

Institution: Nottingham Trent University
Unit of Assessment: D34 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
Title of case study: Art and Belief
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The Unit's research is at the centre of changing approaches to the relationship between contemporary art and religious institutions by helping a variety of faith communities to reflect on their practices and by influencing public attitudes. The work focuses on 3 areas: the relationship between nature and spirituality; the spiritual well-being of individuals; the role of performance and temporary works of art to increase understanding of religious communities and sacred spaces. Our findings have been used in policy documents published by the Church of England on commissioning art in churches, in the National Conference of the Pagan Federation, the Swedenborg Society and by the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. These impacts are particularly relevant in the context of a new UK legal framework placing religious belief among the protected characteristics of Equality and Diversity.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The impacts derive from individual and collaborative research in Nottingham Trent University's School of Art and Design. The work of these individuals, two artists (Newling, Judd) and an art historian (Davey), has affected practice and understanding in three areas where belief and cultural life intersect: the relationship between nature and human beings; individual spiritual well-being; performance, ritual and temporary works of art. The research has been disseminated in public performances, exhibitions, books and exhibition catalogues.</p> <p>Nature: Judd's practice has helped the Wiccan community to find new ways to reconnect with nature (see section 4) through performance. Since 'Chatham Vines' in 2004 (which had direct impact on liturgy) Newling has worked with plants to point up humans' reliance on natural resources and stimulates debate about our ideas of nature. This work was brought together in a recent retrospective, <i>Ecologies of Value</i> and has included collaboration with the ESRC Centre for the Economic and Social Aspects of Genomics, Lancaster University.</p> <p>Well-Being: Newling's works including <i>Preston Market Mystery</i>, <i>Westonbirt Wishes</i>, and <i>Make a Piano in Spain</i> have used processes that engage directly with the public, introducing reflection on beliefs about happiness and 'mystery' and leading individuals to consider how these beliefs impact on their well-being. These works reflect understanding in psychiatry of the potential for spirituality to foster well-being, and are distinct from art practice that focuses on an artists' experience in that they are all about the experience of members of the public.</p> <p>Ritual, Performance and Temporary works of art</p> <p>Both Newling and Judd have used performance and ritualised actions to help specific religious communities consider their beliefs and activities, as well as helping members of the public to discover these communities. This 'respectful' use of art in 'Observance', 'Chatham Vines', 'Stamping Uncertainty' and 'Concerning the Difference Between the Delights of Pleasure and True Happiness' has helped religious organisations reflect on their own practices and their use of spaces. The wine created by Newling through Chatham Vines caused the clergy and congregation of Rochester Cathedral to see their Easter Liturgy in a new way. This has been referred to in wider literature on the function of temporary works of art in churches to allow new insights to emerge into practice and belief. Davey's close collaboration with Newling and other artists disseminated through his writing (for example in 'Spinning' and 'Adrian Wiszniewski: A New Heaven and a New Earth') has also raised awareness of the impact that contemporary art as a temporary installation might have on religious practice, evidenced in the advisory report published by the Church of England on the commissioning of Art in Churches, for which Davey acted as an expert witness.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newling, J., 2013. Ecologies of Value, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, 26th January - 7th April 2013 (retrospective exhibition) [See REF2] 2. Davey, R., 2010, Spinning, Nature, Culture and the Spiritual in the work of John

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- Newling**, Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary, ISBN: 978 1 907421 06 8 [See REF2]
3. Judd, B., 2009. **Observance**, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 1 October 2009 (performance) [See REF2]
 4. Newling, J., 2008. **Make a Piano in Spain**, Wellcome Trust, London, 15 October – 14 November 2008 (installation and publication) [See REF2]
 5. Judd, B., 2010. **Concerning the Difference Between the Delights of Pleasure and True Happiness**. 14 Interventions. Swedenborg House, London, 3 March 2010 [See REF2]
 6. Davey, R., 2012. **Adrian Wiszniewski: A New Heaven and a New Earth**, Image-Art-Faith-Mystery, No.72, pp1-9, Spring 2012, [See REF2]
 7. Newling, J., 2004, '**Chatham Vines**', Exhibition, St Johns, Chatham, a Medway Regeneration Commission, 01/09/2004 - 08/04/2006 <http://www.john-newling.com/2009/05/chatham-vines-2004-st-johns-church-chatham/> <http://www.i-am-ai.net/work/chatham-vines/>

Grant funding for Newling's work has included £70,000 from ACE and the Henry Moore Foundation for the installation 'Stamping Uncertainty, 2004 that explored the nature of doubt and the struggle for faith expressed in the Methodist hymn book. 'Chatham Vines' received £20,000 (<http://francisknight.co.uk/projects/project-archived/chatham-vines-by-artist-John-Newling/>).

External peer review

The outputs 1-3 and 5-7 above have been independently reviewed in preparation for REF2014 at above 2*.

4. Details of the impact

Judd's, Newling's and Davey's research has had impacts on faith communities, a philosophical society, The Wellcome Trust and the general public. Judd's work facilitated the Swedenborg society's reflection on its purposes, use of its premises and engagement with its members and the public. By making the Wiccan community more visible, he has allowed broader society to re-evaluate the Wiccan religion. Davey's research contributed to the Church of England's guidelines on commissioning art, helping the Church to think beyond object-based and permanent art to value temporary and performative works. Newling's practice, is a prominent instance of such art that has also impacted on this change of perspective. His works in the public sphere, culminating in his commission from The Wellcome Trust, have impacted the participants and the commissioning bodies, changing The Wellcome Trust's view of art as a component of its public engagement on well-being and health.

These impacts are evidenced by references to them in a number of documents published by the Church of England, local authorities, and public bodies and personal testimony by commissioners and participants that points to their significance for individual lives.

Judd's impact is based on a curated exhibition at the Swedenborg House, London and a performance developed with practicing Wiccans at the Barbican Art Gallery. The former impacted on the Society's ability to reflect on itself, altering its cultural values by affecting the members' perception of their relationship to Swedenborg - 'the work positively challenged people with an orthodox Swedenborgian background to review their existing approach to the material'. It also impacted the Society's public profile, helping it to be a site for cultural exchange, evidenced in a wider range of individuals contacting the Society. Judd's work is a 'significant step' in transforming Swedenborg into a 'focal point for a range of cultural, literary and artistic perspectives' (**section 5, i**). The Barbican performance helped represent paganism as a positive, socially acceptable practice by bringing it into a mainstream art venue as a 'bridge' between the religion and mainstream society helping to make it 'more understandable and acceptable' (**section 5, ii**).

Davey's critical writing and Newling's art works have had specific impacts on commissioning and exhibiting art in churches. The UK Church community re-evaluated and promoted the value of housing site specific artwork in Churches and places of worship as a result of Newling's commissions. A 2010 book on art commissions in English churches, highlighted Newling's temporary installation, Chatham Vines (**section 5, iii**). Davey was an expert witness to a national

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panel of the Church of England that produced a good practice guide for commissioning new works of art in parish churches, providing 'particularly insightful response to the questions of how churches can be encouraged to think beyond the obvious traditional object based categories to a broader interaction with creative artists' (**section 5, iv**). His testimony drew on his critical practice, as well as his writing on art in the Church Times and on his role as art adviser on the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Advisory committee (1996-99). His particular input on temporary exhibitions ensured its inclusion as section in the final document (**section 5, xi**).

Impacting both on the participants and on the commissioning bodies Newling's art caused members of the public to consider what makes them happy, which has been identified as a component of well-being, their relationship to the environment and the place of uncertainty in their beliefs. They engaged significant numbers of people directly as follows: 'Make a Piano in Spain, 2008', 500 participants, Euston station; 'Noah Laboratory, 2009', 1000 newspapers and participants; 'Singing Uncertainty, 2010', 23 participants (**section 5, v, vi, vii**). Video documentation recorded the personal impact that this work had on participants, the impact being evident their comments.

The Wellcome Trust's mission is to use innovative means to bring the biomedical sciences to the general public and working with Newling influenced the Wellcome Collection's policy on the potential in participatory art works. According to the curator Newling's work '...encouraged us to carry on working with projects that involved a strong participatory aspect' (**section 5, x**), straddling the boundaries between art and science, and relevant to the relationship between mental and physical health, and culture. The curator also noted that the work will have 'generated a lot of discussion about how to answer the question, and about what 'well-being' means' (**section 5, x**) because of the feature of Newling's projects, which he supports with publications that collate the collected evidence.

Information about the projects has also been disseminated via local press and media through 19 articles in local newspapers each with a circulation of between 15,000 and 35,000 (Nottingham, Lincoln, Preston, Peterborough), two national newspapers (Telegraph and the Guardian) as well as 4 appearances on the BBC news. since 2008.

Newling's Preston Market project has influenced Preston city council to use the market more frequently for cultural events (**section 5, viii, ix**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- i. Correspondence with curator of the Swedenborg Society
- ii. Correspondence with Vice-President of the Pagan Federation.
- iii. DALY, E & MOFFATT, L (2010) Contemporary art in British churches. London: Wallspace. ISBN 978-0-9551485-1-4
- iv. Correspondence with Chair of the 2011 working party for The New Commissioning Guidelines
- v. Newling (2008) '**Make a Piano in Spain**'. First edition. Published by The Wellcome Trust. Hard back, 294 pages. Includes a forward by Ken Arnold and a contextual essay by Dr Jonathan Willett. ISBN- 978- 1- 84129- 079-9.
- vi. NEWLING, J., 2008. Make a Piano in Spain, Wellcome Trust, London, 15 October – 14 November 2008 (installation and publication)
- vii. Newling, J., (2008) 'The Noah Laboratory (constructing soil)', *The Collection, Lincoln*, January – April.
- viii. Newling (2008) '**Preston Market Mystery Project**' First edition, Harris Museum, UK. Hard back edition, Includes a forward essay by Bob Dickenson and a DVD of the live reading event and edited film of the project. ISBN 978-1-871575-27-9
- ix. Correspondence with Market Manager at Preston Market.
- x. Correspondence with Wellcome Trust.

- xi. Commissioning New Art for Churches: A Guide for Parishes and Artists. Archbishops' Council Cathedral and Church Buildings Division. (2010)
[http://www.leicester.anglican.org/site-includes/uploads/wygwam/Art,%20Commissioning%20new%20works%20\(CBC\).pdf](http://www.leicester.anglican.org/site-includes/uploads/wygwam/Art,%20Commissioning%20new%20works%20(CBC).pdf)

Individual Users / Beneficiaries

Judd's work opened up Swedenborg House to the possibility of this type of work. It was the first time performance had ever taken place in the building. As a result, the Society was able to view itself and view its space in a different way. This had a significant impact on the Society. Also, the work itself radically changed the way the Society's members perceive their own relationship to Swedenborg. It was a revelation for them to see Judd come to the society and reuse Swedenborg's text in the way he did, in Swedenborg House. It has therefore altered the cultural values of the Society.

The Society has a public profile, and it does connect with thousands of people. Judd's work helped positively change the relationship between the public and the Society – it helped the public see us in a new way. After the exhibition, the Society is being viewed much more as a place of cultural exchange, where ideas to do with Swedenborg are no longer restricted to the realm of a dry academic discourse, there has been an explosion of new types of discourse, such as performance. Judd's work opened up new ways of viewing Swedenborg's work and the building itself.

Interview with curator of the Swedenborg Society, on 19 April 2013.

'Richard provided a particularly insightful response to the questions of how churches can be encouraged to think beyond the obvious traditional object based categories to a broader interaction with creative artists. He was also a very useful balance in unapologetically arguing for robust theology alongside the market led forces of turning to avowedly successful secularist artists.'

Chair of the working party for The New Commissioning Guidelines

Because it took place at the Barbican, an established international gallery with extensive publicity reach, it brought Paganism, which often exists on the fringes of society, into the mainstream. I believe that because Judd's work was seen by a mainstream audience it has been a contributing factor to society thinking of paganism as a useful and beneficial religion, which is environmentally concerned, and a serious spiritual path.

Interview with Vice-President of the Pagan Federation, on 18 April 2013