

<p><b>Institution:</b> Lancaster University</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> D34 (Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory, Main Panel D, Sub-panel 34)</p>
<p><b>Title of Case Study:</b> Using performance to enhance understanding of the natural world</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Increasing understanding of the natural world is at the heart of Stewart’s walking performance, <i>Jack Scout</i>. The key impacts of this piece have been through their engagement with and promotion of rural organisations and businesses, such as the RSPB, local schools, and the local authority. The production also encouraged participants to engage with the landscape, history, storytelling and nature, and created new audiences for site-specific rural performance. The work has supported professional development of artist and practitioner participants, who have been inspired to develop their own practice through participation as both collective and individual experience.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research basis of this project focused on exploring ways in which a walking performance featuring dance and music could promote public engagement with divergent understandings of the natural world. In the introduction to <i>Performing Nature</i> (Giannachi and Stewart 2005: 34–62), these understandings are grouped into four categories underpinning ecological philosophy and art. This explored how systems of knowledge exist on a continuum between theories and practices that understand nature as a human construction, to those that claim nature as being other to the human. In categorising nature within "spectacle", nature is seen as a place to observe, visualise, map, ponder or analyse from a distance, reducing it to a scientific or cultural object (or landscape) of the "human mind" created entirely through "convention and cognition" (Schama 1995: 12). In contrast, categorising nature as "world", nature is encountered through conversations, stories and histories, through which cultural groups develop understandings of the other-than human world. In "environment" nature is a bodily experience, felt through our interaction with the environment’s physical components. Finally, in "void" nature is the ineffable sublime which exceeds the limits of human scale and cognition: nature is a concept which struggles to find form in any language or thought system.</p> <p><i>Jack Scout</i> was a practice-based research project that interrogated the validity of these four categories and was conducted at Jack Scout – a 16-acre heath in Silverdale, Lancashire, overlooking Morecambe Bay – through four on-site "Dialogues": (1) an "Underworld Dialogue" with National Trust wardens and plant ecologists about Jack Scout’s unique flora and fauna; (2) an "Overworld Dialogue" with RSPB educators and ornithologists about the behaviour of indigenous species of birds, butterflies and bats on the heath and migratory birds on the beach; (3) an "Innerworld Dialogue" with pupils at a nearby residential school for urban children with special needs; and (4) a "Waterworld Dialogue" with cross-bay guides, fishermen and local historians concerning fishing traditions and techniques. Research into the ways in which nature might be encountered was carried out by the creative team. They used experimental cartography, creative writing, drawing and photography, and a systematic approach to musical and movement improvisation, to record dialogues, register and distil individual experience of the site, and thereby to evolve choreographic, spoken, and musical material. This material was montaged into the public performance work, and then into the film.</p>

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

The research generated three outputs:

1. An hour-long public walking *performance work* called *Jack Scout*. This was performed twenty times between 17 and 26 September 2010 at Jack Scout itself. Audiences of 17 at a time were led by two guides through the heath, along the shore line and over the beach as live music, dance, voice and art evoked its land, sands, skies and sea. Woven into these impressions was the story of the *Matchless*, a pleasure boat shipwrecked in 1895 with the loss of 34 lives.
2. Twenty-minute *film* called *Jack Scout (redux)* available for purchase. This is distinctly different from the short documentary film of the live performance work available on the website (see below), and presents material cinematically to form an art work in its own right.
3. Dedicated project *website*: [www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout). This website contains a 2010 audience evaluation report, 2012 audience and partners' evaluation reports, production credits, documentary-style excerpts from two live performances, image galleries about the research process and performance, and short sound pieces of the heath and sea shore.

Grants. *Jack Scout* had a budget of £43.8K. It was funded by Arts Council England (£9.9K) and Arnsdale and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (£6K), and was commissioned by Nuffield Theatre (£6K) and Lancaster City Council (£1.9K). In-kind support totalled £18.3K.

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

**Audience engagement with the natural world:**

The 2010 audience survey of *Jack Scout* verified that audiences valued the spectacle, describing the performance as “cinematic”. Live dance and music provided an immersive experience that made the audience “much more aware of the ‘natural’ sound[s] of birds, wind, sawing, plane[s]”. Choreography illustrated the morphology of plants accumulated into a “mind blowing [...] interpretation”. Engagement with *Jack Scout* as spectacle and environment was continuous with an understanding of that place as world; thus, the sinking of the *Matchless* was suggested as much from a dance in a muddy cove as a song explicitly about the accident. Respondents to the 2012 audience survey indicate that their “sensitivity to the natural environment” in general or Silverdale in particular was “enhanced”.

**Creation of new audiences for site-specific rural performance:**

Audience responses to the show were ecstatic, describing it as “magical”, “very powerful”, “completely mesmerising”, “utterly outstanding”, “splendid, and of a type that is all too rare”, “imaginatively-conceived, well-researched, beautifully designed and well-performed”, “one of the best pieces of theatre I have ever been to”. Several comment that they have been stimulated to make return visits “to find the places where particular scenes happened”, nearly 100% of respondents said they were more likely to attend other rural site-specific performances.

**Promotion of rural organisations and businesses:**

39% of the audience were members of non-arts partner organizations, and the project was partly funded by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The project met Arts Council England’s aim of creating new audiences for the rural arts, and Live at LICA’s aim of “exploring experimental performance in rural locations”, of “engag[ing] a completely new group of partner organisations and potential audiences”, and of “enabl[ing] members of the

public to engage in meaningful ways with contemporary, research-led practice in extended participatory projects on and off campus". By exploring four epistemologies the project met an objective of the AONB by "develop[ing] and testing innovative methods of achieving a more sustainable way of life in a protected landscape of great beauty and diversity"; it met the aims of Lancaster City Council by providing "cultural tourism for the district" and a "service for children and young people" through a primary schools' performance and workshop and the Innerworld Dialogue with Ridgway Park School. It met ACE's aim of involving "people at risk of 'social exclusion'", and, according to the head teacher, it "enabled [that school] to develop other projects with the local village".

100% of our partners who responded to the 2012 Survey noted that *Jack Scout* promoted "greater awareness of the Silverdale area". A photographic exhibition of the show was displayed at the 2010 Society of British Theatre Designers bi-annual exhibition, with a footfall of over 4000. Nearly 25% of respondents in the 2012 Audience Survey indicated that after the show they visited Silverdale and used cafés and galleries; the Partner's surveys show this contribution to the local economy.

#### **Development for professional artists:**

In the 2012 Partners' Survey, Steve Lewis stated that *Jack Scout* was "one of the best things [he'd] ever done", that his "engagement with 'the rural' had changed very positively"; as a result he formed an ensemble to further explore this. Lisa Whistlecroft said the final piece gave her a new approach to soundscape composition; her piece *Silverdale Sea*, shortlisted for the European Sound Panorama competition and broadcast on Deutschland Radio in 2011, grew directly from *Jack Scout*. Louise Ann Wilson stated that "the project gave [her company] more confidence to support similar projects". The decisive effect that *Jack Scout* had on these artists is attributed to techniques emerging from Nigel Stewart's previous projects - notably with Jennifer Monson during the AHRC-funded *Re-enchantment and Reclamation*, and with Louise Ann Wilson on *Still Life* (2008, rev. 2009). A spectacle was made of nature by using movement to illustrate the morphology of plants; or flute and clarinet to mimic songs of indigenous birds. Nature was explored as world by writing songs with children about their feelings whilst playing on the heath; collecting stories about the bay from local historians; by recording social gestures by learning from fishermen how to work nets, tackle and tractors on the sands, from conservationists how to mobilise bracken bashers and pitch forks on the heath. Nature was experienced as environment by hearing how the sound of a clarinet could mingle with the sounds and shapes of oyster catchers and other birds at key tidal moments, and using Monson's "logging" techniques to disclose and distil kinaesthetic sensations of the shoreline. Through gathering accounts of shipwrecks and drowning, the bay was experienced as a sublime or void place in which human life can be swallowed on the incoming tide or sinking sands. (784 words)

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

- Curran, Mary (2012) "Audience Survey July 2012", *Jack Scout* [Online] Available: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/Evaluation2012\\_Audience\\_Survey\\_report.pdf](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/Evaluation2012_Audience_Survey_report.pdf)
- Curran, Mary (2012b) "Partner's Survey July 2012", *Jack Scout* [Online] Available: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/Evaluation2012\\_Partners\\_Survey\\_report.pdf](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/Evaluation2012_Partners_Survey_report.pdf)
- Ho, Yun (2010) "An Audience with Jack Scout: A quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the audience's experience of Jack Scout" [Online] Available: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/jackscout\\_evaluation\\_report.pdf](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/jackscout_evaluation_report.pdf).

- Sap Dance and Louise Ann Wilson Company (2010) "Credits", *Jack Scout* [Available] Online: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/jackscout\\_credits.pdf](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/jackscout_credits.pdf).
- Sap Dance and Louise Ann Wilson Company (2010) "Credits", *Jack Scout* [Available] Online: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/jackscout\\_credits.pdf](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/jackscout/docs/jackscout_credits.pdf).
- Sap Dance (2011) "Jack Scout: Grant for the Arts Activity Report Form", Manchester: Arts Council England North.
- Sap Dance and Louise Ann Wilson Company (2013) *Jack Scout (redux)*. Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University