Craft*, Vol 5, Number 2, 2012, 'Editorial Introduction', pp133-135
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/156920610X512444>