

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Teesside University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 32		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Placing Disability Arts and Heritage Centre Stage		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2008 to 2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Simon McKeown	Reader	Sep 2003 to present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2013 to December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

**1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)**

Directly tackling the lack of disability representation within the arts and mainstream media, artistic research at Teesside University has sought to ensure that the creativity of those with disabilities as well as their histories and their stories are presented “centre stage”. This work has generated new audiences through new forms of artistic expression at popular and accessible venues (Southbank Centre, Channel 4), documented and preserved forgotten histories (Beamish Museum, BBC) and shaped approaches to arts management and heritage preservation in both the UK and Ireland, altering the level of ambition for disability arts within civil society partner organisations (Cork City Council, Arts Council Ireland).

**2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)**

15% (1 Billion) of the world’s population has an impairment, with over 135 million people in the World Health Organisation (WHO) European Region having a long-standing health problem or impairment leading to disability (as identified by WHO). Yet disabled people are often invisible within shared cultural spaces and excluded from cultural production and consumption. Artistic research at the Centre for Culture and Creativity at Teesside University has sought to elevate and make visible marginalised disabled people and their histories. Using art and design along with technology as a focal point to drive engagement, the works of McKeown have brought together creative and curatorial practice with historical and social research to challenge cultural assumptions and societal views of normality and difference.

In works such as *All for Claire* (2010) and *Motion Disabled* (2009), video gaming techniques and motion capture technologies are combined to provide insight into motion and disability as well as concepts of power and provenance [3.1, 3.2]. These works focus the viewer’s attention on perceptions of normality and difference that exist within contemporary culture. *All for Claire* is an animation that examines themes of power, control and rejection and seeks to challenge hegemonic discourse about disability. Working with internationally recognised dancer and disabled performer Claire Cunningham, motion capture technology was used to create an animation that effectively realised Cunningham’s unique movements. In *Motion Disabled* (MD) (2009) and the revised Paralympic edition *Motion Disabled Unlimited* (MDU) (2012), a large inflatable sculpture was coupled with a series of motion capture videos to focus the viewer’s attention on the disabled body and disabled movement. Animated short films were created by recording the physical movements of fourteen physically impaired people with conditions such as Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy and Brittle Bones (MD) and eight Paralympians including Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson (MDU). By removing all identifying features from the digital avatars, the viewers’ attention is focused on physicality and movement. *Motion Disabled* rewrites a narrative of impaired movement that is rooted in difficulty and disadvantage to one focused on power, strength, and creativity.

*Cork Ignite* (2015) and *We Are Still Here* (2018) build on these works, but with the focus now on how large-scale public events can be harnessed to further challenge perceptions of disability and disability arts [3.3, 3.4]. In these dynamic and celebratory interventions, public and participants are enabled to see and present themselves, and their social relations, equitably. By

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presenting disability arts within a civic mainstream space, these works confront the perceived low value definitions of art practice for people with disabilities that are all too often marginalised. Cork Ignite sought to transform conventional event production and consumption through an inclusive collaborative practice that ensured disability arts and participant voices were placed centre stage [3.3]. In We Are Still Here this research was furthered through coproduced work with people with learning disabilities [3.4]. Through a research process that combined arts practice with event management and civic debate, We Are Still Here supported cocreators and participants to become active cultural producers and generate a large-scale public event.

Commissioned by Arts Admin for 14-18 NOW and Channel 4, Ghosts (2014) is a video installation that highlights the narrative of global impairment in World War 1 (WW1) that has been largely lost in modern commemoration and museum representations [3.5]. Through historical/archival research into impairment caused by WW1 and the study of contemporaneous imagery and music, McKeown challenged the singularity of global war commemoration culture with its customary focus on surviving heroes. Again, drawing on technology as a mode for engagement, the project brings together research into disability within war curation with motion capture and digital technologies for sound and vision to create an installation that is historically authentic and aesthetically engaging.

The Carrying of Passengers is Forbidden (2018-2019) further develops McKeown's interest in the intersection between disability history and technology through an examination of the UK Government development and national distribution of (legally defined) 'invalid carriages' in the twentieth century [3.6]. Unlike any other motor vehicle with UK (and Commonwealth) distribution, the history of the invalid carriage had almost vanished from national memory. As part of this research, McKeown created one of the largest collections of invalid carriages in the UK and developed a substantial archive of historical ephemera (photographs, postcards, car design blue prints, design history, government documents, national archive and disability campaign material, licensed film material and video interviews). Challenging normative approaches to museology, McKeown's work reintegrates these largely forgotten objects and their histories into UK national memory through an extensive research, artistic and public engagement project that demanded a more holistic, inclusive approach to mainstream motoring history.

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

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[3.1] McKeown S. 2010. All for Claire. Dada Fest International. Liverpool, UK. Available at: <https://research.tees.ac.uk/en/publications/all-for-claire>. Selected for REF2014 (2014 portfolio available).

All for Claire was sponsored by DaDaFest 10 International and BBC BigScreen. It was awarded Best Experimental Film at the UK's Deaffest, Wolverhampton in May 2011. It has been screened internationally at Bosifest, Serbia 2011, New York City Film Festival, August, 2011, Moving Image Film Festival, 2011, Animax Animation Festival, Skopje, November 2011 and Picture This Film Fest, Calgary, Canada, February 2012. All for Claire was shown on the BBC Big Screens in 21 locations nationwide in 2010 and 2011.

[3.2] McKeown S. 2009. Motion Disabled. Wolverhampton Art Gallery, UK. Available at: <https://research.tees.ac.uk/en/publications/motion-disabled>. Selected for REF2014 (2014 portfolio available).

Motion Disabled was supported by funding from the Wellcome Trust. grid.52788.30. 2007. Motion Disabled: Disable Motion. 084790/Z/08/Z. GBP36,370. Lead: McKeown. Motion Disabled was adapted in 2012 as Motion Disabled: Unlimited. They have been exhibited internationally in over 70 locations and venues, indoors and outdoors. In 2010 promoted by VSA Arts (Kennedy Center, Washington D.C, USA) the work was simultaneously exhibited in 17 countries in 24 venues and locations on the 3rd of December in support of the United Nations International Day of People with Disabilities.

[3.3] McKeown S. 2015. Cork Ignite 2015. Cork, Ireland. Available at <https://research.tees.ac.uk/en/publications/cork-ignite-we-are-still-here-3>. Selected for REF2021 (portfolio available).

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Cork Ignite attracted a live audience of over 7,000 people. Cork Ignite was a unique partnership involving Arts Council Ireland, Arts & Disability Ireland (Dublin), Create (Dublin), Cork City Council, Galway City and County Councils, and Mayo County Council. It was supported by funding from Arts Council Ireland.

[3.4] McKeown S. 2018. We Are Still Here. St Helen's, UK. Available at: <https://research.tees.ac.uk/en/publications/we-are-still-here-st-helens-100th-year-anniversary>. Selected for REF2021 (portfolio available).

We Are Still Here was created by McKeown for partners Heart of Glass and DaDaFest International 2018. The project was supported by funding from St Helens Council, DaDaFest, Arts Council England, Creative People and Places, Culture Liverpool, The Granada Foundation and Teesside University. Heart of Glass managed the project which formed the culmination of St Helens 150th year long celebrations.

[3.5] McKeown, S. 2014. Ghosts. Channel 4, UK. Available at: <https://research.tees.ac.uk/en/publications/ghosts-3/>. Selected for REF2021 (portfolio available).

This work was commissioned by Arts Admin for 14-18 NOW and Channel 4 to be showcased on Channel 4 (28/7/2014) and its online platform 4OD (2014) as part of the 14-18 NOW, the UK Government's WW1 commemoration programme. 14-18-NOW was part of the WW1 Centenary Art Commissions, a programme of special commissions by leading artists from Britain (including Rachel Whiteread, Sir Peter Blake and Yinka Shonibare) and around the world to mark the centenary of the First World War. Ghosts additionally featured on 14-18-NOW WW1 website, as well as at festivals, such as Unlimited at the London South Bank Centre.

[3.6] McKeown, S. 2018 The Carrying of the Passengers is Forbidden. Available at: <https://research.tees.ac.uk/en/publications/the-carrying-of-passengers-is-forbidden-invalid-carriages-and-the>. Selected for REF2021 (portfolio available).

This work was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). grid.507557.5. 2018. 'The Carrying of Passengers is Forbidden' - Invalid Carriages and their Heritage. OH-17-07626. GBP52,900. The research has been exhibited at the UK Disability Art festival, DaDaFest International, Museum of Liverpool, St Georges Hall Liverpool, Thought Foundation Birtley, Finchale Group Durham, Disability North Newcastle, and Preston Park Museums and Grounds Stockton-on-Tees. McKeown further curated the largest demonstration of invalid carriages in the UK in over 20 years and placed them equitably alongside mainstream vehicles in the Transport Through Time event at Beamish – The Living Museum of the North, Durham (October-November 2019).

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

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Since 2014, McKeown's research-led artworks, installations, and interventions have been exhibited internationally (UK, Ireland, Czech Republic, Greece, Germany, Australia) in 19 venues, as well as archived online (BFI Permanent Collection) and screened on national TV networks (BBC, Channel 4, Forces TV). Through engagement with a diverse range of venues, McKeown's work has extended the reach of disability arts and history into mainstream television, city and town centres, and entertainment and culture venues bringing new audiences to disability arts and heritage. Venues have ranged from regional museums (Preston Park Museum and Grounds, Stockton-on-Tees) to open air heritage venues (Beamish, The Living Museum of the North), from town and city centres (St Helens, Cork) to prime time television (BBC, Channel 4), from the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (Mayor of London's Liberty Festival) to events championing regional innovation (Great Exhibition of the North), and from cultural hubs and galleries (London South Bank Centre) to international art and film festivals (DaDaFest International, Adelaide Film Festival) [5.1].

The venues and platforms reflect the diverse audiences that have engaged with this research and the importance attributed by the organisers, commissioners, programmers and producers to engaging new audiences with disability arts and disability history. For the Director of Create, Ireland's national development agency for collaborative arts, Cork Ignite 'opened up a whole vista for people in terms of a compelling, unique public artwork, that spoke of inclusivity, spoke

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of ambition, it spoke of making our public spaces in the city alive and speak back to the public'. [5.2].

By preserving and documenting hidden histories of disability, this research has ensured continued representation within a range of cultural spaces. All for Claire (2010), for instance, was selected in 2019 for the BFI's Disabled Britain on Film permanent collection, attesting to its importance in capturing and raising the visibility of disabled people [5.3]. The commissioning of Ghosts for Channel4 and the subsequent awards it has received signal the importance of this work in voicing and documenting disability history in a new and engaging ways. The five-part series (Does it matter?) that featured Ghosts received an award for Performance under Ten Minutes at the Picture This film festival (Calgary, Canada) in 2015. For the jury of the Picture This film festival, the five-part series was: 'an eclectic series exploring war from a point of view seldom seen in mainstream media ... informing and entertaining ... very powerful and engaging' [5.4, p. 7]. Ghosts has also won an award of merit for disability issues from the Accolade Global Film Completion 2016); an award from the Respect Human Rights Film Festival (Belfast, 2017); and award for first place in the Non-Documentary Division of the Cinema Touching Disability film festival (Texas USA, 2016). [5.5]

McKeown's work on creatively recovering and resurfacing disability histories led to investment from HLF to preserve disability heritage in the form of living memories and artefacts, preventing loss of this history through destruction, neglect, or export. The project led to: McKeown becoming the Director of the Invalid Carriage Register and a modernisation of the Invalid Carriage Register (which maintains records of known invalid carriages); the first comprehensive list of disability vehicles in public ownership; and the retention by The Science Museum of rare and significant vehicles of disability history that were being considered for disinvestment of stock. [5.6]. The exhibition of these vehicles and their social histories has attracted audiences both new and old. The Chief Executive Officer of the Finchale Group remarked that: 'it was certainly an object of curiosity and great interest for our more modern-day veterans and attendees...on every occasion, the display drew comments and generated a great deal of interest. As a result, Finchale Group has been inspired to investigate and preserve its own history: for example, we have recently uncovered some historical photographs of disability vehicles that have a clear and direct link to our organisation's past' [5.7].

McKeown's research on invalid carriages has supported the development of three television programmes that have each sought to centre the almost forgotten history of the disability carriage within mainstream public consciousness. McKeown's research contributed the BBC's The NHS: A People's History (2018), Channel 4's Great British Car Journeys (2019), and to Forces TV's Saving The Forgotten Invalid Carriage (2019) [5.8]. The interview for Forces TV was also made available on their TV website [5.8]. The dedicated airtime from national TV networks is reflective of both the emerging public interest in this space and the role McKeown's research has played in generating and shaping content for these audiences. For the Director of the BBC's The NHS: A People's History, McKeown's work was crucial to developing the narrative: 'at the time of production we found it very difficult to determine a coherent narrative from normal sources such as Google, as there is very little online and quite a lot of it inaccurate. Simon's research has enabled 7Wonder to interpret and understand the complexities of the 1970's Invalid Carriage and to place their use within the context of the time' [5.9].

In addition, events such as Cork Ignite and We Are Still Here have generated significant and transformative cultural moments that have helped to redefine space and place. For the Chief Executive of Heart of Glass, the charity that commissioned We Are Still Here for St Helen's: 'the event was a very bold statement that brought into focus those frequently marginalised within the arts and cultural sector. It enabled a disabled artist and learning disabled within St Helen's to take centre stage at the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the town in a bombastic way that's hard to ignore [5.10]. For the then Director of Corporate Affairs at Cork City Council: 'Fans of digital technology and design are still talking about the detailed, painstaking work that it took to produce Ignite. Those who know nothing of that still talk about the entertainment value of the show. And the people with disabilities who were involved will always be proud, not only of their work, but of the fact that their abilities were recognised in such a public way in their city. Cork

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businesses took the project to their hearts, and used its impressive images to promote the city and their own place within it [5.11].

Significantly, the three part Ignite series of which Cork was a part has subsequently led to Arts Council Ireland (ACI) reflecting on their roles in supporting disability arts, particularly within public spaces, sparking institutional change. The Ignite series, for example, helped inform the development of a signed agreement between Cork County and City Management Association and the Arts Council [5.12]. As stated by the Arts Director for Performing and Local Arts at Arts Council Ireland (ACI): 'this Framework for Collaboration was rooted in learning from the Ignite events and includes a commitment to focusing on arts and disability and details on how this work might be supported in the future' [5.12]. The Ignite series also led ACI to reconsider the upper limit for their Arts Participation Project Award, which was increased to EUR60,000 post Ignite to facilitate great ambition demonstrated by these events [5.12]. More specifically, ACI have recognised the significance of Cork Ignite for disability arts: 'the visibility of Simon's project was also enormously valuable. It was a landmark initiative that built on years of work and practice. It demonstrated both the ambition and quality of disability arts and the importance of incorporating disability arts within mainstream arts and culture' [5.12].

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

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[5.1] Consolidated publicity material (pdf). List of events, exhibitions, screenings. September 2013 to 2019.

[5.2] Radio Broadcast. UCC Radio. 2019. Cork Ignite Broadcast. Available at: <https://youtu.be/ON8sQ5wBTqI>

[5.3] Webpage and email correspondence (pdf and link). BFI Film Collection. All for Claire (2011). Available at: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-all-for-claire-2011-online>. Email correspondence (pdf) from the curator at the British Film Institute confirming entry into collection. Received 16 August 2018.

[5.4] Brochure (pdf and link). Picture This Film Festival. 2015. Brochure: 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Picture this...Film Festival. Calgary. Available at: <https://www.ptff.org/files/2015-catalogue-and-cover-openo-v1-21-final-feb-26-2015-for-web-200dpi80p-pdf.pdf>

[5.5] Collated awards (pdf). Announcement of awards for Ghosts at Accolade Global Film Competition, Respect Human Rights Film Festival and Cinema Touching Disability film festival. 2016 and 2017.

[5.6] Final Report (pdf). Teesside University. Heritage Lottery Completion Report: 'The Carrying of Passengers is Forbidden' - Invalid Carriages and their Heritage (2018-2020). Report submitted to HLF on 03 February 2021.

[5.7] Signed Letter (pdf). Testimonial from Chief Executive Director of the Finchale Group. Received on 08 March 2021.

[5.8] Documentary listings and Screenshots (pdf). BBC. 2018. The NHS: A People's History. Episodes 1-3). Channel 4. 2019. Great British Car Journeys. Series 2, episode 1. ForcesTV. 2019. Saving the forgotten Invalid Carriage. MP4s for each programme are available.

[5.9] Signed Letters (pdf). Testimonial from the Producer/Director of The NHS: A People's History (7Wonder). Received on 10 May 2018.

[5.10] Signed Letter (pdf). Testimonial from Chief Executive of Heart of Glass. Received on 03 March 2021.

[5.11] Email correspondence (pdf). Testimonial from the Director of Corporate Affairs at from Cork City Council. Received on 05 October 2015.

[5.12] Signed Letter (pdf). Testimonial from Arts Director, Performing and Local Arts, Arts Council Ireland, email received 15 March 2021.