

<p>Institution: University of Leeds</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UOA 34</p>
<p>Title of case study: Case Study 2: Taylor & Wood Creative Partnership: innovation and commercialisation in wallpaper design through creative practice, interactivity and public participation.</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Christopher Taylor and Craig Wood Creative Partnership is a collaborative fine art practice-based research partnership. Their research is underpinned by interactivity and participation which seeks to dissolve the boundaries in creative practice via public exhibitions, educational events and the commercialisation opportunities of practice-based fine art research. This has resulted in a series of innovative wallpaper designs, commercially produced by international wall coverings manufacturer Graham & Brown. These designs have acted as catalysts for wider public engagement with creative practice, knowledge exchange between academia and the creative business sector, and commercialisation initiatives which have contributed to innovation within the international wallpaper business sector and the economic prosperity of an international manufacturing company.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Taylor joined Fine Art, University of Leeds as a Lecturer in 1995 and has been Senior Lecturer since 2003. He formed a creative partnership in 1999 with artist Craig Wood, who was the Gregory Fellow in Sculpture at the University of Leeds between 1997 and 2000.</p> <p>Taylor and Wood's practice-based research is based around a dissemination of practice and the translation of creative practice into the commercial sphere. Their research also consistently attempts to break down the boundaries between art/craft/design, highlighting the dialectic between their 'artworks' in the public gallery and the translation of these 'artworks' into commercially mass-produced design.</p> <p>Their research activity began in 1999 when Taylor invited Wood to collaborate with him on an artist's book commission for the international touring exhibition <i>Inside Cover</i> (1). This resulted in the conceptual artwork, <i>Down on Paper: wallpaper to complete</i> (2000) (6), a series of 18 designs in a wallpaper sample book format where a third party was invited to imagine or 'complete' the designs.</p> <p>The partnership's practice-based participatory research has since evolved to confront issues such as authorship, interactivity, creativity and dissemination through the format of repeat pattern wallpaper. Although artists have not traditionally been associated with wallpaper design, Taylor and Wood chose wallpaper as a ubiquitous, un-threatening and inexpensive format upon which the 'interactees' could express themselves through writing, drawing and colour. Thus the categories are blurred with a conventional fine art model so that artist and audience, process and completed work, artistic experience and its context become merged.</p> <p>Driven by specific research questions such as 'why, as creative thinkers are we discouraged from making our mark on the surroundings in which we feel most secure?' and 'why, as upholders of our history and culture are we discouraged from touching, never mind drawing on, our most treasured artefacts and monuments?' they have designed a number of 'interactive' wallpapers printed as limited edition rolls by Graham & Brown. Some of these wallpapers have been made available in mass retail outlets, whilst simultaneously appearing in fine art exhibitions. Thus the work straddles the traditional fine art/ design divide as well as the perceived gulf between the original artwork and mass-produced product.</p>

Taylor's research consistently seeks to articulate creatively the complex dynamics of participatory and collaborative artist practice, and explores the relevance of practice-based fine art research for visual communication. **Taylor** and Wood's wallpapers have been deployed as part of **Taylor's** practice-based research in educational and gallery contexts in Manchester and Birmingham (2) (3) to allow varied audiences to respond directly and constructively (whether positively or negatively) as part of a rare, collaborative act. Pupils and staff in five inner city Birmingham schools were actively encouraged to engage with, utilise and respond to the *Frames*, *Dot to Dot* and *Notes* wallpapers (3) in cross-curricular activities that provided sites for creative expression and discussion. The imagery has a reductive aesthetic, offering a space for an unknown third party to collaborate with the artists in which the viewer is invited, but not compelled, to 'complete' the work. The wallpapers, which form part of **Taylor's** REF submission outputs, articulate the central notion of participatory and collaborative work, in which the visitor could 'colour-in' and draw on the wallpaper to create their own artwork.

An invitation by the Curator of Wallpapers at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester in 2009 (Christine Woods) to respond to the zeitgeist for the exhibition *Walls are Talking: Art/Culture/Wallpaper* (2010) (5), provided **Taylor** and Wood with an opportunity to consider artist's wallpapers as backdrops to social commentary, as opposed to being just aesthetic/conceptual puzzles. This led to the development of new wallpapers such as *Witness* (2010) (5) which keys into the (British) obsession and topical issue of surveillance, and *Blank Cheque* (2010) (4), which explores the zeitgeist through direct reference to the current global economic crisis. The analysis of these works by Curator of Prints at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) suggests that these designs subtly highlight some of the 'defining issues of our time' (5).

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

(1) Ward, J., *Inside Cover*, exhibition catalogue, (Making Space Publishers, 2000). Copy of catalogue can be made available by UOA on request.

(2) Schoeser, Mary, 'A Potent Resource: wallpapers at the Whitworth', *The Wallpaper History Review* (2008), pp.82-84. ISSN0961-0987. Copy of text can be made available by UOA on request.

(3) *Can we come back?*, Ikon gallery and Creative Partnerships, exhibition catalogue, (Birmingham, 2005), pp.10-23. ISBN 1-904864-06-6. Copy of text can be made available by UOA on request.

(4) **Taylor, Chris**, *Assegno in Bianco / Blank Cheque*, exhibition catalogue, (SGgallery, Venice, 2010) – catalogue with curators introduction and quotes; *Assegno in Bianco / Blank Cheque*, **Taylor & Wood**, SG Press, Venice 2011. ISBN 978-88-906253-0-5. Catalogue can be made available by UOA on request.

(5) Saunders, G., Heyse-Moore, D., Keeble, T., Woods, C., *Walls are Talking: Art/Culture/Wallpaper*, exhibition catalogue, (Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 2010), pp.84-85. ISBN 978-0-903261065-4. Catalogue can be made available by UOA on request.

(6) **Taylor, Chris**, and Wood, Craig, *Down on Paper*, (Wild Pansy Press, 2000). Artist Book can be made available by UOA on request.

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

i) Commercialisation and business innovation

A series of Graham & Brown wallpapers based on the designs of **Taylor** and Wood (*Frames*, *Blank Cheque*, *Witness* and *Flowers*) (a) have been produced and are promoted in the company's in-house publication *What Walls Want* (b) and are sold through major retailers such as B&Q. As a result of the success of those wallpapers (over 120,000 rolls of *Frames* wallpaper have been sold since its launch in 2002), **Taylor** and Wood have contributed towards the competitiveness and

profitability of the international manufacturing company Graham & Brown, broadening its creative range as well as providing opportunities for product development; 'Frames' for example has recently (Oct 2013) been selected as an 'Anniversary product, with new printings in gold metallic and pink' (c) in order to expand their children's market.

Frames, a completely interactive wallpaper which encourages the creation of personal artwork, has become 'a worldwide success for both Graham & Brown and the wallpaper industry itself' (c), as evidenced by the inclusion of **Taylor** and Wood's designs in the *Cool Brands 2010* awards (d). *Frames* also has been shortlisted for numerous design awards including the 2004 Homes & Gardens Classic Design Awards alongside internationally renowned designers Terence Conran, James Dyson, David Mellor and Toorde Boontje.

The collaboration between **Taylor** and Wood and Graham & Brown has led to knowledge exchange impact through a mutual consideration of the role of business-related issues and academic-based creative innovation. Graham & Brown state that '**Taylor** and Wood are now deeply rooted within Graham & Brown culture', helping the company fulfil a challenge 'to develop fine art concepts into commercial wallpapers' (c). Commissions have allowed **Taylor** and Wood to fully engage with Graham & Brown's designers, making use of their technical skills in developing and experimenting with new designs. These experiences have given **Taylor** and Wood first-hand experience of the limitations of the print/production process, and have taught them how to refine their designs in order to capitalise on such commercially situated technical expertise and to appreciate the commercial objectives of Graham & Brown as the company works in response to niche markets and trends. **Taylor** and Wood's visual ideas were often not in line with Graham & Brown's existing marketing strategies or customer research, but their sponsorship has provided **Taylor** and Wood with the materials to carry out their projects. In turn, **Taylor** and Wood's creative practice promotes Graham & Brown as an innovative company, willing to take risks in order to explore the boundaries of their product and broaden their appeal. Such creative collaborations exemplify the new, emerging communications between creative practice-based research in the HE and business sectors.

ii) Public engagement with interactive research

The wider dissemination of their commercially produced wallpapers has allowed **Taylor** and Wood to make a distinct and material contribution to wider public engagement with practice-based research. Through the processes of participation and creation the general public can themselves perform an interactive act with the wallpapers, facilitating a vibrant and purposeful on-going dialogue with practice-based research.

The wallpapers have been featured in a wide range of international publications and television programmes, for example *Home & Garden* and *Elle* magazines, *Changing Rooms* and *The Culture Show*. The wallpapers also have a consistent presence on the Internet, in personal blogs, commercial and advertising sites, visual sites such as *Flickr* and *Pinterest* and cultural reviews (e). There is evidence of considerable reach here, with much of the traffic indicating that the notion of interactivity and participation is playing a significant role in the public consumption of **Taylor** and Wood's designs. Blog comments from members of the public include; '*Frames* wallpaper turned out to be the perfect way to show individual, almost random ideas...telling a story in one place...I think this is exactly what the designers had in mind.'; '(the wallpapers are) intentionally open to interpretation. The whole concept is to invite the homeowner to be part of the design process'. *Culture24* stated that 'most intriguing are the 'interactive' wallpapers – designs which can be altered or added to according to the taste of the buyer.' (e).

iii) Practice-based research and public exhibitions

Taylor and Wood wallpapers have been accessioned into the collections of the V&A, Tate Britain, The Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester and The National Gallery of Canada (NGC). Curators at the V&A state **Taylor** and Wood wallpapers are innovative by blurring the boundaries between pure artist wallpapers and 'artist-designed' wallpapers that are intended for the

commercial sphere, and are most effective in bridging artistic and commercial boundaries. (i)

Exhibitions at The Whitworth Art Gallery featuring **Taylor** and Wood wallpapers (*Featuring Walls*, 2008 and *Walls are Talking*, 2010) (f) (g) provided educational and artistic contexts for participatory engagement. The *Walls are Talking* exhibition attracted 102,201 visitors, with visitor comments such as ‘this is the best exhibition I’ve seen in ages...brilliant selection of work’ (f). Associated with the exhibition were a wide range of public engagement events funded by Creative Partnerships, the government’s creative learning programme. These included educational sessions for schools (attended by 4,788 children/young people) and Arts and Health Programmes with Galaxy House (child and mental health services) which 551 children and patients took part in, as well as adult programmes ‘Smart Deco: Intelligent Interior Design Course’ (60 attendees) and ‘Wallpaper Dancers’ (300 attendees) (f). The exhibition also attracted a considerable amount of press coverage (advertising equivalency of £485,500) (f).

Taylor and Wood wallpapers were the only artist-designed wallpapers to be sold in the Whitworth Gallery shop. The Whitworth stated that ‘this (was) a new departure for the gallery shop which we hope to build on’ (f) and that the work of **Taylor** and Wood ‘breaks with conventional perceptions’ bringing together the two worlds of the conceptual and the commercial (i).

In 2007-2008 **Taylor** and Wood’s pattern book and wallpapers were acquired by the NGC. Its influence on curatorial practice is demonstrated by the fact that it is part of a new exhibition (*Wallpower*) at the NGC in September-December 2013. The curator of the Art Metropole Collection at the NGC stated that the works ‘readily respond to our collection criteria. Their pattern book enables the artists to make their “theoretical” work tangible, portable, and available simultaneously to many people in various places.’ (h)

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

(a) Graham & Brown Wallpaper Company

<http://www.grahambrown.com/uk/product/52050/Taylor+%26+Wood+--+Frames>

(b) *Frames: The Story of a Design Icon* in ‘What Walls Want’, issue two, Graham & Brown publication, 2009, pp.36-37; *The Walls Have Eyes* in ‘What Walls Want’, issue five, Graham & Brown publication, 2011, pp.50-51. Copies of texts can be made available by the UOA on request.

(c) Personal testimony from Head of eCommerce at Graham & Brown (December 2012); personal testimony from Brand Manager at Graham & Brown (16th October 2013) (details on the REF submission system).

(d) *Cool Brands* (2010). Copies can be made available by the UOA on request.

(e) World-wide-web data. Data: 70 web listings in total; Professional Reviews (16); Personal Blogs (16); Design sites/Flickr (10); Museum archives (2); Commercial Advertising (26). Summaries and web-links can be made available by the UOA on request.

(f) The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, *Walls are Talking* Report for Funders 2010 (unpaginated). Copies of texts can be made available by the UOA on request.

(g) Higgins, C., *Walls Are Talking: Wallpaper Art and Culture*, review, *The Guardian*, 6 February, 2010, p.13. Copies of the text can be made available by the UOA on request.

(h) Personal testimony from Curator, National Gallery of Canada (5th January 2012) (details on REF submission system).

(i) Personal testimony from Senior Curator in Word & Image Department, Victoria & Albert Museum); Personal testimony from Curator (Wallpapers), The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (4th December 2012) (details on the REF submission system).