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| Institution: University of Nottingham |
| Unit of Assessment: UoA 34 |
| Title of case study: Changing understanding of British Land Art |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Nicholas Alfrey's work has led to a reassessment of modern British art of the 1960s and 1970s concerned with landscape and the environment. This has been achieved through his curatorship of exhibitions at the Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham (2009) and at Southampton Art Gallery, the latter under the aegis of Arts Council England (2013), and their subsequent press reception. Alfrey has selected work for these exhibitions by leading British artists never before displayed and he has therefore increased the visibility of this material. Through his activities, the dominance of American Land Art has been questioned. In a related strand of activity, Alfrey's Land Art Network, funded by the AHRC, has initiated a dialogue between different generations of contemporary artists and created new networks and interaction between art historians, museum and gallery curators, artists and writers. The careers of individual artists, notably Katie Paterson, have been transformed by their participation in the Network. The institutions concerned have thereby invested and promoted Land Art as part of their exhibition strategy, which has been linked to Arts Council England's historic promotion of British Land Art and the more recent revival of Southampton Art Gallery.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research for Alfrey's work on landscape and geography concerns the use of cartography by land artists, and it addresses the relationship between Land Art, the British landscape tradition and the cultures of geographical locations such as Exmoor and Dartmoor. Alfrey joined the University of Nottingham in 1977, where he is currently Associate Professor, and this phase of his research began in the early 1990s. He laid its foundations in two exhibitions that he curated or co-curated, <i>Mapping the Landscape</i> at the Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham (1993), and <i>Art of the Garden</i> (Alfrey with Stephen Daniels and Martin Postle) at Tate Britain (2004) (3.1).</p> <p>More recently, his research has been delivered through the meetings and events held by the Land Art Network that he set up in 2006 with AHRC funding, working in collaboration with Dr Joy Sleeman (Slade School of Fine Art). The Network set out to explore how and why landscape became the focus of innovatory practice in the 1960s and it has aimed to stimulate the renewal of interest in it amongst contemporary artists. Alfrey brought the longer, historical perspective to the research, situating Land Art in relation to the romantic tradition. Sleeman's contribution was more exclusively focused on contemporary practice.</p> <p>This has led to two exhibitions, the first being <i>Earth-Moon-Earth</i> at the Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham (June-August 2009) which drew on the idea that the moon was a context in which Land art might be understood (3.2). This was a stepping-stone to a more ambitious proposal, <i>Uncommon Ground. Land Art in Britain 1966-1979</i> which was accepted for funding by Arts Council England and opened at Southampton Art Gallery (May-August 2013). Beyond the current REF period it will travel to the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; the Mead Art Gallery, University of Warwick; and the Longside Gallery at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2013-14). It is the first comprehensive historical exhibition of British Land Art (3.3).</p> <p>A key publication has been written in collaboration between Alfrey and Sleeman (3.4), and they are joint curators (with Tufnall) of the Arts Council exhibition (3.3). Other strands of their research have helped document Land Art through a series of interviews with key artists. One with David Lamelas and Katie Paterson formed the basis of the <i>Earth-Moon-Earth</i> catalogue (3.2). This material was further developed when Alfrey and other members of the Network made a significant contribution to the Landscape and Environment conference at Tate in June 2010 (3.5). The proceedings were published online in <i>Tate Papers</i> (3.6) an issue co-edited by Alfrey with Professor Stephen Daniels (Director of the AHRC Landscape and Environment Programme, the larger context for the Network).</p> <p>Subsequently, Alfrey was invited to contribute to the exhibition <i>Verstand und Gefühl. Landschaft und die zeitgenössische Romantik</i> (Springhornhof, Neuenkirchen, 2013), indicating the international reach of this research project.</p> |

3. References to the research

A. Curating. Exhibitions in national institutions with international reputations, with accompanying catalogues

- (1). *Art of the Garden*, curated by Nicholas Alfrey, Stephen Daniels and Martin Postle, Tate Britain, London (3 June-30 August, 2004). Reviewed in the *Observer* (6 June 2004); *Daily Telegraph* (9 June 2004); *London Review of Books* (8 July 2004). The catalogue is available on request. For the exhibition see <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/art-garden>.
- (2). *Earth-Moon-Earth*, curated by Nicholas Alfrey and Joy Sleeman, Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham (20 June-9 August, 2009). An exhibition portfolio which contains the exhibition catalogue is included in REF2.
- (3). *Uncommon Ground. Land Art in Britain 1966-1979*, Arts Council Touring Exhibition curated by Nicholas Alfrey, Ben Tufnell, and Joy Sleeman, Southampton Art Gallery (10 May-3 August 2013). It will later be shown outside the current REF period at National Museum of Wales, Cardiff (28 September 2013-5 January 2014); Mead Art Gallery, University of Warwick (18 January-6 March 2014); Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park (5 April-15 June 2014). Reviewed in *The Independent*, 11 May 2013; *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 2013; *Art Monthly*; June 2013), *Financial Times* (11 June 2013), see 5.1. The catalogue is included in REF2. For the exhibition as an event see <http://www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk/showExhibition.do?id=274>.

B. Peer-reviewed essays

- (4). (with Joy Sleeman), 'Framing the outdoors: landscape and Land Art in Britain, 1973-77' essay in *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, 29, Nos 1-2, 2009, pp. 83-94. DOI: 10.1080/14601170701807054. Included in REF2.
- (5). 'Ten Miles on Exmoor', *Tate Papers*, Art and Environment, Issue 17 (11 May 2012). Listed in REF2. URL: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/ten-miles-on-exmoor>.
- (6). (co-edited with Stephen Daniels and Joy Sleeman), 'To the Ends of the Earth: Art and Environment', *Tate Papers*, Art and Environment, Issue 17 (11 May 2012). URL: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/ends-earth-art-and-environment>.

C. Funding

- (7). Grant title: Land Art and the Culture of Landscape, 1967-1977. Principal investigator: Nicholas Alfrey. Sponsor: AHRC. PI report graded 'outstanding' (ref. NWLE/ PID Number: 8012/ AID Number. 120840). Period of the grant: 01/10/2006 to 31/10/2008. Value: £27,760. Document available on request (5.1).

4. Details of the impact

The activity described here builds on Alfrey's career-long interaction with British artists and photographers, the British landscape tradition, and national galleries and museums. The AHRC network that he founded and in which he was Principal Investigator (5.1), as described above, allowed him to develop these links into a sustained collaboration between participants in the Network (Sleeman, Tufnell., Lamelas, Paterson, etc.) This **generated a critical reconsideration of the production, display and reception of Land Art in Britain**. The network also created an opportunity for contemporary engagement with the same material, stimulating new artistic practice and the re-staging of seminal work by David Lamelas from the late 1960s (5.2).

Exhibitions curated by Alfrey at Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham (1993, 2009), Tate Britain (with Daniels and Martin Postle, 2004) and Arts Council England (with Sleeman and Tufnell, 2013) **increased the visibility of modern British art concerned with landscape and the environment**. This visibility can be measured most recently through the press reception for *Uncommon Ground* (5.3). Richard Cork, writing in the *Financial Times* (11 June 2013), said that the exhibition 'proves that Land art can be made in an inexhaustible variety of settings. The sense of freedom is exhilarating at every turn' (5.3). This press attention reflects a demonstrable breakthrough for an area of art practice that has previously not always been easily accessible to many viewers, and forms part of a wider critical assessment of Land Art in which Alfrey's work has played a pivotal role.

This critical reassessment can be demonstrated by widespread engagement from the press (both

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broadsheet and art historical), focussing on **the new and comprehensive definition of Land Art that has been brought to public attention**: Charles Darwent, in a review of *Uncommon Ground* (*Independent*, 11 May 2013), admitted to having dismissed British Land Art as long ago as 2003 but added that that the exhibition showed that he was wrong to have done so (5.3). The most nuanced discussion of the issues involved was made by Andrew Wilson in *The Burlington Magazine* (August, 2013) who wrote that the exhibition raises 'the problem of defining what Land Art might mean in British art of the 1960s and 1970s' (5.3). Mark Hudson in the *Daily Telegraph* (20 May 2013) found that 'The message of this survey of British land art – the most comprehensive to date – is that the British variant...was not only more domestically scaled, but a lot quirkier than its American counterpart' (5.3).

Alfrey's national profile and Network was a catalyst for the display or re-staging of **rarely or never seen art from the 1960s**. In the case of some established artists, his research has led a critical reassessment of their contribution in the 1960s. Impromptu exhibitions were arranged by the Network and in them the artists themselves led the discussion, among them was John Hilliard who presented his little-known landscape work of the 1960s (5.1). This led to its display for the first time in Alfrey's exhibition *Uncommon Ground* (3.3). Paul Carey-Kent wrote in *Art Monthly* (June 2013) that 'What struck me most...was the amount of relatively unfamiliar work [in the exhibition]' (5.3). Another key event was the 're-performance' of a seminal film made in 1969 by David Lamelas (one of the pioneering figures in conceptual art) at the Camden Arts Centre and at the National Film Theatre in 2009 (5.2).

Alfrey's research and related exhibitions and network activities have been **instrumental in inspiring and supporting new artistic practice**. This was stimulated by the bringing together of artists originally associated with Land Art with those working with aspects of its legacy. Emerging artists who participated in the Land Art Network were thereby brought into direct contact with established practitioners. These can be defined in three groups. The first contained key figures from among the original protagonists, in particular John Hilliard, Bruce McLean, and David Lamelas. The second included Garry Fabian Miller (b. 1957) and other artists who emerged at the end of the 1970s who showed their work in relation to that of the first generation of Land artists in *Uncommon Ground* (2013). The third was represented by a much younger artist, Katie Paterson (b. 1981) who shared the *Earth-Moon-Earth* exhibition in Nottingham (2009) with Lamelas (b. 1946) (3.2, 5.4). Paterson participated in a discussion session at the Slade which led to her collaboration with Alfrey on the exhibition *Earth-Moon-Earth*, and, in turn, to her re-creation of an installation for it (3.2). Her work was subsequently represented by the Haunch of Venison Gallery, whose former curator (Tufnell) has been a key figure in the Network (5.1): 'meeting Ben Tufnell...led on to me being represented by Haunch of Venison the best gallery that I have ever worked with' (5.5). Her current visibility can be measured in a piece by Brian Dillon in *The Guardian* (6 April 2012) which discusses *Earth-Moon-Earth* as a key early work (5.6). This activity would not have happened without the fertile environment created through Alfrey's long association with British landscape art, its practitioners and gallerists, and the AHRC Network. The ensuing dialogue cut across assumptions about historical and contemporary practice. It also created space for a new dialogue and sharing of knowledge between generations.

The network also led to **ideas being shared across different professional boundaries** through interaction between these artists, art historians, museum and gallery curators, publishers and writers. These came from a range of organizations including universities, museums, commercial galleries and small presses (5.1, 5.7). Amongst them were participants from Tate Britain (Andrew Wilson); the Henry Moore Institute and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (Jon Wood); galleries in the private sector, notably the Haunch of Venison (Ben Tufnell) as well as independent critics and writers such as Patrick Eyres (Managing Editor and publisher, New Arcadian Press). Many of these meetings involved presentations by participants or invited keynote speakers (5.1, 5.7). Crucially, installations of work by new and emerging artists such as Susan Collins, Simon Faithfull and Rebecca Birch, who were *not* themselves part of the Network, were arranged and discussed through its activities (5.1).

Alfrey has made British Land Art **accessible to a range of audiences beyond a specialist art historical community through public programme activity**:

- Amongst the activities generated by *Earth-Moon-Earth* in 2009 (attendance of 3,000) was a

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'Space Week' involving local primary and secondary schools as well as staff from the science departments at the university of Nottingham (5.8). The total number of school children attending was 288 with 35 adults (5.8). The activities were seen as crucial in the way the university connects to the regional community.

- The 're-performance' by the Network of a seminal film made in 1969 by David Lamelas at the Camden Arts Centre (not ticketed) and at the National Film Theatre (ticketed), made this material accessible to core members of these institutions' audiences (5.2).
- Feedback from the *Re-visiting Land Art* Symposium held at the University of Southampton (11 May 2013), described how many participants had been stimulated to find out more about Land Art, and to think about issues to do with the environment (5.9).
- After seeing the exhibition, feedback from an Adult Study Day at *Uncommon Ground* on 20 July 2013 changed the way some participants thought about Land Art, and helped them recognise an identifiable *British Land Art* (5.9). One respondent wrote that the experience had "provoked participation among participants. It has also made me start thinking about the use of imagination in the changes to landscape and urban settings" (5.9).

Arts Council investment in *Uncommon Ground*, and its decision to let the exhibition be staged first in Southampton, is evidence that Alfrey has contributed to the decision by a major national institution to **promote Land Art as part of its exhibition strategy** (5.10) Furthermore, the exhibition is part of a revival of Southampton Art Gallery and recognition of its outstanding collection of Land Art. The Education Pack created by the Arts Council for the exhibition (5.11) shows its commitment to the value of this material for a wide audience. In addition, the exhibition complements the Arts Council's historic promotion of Land Art in its own collection, as described in the catalogue (3.3, pp. 108-109). The decision of the John Hansard Gallery at the University of Southampton to present the exhibition *Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt: England and Wales 1969* (10 May-17 August 2013) alongside the exhibition at the City Art Gallery, suggests the ripple effect of Alfrey's and Sleeman's work (5.9).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. AHRC, Networks and Workshops, Final FEC Report: Land Art and the Culture of Landscape, 1967-1977, 29 September 2009, ref. NWLE/ PID Number: 8012/ AID Number. 120840 (available on file).
2. *Environments Reversal Revisited: A project to revisit the 1969 Camden exhibition with David Lamelas and Ivor Abrahams in collaboration with Jayne Wilton dedicated to the groundbreaking work of Peter Carey. Curated by Joy Sleeman and Nicholas Alfrey*, Camden Arts Centre, 2009 (22 page booklet documenting the event, available on file)
3. Press reception of *Uncommon Ground. Land Art in Britain 1966-1979* (dossier available on file)
4. Interview with David Lamelas by Fay Nicolson, Nottingham Visual Arts, 8 July 2009. URL: <http://www.nottinghamvisualarts.net/articles/200907/outside-frame-interview-david-lamelas> (pdf available on file)
5. Statement by Katie Paterson, 26 September 2013 (available on file)
6. Brian Dillon, 'Katie Paterson, the cosmicomical artist', *The Guardian* (6 April 2012). URL <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/apr/06/katie-paterson-cosmicomical-artist> (pdf available on file)
7. Landscape and Environment website. URL: (<http://www.landscape.ac.uk/landscape/research/networkworkshops/landartandthecultureoflandscape%2c1967-77.aspx>) (pdf available on file)
8. Documentation for 'Space Week' at Lakeside Arts Centre, 2009 (dossier on file)
9. Public engagement events connected to *Uncommon Ground* at Southampton Art Gallery, including gallery questionnaires, an adult workshop (20 July 2013), and the *Re-visiting Land Art* symposium, University of Southampton (11 May 2013). Spreadsheet of material and attached files gathered by Helen Wainwright (dossier available on file)
10. Statement by Senior Curator, Arts Council England, 14 October 2013 (available on file)
11. Education pack for *Uncommon Ground* created by Arts Council England (dossier available).