

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution:</b> Canterbury Christ Church University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management (36)
<b>Title of case study:</b> Creating New Forms of Political Expression Through Practice-based Research in the Arts
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>

The impact being described in this case study relates to the ways in which the submitting Unit's research on the political dimensions of creative arts practice has produced cultural benefits for arts practitioners, audiences, and cultural organisations. Specifically, the underpinning research has led to two main areas of impact: firstly, the creation of new forms of artistic, social and political expression through practice-based research in the arts, and secondly, the provision of expert advice on cultural politics and policy to European NGOs and campaign groups.

<b>2. Underpinning research</b>
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The underpinning research produced by the submitting Unit encompasses practiced-based outputs in film and video, creative writing for stage and screen, and sculpture, as well as text-based outputs in film and sound studies. This body of research emerges from the Unit's engagement with theory-practice interchange in creative and media arts. This research specialism has been supported and developed through the establishment in 2011 of *theory-practice.net*, a research initiative set up by the Department of Media, Art and Design at CCCU to support collaborative investigation of theory-practice interchange in creative media production, and to which the three researchers featured in this case study have been key contributors. A distinctive feature of the research produced by **Stefanovski**, **T. Long** and **Birtwistle** is the shared critical concern with the relationship between poetics, creative practice and cultural politics. Although working in different media, each has produced research that investigates the political potential of creative practice, paying particular attention to the ways in which formal and stylistic techniques might be understood, developed or re-articulated within a political framework. Within this context two main areas of research activity have created impact: (1) practice-based research that achieves impact through performances, screenings, exhibitions and broadcasts; and (2) text-based research that achieves impact through subsequent creative practice.

**Stefanovski** (Senior Lecturer, 2002-) has an established international reputation as a writer for stage, TV and cinema. Since 1974 **Stefanovski** has been investigating issues of Balkan identity, cultural history and politics through his creative writing. In plays such as *Everyman* (2003) and *The Demon of Debar Maalo* (2006) **Stefanovski** has examined the social and political changes Eastern Europe has undergone since the collapse of communism, and the cultural and political differences that distinguish Eastern and Western European experiences of modernity. In addition to work for the theatre **Stefanovski** has also published essays and articles examining the cultural politics of identity. This latter body of work investigates the identity of small nations and their languages, examined within both European and global contexts, paying particular attention to cultural policy and the politics of cultural translation (e.g. *A Tale from the Wild East* [2004], *Chinese Whispers* [2010], *A Quarrel with Kafka* [published in *Kavga so Kafka i drugi eseji*, Skopje. Tabernakul, 2010]).

**Birtwistle** (Senior Lecturer, 1997-2002; Principal Lecturer 2002-2013; Reader 2013-) has been researching film sound, artists' film and video, and sound art since 1999. At the core of **Birtwistle's** interdisciplinary research is a concern with the political dynamics of sound in both sonic and audiovisual forms of art. His theoretical work in this area examines the ways in which radical poetics of sound, and sound-image relations, have been theorised and understood - particularly in relation to modernist traditions of art practice. In addition to published outputs **Birtwistle** has developed this area of research through creative practice in sound art and video, resulting in performances at festivals, live events, film screenings, exhibitions and radio broadcasts. This body of work draws directly on the creative resources of the art historical archive examined in **Birtwistle's** theoretical research, often rearticulating and redeploying elements of the modernist tradition in ways that seek to investigate or reanimate their political potential.

**T. Long** (Senior Lecturer, 2003-) has undertaken practice-based research that explores the relationship between art theory and creative practice through the production of artworks in mixed-media installation, sculpture and drawing. The political dimension of his research lies specifically in its investigation of Antonin Artaud's notion of the *subjectile*, and how this concept radically

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challenges and destabilises dominant notions of identity. **Long's** artworks draw on the concept of the *subjectile* to interrogate the ways in which subject and object operate together in art, undermining the distinction commonly drawn between the two, and thus challenging the spectator's understanding of subjectivity. Employing assemblage and carving techniques, **Long's** work draws on anthropological and modernist themes and forms, whilst seeking to relocate these forms within a contemporary context.

**3. References to the research**

**1. Creative writing - Stefanovski, G. (2010) 'The Demon of Debar Maalo: a play for the theatre' in Stefanovski, G. *Sobrani dramati* 3 [Collected Plays Vol. 3]. Skopje, Macedonia: Tabernakul.**

Evidence of quality: the play was commissioned by Macedonia's leading theatre, Dramski Teatar, Skopje. Productions of the play have received favourable reviews from theatre critics in national newspapers: *Utrinski vesnik* [Skopje] (26 Nov 2006); *Vest* [Skopje] (27 Nov 2006); *Novinar* [Sofia] (6 June 2011); *Dnevnik, Sled 5* [Sofia] [6 June 2011].

**2. Creative writing - Stefanovski, G. (2010) 'Everyman: an immorality play'. Script published in Stefanovski, G. *Sobrani dramati* 3 [Collected Plays Vol. 3]. Skopje, Macedonia: Tabernakul.**

Evidence of quality: commissioned by Theatre Mélange (UK) and written while Stefanovski was recipient of an Arts Council of England Resident Writer Award (September 2001 – March 2002). First performed at Riverside Studios in London, which has an international reputation for both quality and innovation in the arts.

**3. Creative writing - Stefanovski, G. (2004) 'A Tale from the Wild East', *Alter Ego: Twenty Confronting Views on The European Experience*, ed. Guido Snel. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp.21-27.**

Evidence of quality: published by a reputable academic press, this essay has subsequently been published in two further peer-reviewed publications: *Theatre and Performance in Eastern Europe*, ed. Dennis Barnett and Arthur Skelton, (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2008) and *Theatre, Performance and Identity in Small Nations*, ed. Steve Blandford (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012).

**4. Book - Birtwistle, A. (2010) *Cinesonica: Sounding film and video*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.**

Evidence of quality: Manchester University Press is the third largest university press in England, with an international reputation for the quality of its research monographs and journals. The book has received favourable reviews in the online journals *Undercut* (No. 53, Summer 2011), The American Library Association publication *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries* (Sept. 2011) and *The Journal of Sonic Studies* (Vol. 3, 2012).

**5. Artefact - Long, T. (2008) 'Two drawings from the series What Can A Body Be?', exhibited at Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition, 9 June - 17 August 2008.**

Evidence of quality: works exhibited at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition are selected through a rigorous peer-review process.

Outputs 4 and 5 are listed in REF2. All other outputs can be supplied on request.

**4. Details of the impact**

**Stefanovski's** work has created impact by advancing understanding and appreciation of European cultural identity, history and politics through the creation new forms of social and political expression. The impact of **Stefanovski's** work, which examines the relationship between national narratives and European identity, lies also in the quality and originality of his creative practice. Both of the above were recognised in the award of the 2007 Vilenica Literary Prize, given by an international jury to an author from Central Europe for outstanding achievement in the field of literary creativity and essay writing. The impact that **Stefanovski's** creative practice has had on the cultural environment in Macedonia has been articulated by the Romanian poet Ioana Ieronim, who writes, "He is the one who introduced the post-modern paradigm to Macedonia years before it got to be full-blown there and elsewhere, and to be called so. His creativity, his electrifying energy and his artistically fearless, challenging attitude had the power to change his country's cultural landscape" ('Un dramaturg macedonean: Goran Stefanovski și poveștile lui din Estul sălbatic', *LiterNet.ro*, March 2009). The specifically political impact of **Stefanovski's** work is articulated and evidenced by comments from writer and critic Natasa Avramovska, who writes, "His dramatic

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works allow for the voice(s) of the other, the silenced Europe, to resonate at the center of the European cultural capitals. With that, the interculturality of these theatre projects (performed at all levels of the production), allows for the articulation of the mutual demonisation that generates the imagological, ideological and geopolitical difference which exists between Europe and the Balkans" ('Europe on the Contemporary Macedonian Dramatic Stage', *Slavia Meridionalis*, Issue no.12, 2012). The reach of **Stefanovski's** work is evidenced by the number performances and publications his plays have received. In 2008-12 full productions of *The Demon of Debar Maalo* were staged in Serbia, Bulgaria and France, and in 2008-13 **Stefanovski's** play *Everyman* was performed as staged readings in Romania and the Czech Republic. During the same period three translations of the *Demon of Debar Maalo* were published, and the script of *Everyman* was published three times. Through these productions and publications **Stefanovski's** practice-based research reaches audiences and communities of arts practitioners in Europe and beyond.

The radical dynamic of **Long's** work, and thereby its political potential, is described by the Royal Academician who selected two drawings by **Long** for inclusion in the 2008 Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition: ". . . at the core [of Long's work] is fusion of draughtsmanship and subversion. In an exhibition like the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, a bastion of British complacency, I was keen to introduce an alternative view of what depicting an image, a human form, can be" (email, 16 July 2013). The reach of this work is evidenced by audience numbers for the exhibitions in which **Long's** pieces have been shown. The Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition, at which **Long** exhibited in both 2008 and 2010, receives almost 200,000 visits each year (source: Royal Academy of Arts website). In addition, **Long's** work in the 2008 exhibition reached an audience beyond the gallery through being featured in a BBC2 *Culture Show* special on the Summer Exhibition (TX 12 June 2008). His practice-based research has also achieved impact through its contribution to the enrichment of cultural life in East Kent. In addition to exhibiting work in galleries (Sidney Cooper Gallery, Canterbury 19-31 July 2008; Herbert Read Gallery, Canterbury 2-14 March 2010; The Old Lookout, Broadstairs 14-19 June 2013), **Long** has presented his practice-based research in drawing through public performance as part of the Free Range series of experimental arts events held at the Veg Box Café, Canterbury ('The Drawing Machine: a Relay of Joy', 14 March 2013). Described by music blogger Matthew Watkins as "an extraordinary event", this piece was performed live to an audience of 40 (the maximum for this venue), while videos of the work received 247 plays on vimeo.com by 31 July 2013.

**Birtwistle's** work in sound and video, which investigates the radical potential of modernist poetics in contemporary art and performance, creates impact through the generation of new ways of thinking about the often-neglected role played by sound in cinema and the visual arts. His research on radical modernist poetics and sound-image relations, examined in his book *Cinesonica* (2010), has also reached audiences for film, poetry and music in the South East region through public performances. In 2012-13 **Birtwistle** curated and performed in three public events organised as part of the Free Range Series, mentioned above. In the first two of these (29 March 2012 and 21 March 2013), **Birtwistle** worked with musicians and performers to produce live realisations of Dadaist films and poetry, combining film projection, spoken word and musical performance to create a form of live cinema. The third of these events (25 April 2013) featured new video works by **Birtwistle**, along with existing documentary and information films, each presented with live musical accompaniment and spoken word performance. These events create impact by presenting the cultural heritage of Dada cinema and the documentary tradition in new ways, creating new forms of expression that combine live music and spoken word with the projected image. The political dimension of this work lies in ways in which the modernist archive has been rearticulated by **Birtwistle** within a contemporary context, reactivating the radical potential of forms of expression originally developed in the first half of the last century. With the venue's maximum audience capacity of 40, these live performances have reached a regional audience of 120, and through video recordings made available online have also gained an international audience, having received 1,422 views by 31 July 2013 from viewers in over 60 countries. As contributors to the Free Range Series, the work of both **Long** and **Birtwistle** can be seen to have had an impact on the cultural environment of the local area. The series was awarded the Cultural Pioneer Award at the 2013 Canterbury Culture Awards, the Chair of Judges commenting, "These events are a rich and creative mix of music, film, poetry, technology and even culinary experimentation. They cross disciplines, blending performances to create cultural experiences that amaze, inspire and excite" (email 21 June 2013).

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**Birtwistle's** practice-based work in sonic art has also reached audiences outside the academy through performances (Camden Arts Centre, 2013), broadcasts and diffusion at festivals (*Fabrica Europe 08*, Florence, 2008; Radio Papesse, Sienna, 2008; *38<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Music and Electronic Art*, Bourges, 2008; Contemporary Museum, Baltimore, 2011). Through these broadcasts and festivals **Birtwistle** participates in the international community of sonic arts practitioners, thereby reaching audiences for his work outside the UK.

Research produced by **Stefanovski** has also created impact through the provision of expert advice to European NGOs and campaign groups through his contribution to public discussion of arts policy in the EU. In this way **Stefanovski's** research creates impact through his membership of European cultural agencies. As an elected member of the European Cultural Parliament (2006-present), whose purpose is to strengthen the role of cultural and artistic ideas in the debate on the future of Europe, **Stefanovski** has contributed to public discourse and campaigning on arts policy and practice in the EU. For example, **Stefanovski** participated in the 2009 session held in Gothenburg, one outcome of which was a resolution sent to the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and the EU commission, in support of cultural institutions and the arts community of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A second outcome of the same session was a statement on unjust court proceedings against two Russian curators facing legal action for organising the controversial 2007 *Forbidden Art* exhibition in Moscow. **Stefanovski** has also contributed to public discourse on arts policy in the EU through his involvement with Culture Action Europe's *We Are More* campaign, which champions the role played by culture and heritage in developing European democracy and stresses the importance of public funding for arts and culture. **Stefanovski's** *My Quarrel with Kafka* was commissioned to open and close the campaign's launch event held in Brussels in October 2010, serving as a key reference point for discussions that took place during the one-day conference that followed.

The research produced by the Unit can thus be seen to engage with a range of national and international beneficiaries, including theatre companies and cultural organisations, as well as those who attend performances and exhibitions.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact****Reports, reviews, web links or other documented sources of information**

Reviews of the Paris production of *The Demon of Debar Maalo*, 2012:

(<http://www.sildav.org/ressources/revue-de-presse>)

'We Are More' interview given by Goran Stefanovski at the launch of the EU cultural policy campaign by Culture Action Europe, Brussels, 2010:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rwR-QudT4k>

International Literary Prize Vilenica 2007 Winner - Goran Stefanovski:

[http://www.vilenica.si/2007/ENG/Goran\\_Stefanovski\\_en.html](http://www.vilenica.si/2007/ENG/Goran_Stefanovski_en.html)

European Cultural Parliament: 2009 – Gothenburg Session:

<http://www.kulturparlament.com/sessions/2009-gothenburg/>

Free Range website:

<http://www.free-range.co/>

The Culture Awards – presented by Canterbury for Culture:

<http://www.thecultureawards.org/>

The Spring (Matthew Watkins' blog - 'Last Free Range for a while', Friday April 26 2013):

<http://soundsfromthespring.blogspot.co.uk/>

**Individual users/beneficiaries who could be contacted by the REF team**

Artistic Director, Maison d'Europe et d'Orient, Paris (re. the impact of Stefanovski's writing)

**(Contact I.D.1).**

Director, Free Range, Canterbury (re. impact of Birtwistle and Long's performances and events)

**(Contact I.D.2).**

Academician, Royal Academy of Arts, London (re. impact of Long's artwork) **(Contact I.D.3).**

Secretary General, European Cultural Parliament, Berlin (re. impact of Stefanovski's expert advice)

**(Contact I.D.4).**

Former Secretary-General, Culture Action Europe, Brussels (re. impact of Stefanovski's expert

advice) **(Contact I.D.5).**