

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Robert Gordon University
Unit of Assessment: 34
Title of case study: Artists leading in the Public Sphere
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Artists leading in the Public Sphere has generated, inspired and supported new forms of artistic practice that emerge out of artists working closely with cultural organisations within research led inquiry. These approaches confront the need for and the challenges of change, in a process of mutual support between academics, artists, organisations and communities to adapt to social environmental change and shifting cultural values. By re-examining the role of the professional artist as a catalyst for social change informed by artist activist pedagogies and theories, these new experimental forms **increase collaboration, opening up the imaginations and sensibilities of individuals and groups.**

(100)

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

*Phase one, On the Edge Research (OTE) (2001-4) (lead Douglas) pioneered methodologies of co-creating participatory research. Rated by AHRB as ‘excellent’, the research assembled leaders from National Galleries of Scotland, Shetland College, Scottish Sculpture Workshop, Deveron Arts and Museum of Scottish Lighthouses. We applied a principle of anchoring projects within the histories and communities of these organisations working closely with organizational leaders, who, through the research, framed projects that specifically addressed individuals’ experiences and vision in each context. Artists were able to explore deeper relationships of the contemporary and the inherited, beyond the superficial currents of funding themes and destination marketing [R1,2,3]. For example Bankes-Jones, Artistic Director of Tête-à-Tête, is tracking the processes of *Edge FM* (2001-4), a partnership between OTE, Museum of Scottish Lighthouses and Fraserburgh skateboarders, to inform creative partnerships between skateboarders and choirs in London, Glasgow and Aberdeen (2013-14) <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/symphony-for-skateboard-and-choir-to-star-in-uks-first-new-music-biennial-8590173.html>.*

The practice and theory of artist activists: Lacy (art and the social); the Harrisons (art and ecology); Artists Placement Group (art and industry) and Kester (theorist of social art practice) have co-evolved this research. Douglas and Lacy co-designed *Working in Public* research (2006-8) with Public Art Scotland (PAS) and the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) to address a concern with socially engaged art, which was attracting high levels of funding without clear criteria for quality. SAC were keen that the sector learned from Lacy’s high profile work. The research therefore focused Lacy’s unique long-term experience in Oakland, California (1990 – 2000). Lacy had pioneered art’s role in generating awareness particularly in relation to media stereotyping of disadvantaged groups, giving voice to participants through long term engagement and performance. OTE established a dynamic learning environment across Scotland, analysing the Oakland experience through paired concepts: aesthetics and ethics, power and representation, quality and imperfection [R4]. The public programme (Aberdeen 27/28 March, Glasgow 22/23 May, Inverness, 19/20 June) supported a core

Impact case study (REF3b)

group of 12 selected artists/community practitioners/curators, mainly Scottish, who in turn informed the research through individual practice and contexts. *Working in Public* located public art at the heart of civic discourse, culminating at the Scottish Parliament (25 September, 2007).

In parallel, OTE developed the AHRC *The Artist as Leader* research (2006-9) [R5]. This research was a collaboration with Performing Arts Labs, London (PAL), Cultural Enterprise Office, Scotland (CEO) and Scottish Leadership Foundation (SLF). The team drew together a high level network of artists, policy makers and organisational leaders representing Jerwood Trust, British Council, South Bank Centre, Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Parliament. Through an interview series and a 'Lab' the participants developed a discourse on leadership in the arts. It informed the development of leadership policy/funding within the Scottish Arts Council and Cultural Leadership programme (Arts Council England). Both Arts Councils attended and funded The Artist as Leader Lab.

The research has further evolved through two AHRC Connected Communities awards (2010-13)(2012-13) in collaboration with Woodend Barn Arts Centre: a Pilot Demonstrator project [R6] and a Collaborative Doctoral award to investigate the role of the artist in organisational development.

497 words

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

R1. Douglas, A. Fremantle, C and Delday, H (2004) *The Dynamic of the Edge* presented at Sensuous Knowledges 1: International Conference, *Creating a Tradition* Bergen National Academy of the Arts <http://sensuousknowledge.org/gammel/2005/02/douglas-fremantle-delday/> (pdf supplied by HEI on request)

R2. Douglas, A. and Fremantle, C. (2005) *Leaving the (social) ground of artistic intervention more fertile* for 'Sensuous Knowledges' 2 Aesthetic practice and Aesthetic Insight international conference, organised by Bergen National Academy of Art of the Arts <http://sensuousknowledge.org/gammel/2005/11/anne-douglas-and-chris-fremantle-2/> (pdf supplied by HEI on request)

R3. Douglas, A. (2005) On the Edge – an exploration of the visual arts in remote rural contexts of Northern Scotland. in Miles, M. and Hall, T (eds.) *Interventions: Art in the Public Sphere*. Advances in Art and Urban Futures Vol. 4 Bristol: Intellect Books ISBN: 1 84150 118 2 (pdf supplied by HEI on request)

R4. Douglas, A. Working in Public: Art, Practice and Policy <http://archive.publicartscotland.com/search/?cx=005169466167014530546%3Aabtqzi152g4&cof=F%2F&ref=www.publicartscotland.com%2F&ss=6976j3863442j29> (pdf supplied by HEI on request)

R5. Douglas, A & Fremantle, C. (2009) *The Artist as Leader* Research Report Robert Gordon University ISBN 978-1-901085-98-3 (AHRC funded research) including DVD (accessible from www.ontheadgeresearch.org) (pdf supplied by HEI on request)

R6: Douglas, A. (2013) *Casting back and forth from a point in the present: Time, Improvisation and Experience* selected conference paper presented at PS19 Stanford University 26-29th June 2013 (accessible from www.ontheadgeresearch.org) (pdf supplied by HEI on request)

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

The impact developed by this research, includes

1. generating new ways of thinking that influence the practice of the arts in society *giving form* to collaboration
2. through collaboration, helping professionals and organisations to adapt to changing cultural values

In an independent report on the *Working in Public* research [E1] focusing on the impact of collaboration some 18 months after the research, 12 interviewees consistently mention, 'without prompting' and in 'nearly full agreement', the positive value of the research and its continued influence on individuals' practices including questioning assumptions that public art is beneficial, rethinking the intersection of ethics and public art practice, exposing artistic practice to wider critiques of community development. They comment on the value of the particular dynamic of a level playing field developed through the event structure of 4 seminars across the 4 Scottish cities that gathered together ~400 participants, including artists, academics, organisations with, importantly, funders. This, it was felt, led to the generation and dissemination of knowledge in ways that do not entirely belong to any one sector. The 12 core participants, who constituted most of the interviewees, represented leading Scottish arts organisations, including the Collective, Public Art Scotland, Glasgow International and Grampian Hospital Arts Trust. They comment on the value of the exceptionally high level international contributors (Lacy, Kester, Sheikh, Trevor). This research is viewed as directly instrumental in 'incorporating the ethos of high quality, challenging art in the public realm and the institutional structures that support it' [E1 p2 and E2].

Two Clore Fellows, Sofaer [E3] and Matarasso [E4] and Fokert, a writer in media theory [E5], also cite the impact of the research in terms of new influential ways of thinking about practice of the arts, in relation to *The Artist as Leader* (2006-9). Sofaer, the first dedicated 'Artist Fellow' within Clore, acknowledges this research in 2012 as an important precursor to his own perceptions of leadership, in particular the need to publically recognize where and how artists are leading within the wider social, cultural spheres. Sofaer uses this need to underpin in depth interviews with high level practitioners: Cornelia Parker, Field Theory, First Draft, Masato Nakamura, Richard Layzell, Richard Hicks, Kate Love and David Wilson [E3]. He publishes on the same platform as the early output of *Artist as Leader* (2007): *an* with a 18k professional readership and 32 year archive of artistic practice.

Matarasso (2010), an independent writer and Clore Fellow, was commissioned by NESTA and Clore Leadership programme to explore the role of the arts in our current age of economic and environmental uncertainty. He notes that the *Artist as Leader*'s definition of leadership is far removed from stereotypes of the romantic genius, emphasizing the 'collaborative and social' and the 'relational'. The research positions the artist in relationship with others as a way of opening up problems to better ways forward to adapting to cultural change. This is viewed as a counterpoint to quantifying the value of culture and the arts [E4 p 6-7].

Both *Working in Public* and *Artist as Leader* represent a scaling up and development of methodologies of collaborative art practice pioneered in *OTE Phase 1* (2001-4), research involving a NE Scotland regional network of 5 key arts and heritage organisations linked to national bodies (Historic Scotland, National Museums of Scotland, Sculpture Workshops) that commissioned 10+ artists in the development of new experimental work yielded through collaboration, establishing

Impact case study (REF3b)

artistic methodologies with international reach [E6,E7].

Hope evaluates the recent research through the **two recent Connected Communities awards to OTE** with Woodend Arts (2011-14, 2012-13) (2) [E8]. As a founder trustee of Woodend Arts and a leader in the Energy sector (E8, p 2), Hope traces his connection with the research to 2000 as an 'introduction to research as a living practice' (E8, p1) and 'as an important part of his evolution as a manager and leader in industry and the arts' (E8, p 3). In particular in response to one of the two research projects, a practice-led Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)(2011-14), he emphasizes the impact of the collaboration to generate new ways of thinking that are helpful to organizational change. The particular participatory approaches to art at work in the CDA, enable familiar workplace problems to be framed more creatively to arrive at better solutions through more inclusive processes. "This project has involved many staff, volunteers and members of the community who now feel directly involved in the evolving conversation. This will directly influence the future strategy and development of Woodend Arts" (E8, p4).

749 words

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

E1: Heim, Wallace. *Working in Public* Evaluation Report Commissioned Scottish Arts Council 2009 articulating the impact of the research approach in *Working in Public* on the sector, in particular 12 core participants (pdf supplied by HEI on request).

E2: Previously Visual Arts officer at Scottish Arts Council and currently Portfolio Manager , International, Cultural Export and Visual Arts, Creative Scotland: testimony confirming the national/regional impact of the research approach in *Working in Public* on the sector in relation to current developments supported by Creative Scotland (Testimony on file) (pdf supplied by HEI on request).

E3: Sofaer, Joshua. *Artist as Leader* 2012
<http://www.a-n.co.uk/publications/article/2667190/2667186> : published article describes the influence of the *Artist as Leader* research on his understanding of leadership and approach to interviewing leading artists (pdf supplied by HEI on request).

E4: Matarasso, Francois. *The Art of Uncertainty* Clore/NESTA, 2010
http://www.cloreleadership.org/cms/user_files/files/24/FrancoisMatarasso.pdf : independently commissioned article cites the *Artist as Leader* research as influential in establishing relational forms of leadership (pdf supplied by HEI on request).

E5: Forkert, K. *Artist as Executive, Executive as Artist* in Variant 35, Summer 2009 pp23-24,
<http://www.variant.org.uk/pdfs/issue35/CulturalLeadership.pdf> situates the research within wider discourses in cultural policy and creativity including Smith, Cox and Hewison (pdf supplied by HEI on request).

E6: Professor of Art History in the Visual Arts department at the University of California, San Diego: Testimony articulating the international reach and significance of the On the Edge research, the value of working directly with communities (Testimony on file) (pdf supplied by HEI on request)

E7: Artistic Director of Tête-à-Tête, testimony confirming the artistic influence of the On The Edge Phase 1 2001-4 research on new forms of creativity (Testimony on file) (pdf supplied by HEI on request)

E8: Founder Director and Trustee. Woodend Arts: letter describing the value to a rural arts organisation of participatory approaches developed by the research to organisational development, particular organisations that involve substantial levels of volunteering. (Testimony on file) (pdf supplied by HEI on request).