

Institution: Leeds Metropolitan University
Unit of Assessment: Unit 34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
Title of case study: The expanded field of performance art
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The research described focuses on performance in an expansive sense – including both live and documented forms – to address and engage with audiences both within and outside the usual parameters of the art museum or gallery. Impact is achieved through multiple modes: public, audience and community, participation, video, broadcast and performance. This work addresses the impact on cultural understandings and attitudes to performance art in the light of its increasingly de-marginalised role within fine art. The study should be considered in the context of moves by major institutions to acknowledge the increased significance of performance art practice whilst also reaching beyond the fixed notions implied by permanent structures such as the Tate's oil tanks.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research collected under the heading 'The expanded field of performance' relates directly to a core concern of the school: the role of performance and video art practice in the discourse of contemporary art which, as Bamford has argued (2012), is often made to fit arcane and inappropriate categories. The particular concerns of several artists and researchers within the school lie with the potential of performance and its attending documentary manifestations to question the audiences presuppositions in relation to what might constitute performance in a fine art context whilst also exploiting its interactive nature to raise wider questions relating to identity, language and place.</p> <p>The impact of the performance practice described is best understood as the culmination of a series of inter-related events, rather than a single identifiable output as usually conceived within the parameters of the REF.</p> <p>Harold Offeh [SL] uses practice-based research to investigate the role of racial stereotyping and representations of cultural power. It is through performance-based events that audiences are confronted with situations that ask awkward questions and intimate a sense of cultural unease, often through parody and gentle humour. In earlier work these concerns have been presented through the 'Mammy' character, used on American Food stuffs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and on screen, including the archetype of the loyal black servant played by Hattie McDaniel. In recent work the development and adaptation of this character is evident in work that continues a concern for the tropes of popular visual culture but diversifies historically into the more recent history of television and the marginal figures of classical literature. The two projects highlighted below explore cultural spaces associated with middle class leisure time - the stately home and the cultural centre - to exploit the appropriateness of performance as a means by which the boundaries of theatre and fine art can be tested and the expectations of new audiences challenged.</p> <p>This consideration of new, or alternative, audiences is also key to the work of Clare Charnley [SL], whose research also uses performative elements to directly engage audiences in the public realm. Charnley's strategies differ significantly from those of Offeh but together they demonstrate the important role of an extended performance art practice as a tool for cultural enquiry, asking questions which relate to similar issues of place and presentation. It is through her collaborations, currently with Brazilian artist Patricia Azevedo (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais), and previously with Katrin Kivimaa (Estonian Academy of Art) that Charnley has used the potential of language to de-familiarize established structures and involve participants in this process, thereby exploring their own place within a site of cultural history and its legacies.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Bamford, K: 'Acconci's pied-a-terre: Taking the archive for a walk', <i>Performance Research: A</i></p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Journal of the Performing Arts, 17:2, 54-61. See REF 2

Charnley, Claire: *Leave Blank*: in collaboration with Patricia Azevedo. See REF 2
The Northern Art Prize, Finalist, Exhibition and public events, Leeds Art Gallery, 2008
<http://www.northernartprize.org.uk/2008-prize/2008-shortlist/clare-charnley>
Belfast Exposed, Belfast; Bed-in, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool

Charnley, Claire, *Here We Are*, Interactive performance events in Brumadinho, Brazil, in collaboration with Patricia Azevedo 2008 (ongoing) See REF 2
<http://www.clarecharnley.com/>Recipients of Arts Council Artists Links Grant 2008.

Offeh, Harold, performance, *The Garden of Reason*, The National Trust, Ham House, London 2012; commissioned by The National Trust as part of the inaugural New Trust Art project *The Garden of Reason*, 28 April – 23 September 2012, curated by Tessa Fitzjohn. Supported by grants from Arts Council England (Trust New Art), The Heritage Lottery Fund (£50,000), The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

<http://gardenofreason.tumblr.com/about>

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ham-house/our-work/projects/>

Reviewed in *Art Monthly* 362 (Dec / Jan 2012/13) pp10-13: 'Human Nature' by Michael Hampton; Time Out - <http://www.timeout.com/london/art/garden-of-reason>; the catalogue is available online at: <http://www.tessafitzjohn.org/archives/category/garden-of-reason>

Offeh, Harold, performance with Duckie 'Copyright Christmas', Barbican, London 2012

Performance, 10 - 31 December 2011. Barbican Theatre, London, UK. Directed by Mark Whitelaw, Designed by Robin Whitmore. Devised and performed by Dickie Beau, Scottee, Jess Love, Ryan Styles, H Plewis, Sheila Ghelani, Roy Kerr, Susannah Hewlett, Harold Offeh and Bird la Bird. Produced by Duckie, Co-commissioned by the Barbican. See REF 2

Links:

<http://duckie.co.uk/generic.php?id=130>

<http://www.barbican.org.uk/duckie/>

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

The long-standing preoccupations of Harold Offeh's performance work, as an active engagement with the received history of visual culture, led to a major commission by the National Trust as part of their new contemporary art programme, *The Garden of Reason*. Jointly funded by the Arts Council, England and Heritage Lottery, Offeh has undertaken a series of performance events at Ham House, a Seventeenth Century stately home in Richmond-Upon-Thames, London (2012). In turn both comic and bizarre these performances invited visitors to the property to encounter and engage with unexpected objects in the grounds of the house: the Ham Hermit in the grounds' grotto or living topiary elements installed in the formal garden. It is the aim of Offeh's work to open up stories relating to the lives and aesthetic sensibilities of the estate's owners, in particular Elizabeth Murray, Countess of Dysart, who played a significant role during the Commonwealth and Restoration whilst also redeveloping Ham House. *The Garden of Reason*, which opened and closed with performances by Offeh, took place at a time of major restoration for Ham House, during which the National Trust sought to further involve local communities and offer alternative ways of experiencing the gardens and their histories, using contemporary art.

The second project involving Offeh's work as part of this expansion of performance art also redresses a familiar leisure activity, that of Christmas shopping, but in a venue and with an audience more familiar with conventions of theatrical performance – the Barbican theatre, London. Working as part of the collective *Duckie* Offeh's interactive performance for *Copyright Christmas* drew visitors into an uneasy world between soap opera, music hall and everyday theatre to play again with the familiarity of stereotypes. dressed here as a female, black toilet attendant. The audience toured the foyer and stage as cultural consumers in a satirical critique which refused to draw lines between the different aspects of theatrical and artistic practice that are labelled 'live art': an impact of Offeh's work that is central to the reach of his investigations. The reach of the two examples cited mixes up established audiences and takes them to unanticipated places and

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experiences, whether the National Trust visitor who experiences a live art performance, a live art audience taken to a site of the cultural mainstream or the theatre critic whose familiar territory is reduced to a version of Poundland. The impact of this performance-based research is not only on the audience, however, but equally on the institutions and organisations who play host to the events, testifying to the increased de-marginalisation of performance and its flexibility to exist both within and outside existing art institutions.

The impact of Charnley's work similarly opens audiences to new experiences through her role as an artist, one who collects and curates the contributions of others. *Here We Are* (2008-ongoing) is part of a collaboration with the Brazilian artist Patricia Azevedo and the public participants with whom the project is realised. Building from recorded conversations with occupants of the works' location it is their words which constitute the resulting audio performance to address attitudes to place, both physical and emotional. In the Brazilian village of Brumadinho the initially unwitting participants are made aware of their contributions through public broadcast, redirecting their own questions and statements to a new context. Funded by the Arts Council, England, as part of their Artists Links England-Brazil project (2009) Charnley and Azevedo have worked with groups in Northumbria, UK and Brazil using a variety of similar formats. A second project, grouped under the title *Leave Blank* addresses questions of immigration, using adapted immigration forms as a site to discuss who is welcome to which places. Through both public participation, video and performance Charnley has developed a strategy to ask questions pertinent to the sites of exhibition, including the Northern Art Prize 2008 in Leeds (where she was a finalist), Belfast (as part of Belfast exposed (2010) and part of the 'Bed-in' at Liverpool's Bluecoat Gallery (2011). Each project, in their different manifestations, impacts on the lives of the participants through a subtly altered form of cultural understanding, suggesting that established forms of communication might be opened up to alternative possibilities; sometimes this takes place within a clearly understood framework of contemporary art but in other cases these small interruptions carry no identified categorisation.

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

Offeh, Harold: *The Garden of Reason*

http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/NT_ACE_MoUFinal_logos.pdf

<http://gardenofreason.tumblr.com/>

Offeh, Harold: *Copyright Christmas*

Reviews

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2011/dec/14/copyright-christmas-review>

<http://www.divamag.co.uk/category/arts-entertainment/duckie%27s-copyright-christmas.aspx>

<http://londonist.com/2011/12/review-duckies-copyright-christmas-the-barbican.php>

<http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/news/latest-news/article/item118697>

Charnley, Clare:

Recipients of Arts Council Artists Links grant 2008 (England-Brazil).

http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/external-evaluation-artist-links-england-brazil/

Reviews and publications

Northern Art Prize 2008, exhibition catalogue, Leeds: UK.

Northern Art Prize 2008, Finalist and winner of the public's vote.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2008/nov/26/northern-art-prize-leeds>

Bed-in at the Bluecoat Gallery

<http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/liverpool-news/local-news/2010/10/12/bed-in-today-on-the-bed-clare-charnley-with-patricia-azevedo-100252-27450488/>

<http://www.thebluecoat.org.uk/forum/index/20/47>