

<b>Institution: Bath Spa University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment 34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b> Live Ceramics: exploring the processes of firing clay in live public experiments in museums and galleries.
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Harrison makes public sculptural installations using and referencing the processes of firing clay in live public experiments that draw on, and become metaphors for, socio-political events. A Residency at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&amp;A), London (October 2012-March 2013) enabled Harrison to bring the process and methods of these innovative time-based works (developed since 2002) to a larger public, including those in education at all levels and professional audiences, transforming attitudes, knowledge and understanding of the ceramics field, and contributing to significant economic impact via visitor numbers and practical workshops. The V&amp;A has c1.6million visitors in any six-month period, 50,000 school trips, and a substantial online audience.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Since his appointment to Bath Spa in 2002, Harrison has explored the limits for working with clay and how one can stretch the ideas, equipment and processes associated with conventional ceramics. He works with the direct transformation of clay from a raw state - liquid, plastic or solid - wrapped, dipped, sprayed, painted or cast onto industrial and domestic electrical systems (for example the elements of electric fires) heated, to unpredictable effect, in a series of process-based, live, public experiments, that reference the 'firing' in ceramics. Alongside this runs an awareness of social issues: the relation with the audience; the value of artefacts; references to popular music, working class buildings and places, and non-traditional audiences.</p> <p>Large-scale works have been presented for the V&amp;A (2006, 2012, 2013); Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima) (2009); Camden Arts Centre (2010); and the Jerwood Space (2011). Some works permanently changed the property of clay, others produced a temporary alteration, such as a change of colour, the generation of sound or the creation of an aroma. These explorations included 20 Whittington Street, Camden Arts Centre (2007) in which a carpet of chapatti bread dough and spices was heated until the smell became overpowering to the audience.</p> <p>Commissioned for Jerwood Open Makers 2011, <i>Float</i> was a culmination of experiments involving sound in conjunction with clay, including <i>Blue Monday/White Label</i> (Landmark, Bergen, Norway 2010) when hired disco equipment played raw and cooked clay copies of the New Order 12"; <i>Brother</i> (mima, 2009) wherein a record deck played Northern Soul tracks as a timeframe for the firing of an Egyptian paste and resistance-wire replica of Karl Marx's headstone; and <i>Grand</i>, (Permanent Gallery, Brighton 2008), a collaboration with a sonic artist mixing sound from piezo-electric transducers embedded in a block of clay as it was heated internally in a re-enactment of the bombing of the Grand Hotel, Brighton in 1984. Prior to 2008, Harrison received the 2003 Gasworks/Arts Council International Artists Fellowship, New Delhi; exhibited with Richard Wentworth and Barnaby Barford in Cordoba, Spain, 2005; with Roger Hiorns and Karen Russo at Camden Arts Centre; and presented <i>Last Supper</i>, Raphael Gallery, V&amp;A and <i>M25 London Orbital</i>, Sculpture Galleries, V&amp;A (both 2006).</p> <p>Related activities are to be found in contemporary art as well as ceramics, with Harrison citing Arte Povera, Kounellis, Anselmo, Merz and the auto-destructive art of Gustav Metzger as key references. School-related research includes that of Kidd (appointed 2007), with her performative painting machines and systems; the writings of Dr Graham McLaren (appointed 2004), e.g. a chapter in <i>Ceramic Millennium: Critical Writings on Ceramic History, Theory, and Art</i> (Clark, G., ed. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2006) and <i>Ethics, Education and the</i></p>

*Kitchen Table Potter* the Making Futures conference (Dartington Hall, 2011); and Dahn (appointed 1998) whose publications include a chapter in *'Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art'* (Buszek, M., ed. Duke University Press, 2011), editor of *Interpreting Ceramics*, who cites Harrison in *Proper Concerns*, The Studio Potter (Summer/Fall 2012, Vol. 40 No2, pp46-53).

### 3. References to the research

- 1) Harrison, K. (2009) *Brother*, included in *Possibilities and Losses: Transitions in Clay*, group exhibition with Twomey, C. (Curator), Sormin, L., Brownsword, N. Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima). 22 May - 16 August 2009. [Exhibitions and Performances]
- 2) Harrison, K. (2011) *Float: a clay sound system*, included in *Jerwood Makers Open* and tour. Jerwood Space, London, UK. 13 July - 28 August 2011. [Exhibitions and Performances]
- 3) Harrison, K. (2012) *Disruption Series: installations and performances as Ceramics Resident at the V&A*. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK. October 2012 - March 2013. [Exhibitions and Performances]
- 4) Harrison, K. (2013) *Bustleholme: a performance with Keith Harrison and Napalm Death*. De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, UK. 29 November 2013.

### 4. Details of the impact

In terms of **artistic impact**, Harrison's radical performances and live public experiments in the museum have extended the scope of ceramics as a discipline. By and through successive presentations of different kinds, he has developed a new kind of engagement with its museum and gallery public.

The **cultural impact** of the successive works undertaken by Harrison at the V&A and in other publicly funded museums and galleries nationally and internationally led to his appointment as Resident in Ceramics at the V&A in 2012-13 after a successful sequence of works produced for them in 2006 that interested the collection and museum context (*Last Supper* in the Raphael Gallery and *M25 London Orbital* in the Sculpture Galleries. The residency resulted in the development of four *Disruptions* (*Lucie Rie vs Grindcore*, *Circulation*, *Moon* and *Bustleholme*), each using his characteristic approach to the tools, materials and processes of the ceramicist, to performance and to the audience. These *Disruptions* were scheduled at lunchtime, as a riposte to the 'lunchtime recital' and something of a short shock to the institution of the Museum. Each piece has subsequently been included in further outcomes.

In *Lucie Rie vs Grindcore* (2012), potters' wheels were turned into record player turntables, and from May 2013 was included in the Crafts Council Touring Exhibition "Sound Matters" curated by the musician and writer David Toop.

*Circulation* (2012) in the Gorvey Lecture Theatre, a sound installation and performance piece was later performed as part of the series '*On Performance*' with Turner Prize Winner Mark Leckey at the Royal College of Art, February 2013, together with '*Lucie Rie vs Grindcore*'.

*Moon* (2013), made in the Hochhauser Auditorium, was a clay and performance recreation of Keith Moon's 'Exploding Drum Kit'; 100 people saw the live event '*Moon: a public demonstration*', which was filmed and made available on the V&A website for their on-line audience.

'*Bustleholme: Harrison and Napalm Death*' was (to be) a collaborative performance with the legendary grindcore band in the European Galleries, to be live-streamed on the V&A website

and the Napalm Death homepage. All of the preparatory drawings and models were shown in the V&A Residency Studio. However, as the Times' leader article (20/03/2013) explained: in *'Music To Crack Pots By'*, "the V&A may have scrapped one of the great artistic performances of our time'. As marriages between music and art go, it had the potential to be whispered in the same breath as Mussorgsky's *Pictures At An Exhibition*, celebrating the art of Viktor Hartmann, and as David Hockney's Glyndebourne stage set for *The Rake's Progress*. Who dares say that it might not, one day, have stood alongside Chagall's collaboration with the Ballets Russes, or been compared with Picasso's costumes and sets for *Parade*, the ballet Diaghilev staged in Paris in 1917, or with Sir Peter Blake's album cover for The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's*? Now we will never know. For a performance by the death metal band Napalm Death at London's Victoria and Albert Museum, in which the grindcore musicians were to collaborate with the in-house artist Keith Harrison, has been cancelled." Rescheduled for the De la Warr Pavillion in Bexhill-on-Sea (November 2013), the 500 tickets sold out in six hours.

Prior to his V&A Residency with its large visitor numbers (c1.6m), Harrison's piece *Brother* was included in the exhibition *Possibilities and Losses: Transitions in Clay*, 2009 at mima, Middlesbrough and helped the gallery achieve its largest exhibition attendance to date of 34,791. During the V&A Residency, one of the *Disruptions* was always on display in a preparatory or post-performance state and V&A visitors could see Harrison's work throughout the Residency. There were numerous secondary school and public visits during the weekly Open Studios and a two-day Design-lab workshop was arranged with a school from Slough and the Create Voice Youth Group at the V&A. Visits to Harrison's studio talks included groups from the RCA MA Ceramics; Goldsmiths BA Fine Art; Central St Martins BA Ceramic Design; Courtauld Institute MA Curating; RCA/V&A Curatorial Practice with Glenn Adamson; University of Westminster Research Department; Kingston University MA Museum Studies; Camberwell College of Art MA Designer Maker; and Galway College, BA Ceramics. Artistic and cultural impact is seen to take many forms and the full impact of these projects on other practitioners, including students and staff from the colleges listed above, is still to be fully determined.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 1) **Exhibition catalogue:** *Sound Matters* Touring Exhibition, Crafts Council, May 2013, pps18-21. [http://www.soundmatters.org.uk/content/documents/exhibition-guide/CC\\_SM\\_guide.pdf](http://www.soundmatters.org.uk/content/documents/exhibition-guide/CC_SM_guide.pdf)  
<http://www.soundmatters.org.uk/artist/keith-harrison>

*'Keith Harrison challenges preconceptions about the use and practice of ceramics. He is interested in the physical transformation of clay from a raw state, and the transformative qualities of sound. Using technology and sound in live public experiments, he attempts to permanently change the properties of clay or to produce a sensory alteration such as the generation of sound or an aroma.'*

- 2) **Book:** Hanaor, C., ed. *'Breaking the Mould; new approaches to ceramics'*, Black Dog Publishing, 2007. pps 110-113.

*'Keith Harrison is one of Britain's Leading contemporary ceramicists, pushing the boundaries of ideas and the techniques for creating ceramics by making visible what is normally a hidden part of the firing process.'*

- 3) **Eleventh Annual Dorothy Wilson Perkins Lecture** *'Out Of The Studio, Or, Do We Make Better Work In Unusual Conditions'*, Dr Tanya Harrod, Schein-Joseph International Museum of Ceramic Art at Alfred University, USA. 5 November 2009.  
[http://ceramicmuseum.alfred.edu/perkins\\_lect\\_series/harrod/](http://ceramicmuseum.alfred.edu/perkins_lect_series/harrod/)

*'We could, reasonably, reframe some of the hearty kiln building and firing events staged by*

*pottery as radical performance. One ceramicist, Keith Harrison, has reconfigured firing and made it a dramatic visual experience by doing away with the kiln - by plugging electrical elements directly into the clay. His time-based Last Supper firing in 2006 at the V&A took place in a space shared with Raphael's priceless tapestry cartoons. Again we find that element of danger as his piece emitted steam and smoke in the semi-sacred museum space.'*

- 4) **Book Chapter:** Cooper, E., *Contemporary Ceramics*, Thames and Hudson, 2009. ISBN: 978-0500514870. Chapter Four, *A Sense of Space*, cites Harrison's *Stage/Staged*, pps 230-231.

*'Not all site-sensitive installations are as controlled ..., but they can involve an element of drama and performance. The two installations at the Victoria and Albert Museum by Keith Harrison made inventive use of the space and location which, for their full effect, required the presence of an audience to realize his idea fully.'*

- 5) **Essay:** Adamson, G., *Outsider Artists*, pps 13-15 on 'Ill The Alien', included in Twomey, C., *Possibilities and Losses; transitions in clay*, mima/Crafts Council, 2010 (exhibition catalogue).

*'Keith Harrison is an unusual sort of artist. His public appearances tend to prompt questions such as 'What on earth is he doing here?' Or maybe even 'What is he doing here on earth?' Wildly obscure in form and conception, Harrison's practice has all the earmarks of an alien scientific study. Looking particularly at the technology that dictates so much about our lives. It is also deeply informed. He doesn't necessarily get things right (or at least as we would expect to find them), but his mis-readings have their own crazy sense.*

*...So to get back to the question 'What on earth is he doing here?' As it happens there is a good answer, Harrison has invented a new medium: live ceramics.*

- 6) **Review:** Adamson, G., *Big Art makes way for science and sound*, *Crafts Magazine Review*, September/October 2011.

*'The other... artists in the show...and Keith Harrison, might be described as eccentric technologists. Well-known in Ceramic circles for his live-firing performances involving electrical components and raw clay Harrison is a veritable ideas factory, but the forms of his work sometimes struggle to keep up. Jerwood support gave him the chance to do something truly magnificent. ...In its physical and imaginative scale, Harrison's work (entitled Float) dominates the Jerwood show. It's the best thing he's done and wouldn't have seemed out of place in Venice - perhaps sailing down the Grand Canal.'*

**Individuals to corroborate the artistic and cultural impact in the field:**

- 7) Former Head of Research and current Senior Curator of Contemporary Ceramics, Ceramics and Glass Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.
- 8) Senior Curator, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art
- 9) Director, Jerwood Charitable Foundation
- 10) Head of Live Programming, De La Warr Pavilion