

Institution: University of the West of England, Bristol		
Unit of Assessment: 32		
Title of case study: Changing the face of traditional journalism through reportage drawing		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Gary Embury	Senior lecturer, Illustration	2006 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01.08.2013-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Practice-based research by Gary Embury at UWE has challenged and changed both perceptions and the practice of reportage drawing or 'visual journalism'. His work has impacted widely, domestically and internationally, through his publications and exhibitions, and his personal contributions to participatory projects, residencies, symposia, conferences, editorships and awards. His work has enriched and changed the understanding and practice of reportage among both leading practitioners, and many artists and illustrators earlier in their careers. He has challenged the assumption that 'on the spot drawing' is a passive observational activity, demonstrating to an increasingly wide-ranging, international network of practitioners, that reportage constitutes proactive journalistic practice – and in the process shifting and enriching that practice itself. His work has shown that in an age of digital media and 24-hour rolling news, traditional analogue drawing is still a valuable interpreter of contemporary events. Embury's research has impacted on artists and practitioners, art directors, publishers, educators and students. It has also impacted on wide-ranging public perceptions and experiences of reportage drawing, in a new age of visual journalism across multiple media channels.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>Research carried out by Gary Embury has included written and published outputs, including the influential <i>Reportage Illustration: Visual Journalism</i> (R1); practice-based outputs, including Embury's own work in <i>Reportage Illustration</i> and its exhibition (R2); and practice-based work produced in collaboration with others through residencies and events (R3, R4).</p> <p>Traditionally placed within the field of illustration, reportage drawing in the 20th century had been largely eclipsed by the public's belief in the photographic image as an objective conveyor of truth, relegated to little more than a decorative page filler. More recently, digital images and print media have been increasingly questioned as a guarantee of truth, leaving a void to be filled by other forms of journalism.</p> <p>Embury's research demonstrated the opportunity for reportage to reclaim and redefine the role of 'visual journalist' (R1). According to Embury, much current illustration exists on a purely aesthetic level as ambient decoration. It fails to comment, debate or inform, but</p>		

merely exists on a secondary level to support the text. Embury's research has laid the groundwork for artists to re-establish themselves as a pro-active research-led community. (R1, R5, R2) Artists are now able to question the traditional role of drawing in news reporting and the impact drawing can have on the way in which an event is covered. Embury quotes Milton Glazer, the celebrated American graphic designer, who once stated: 'The great benefit of drawing is not to replicate reality but to understand what is real.'

Embury's own practice-based research has included reportage drawing for a number of exhibitions, publications and awards. In 2016, he produced work as one of 16 international artists for a cross-media storytelling project exhibited at The Paten Museum in Nepal (S5), subsequently published in *Varoom* magazine. Embury has also been the recipient of the prestigious Association of Illustrators Gold Award, exhibited at a number of UK galleries and contributed a number of drawings for the critically acclaimed *Beneficial Shock* magazine. In 2018, Embury exhibited work at the Topolski Studio on London's Southbank as part of the 'Drawn in Residence' project (R2) with the Topolski Residency Artists, in conjunction with Chelsea and Westminster hospital.



Figure 1: Work for the cross media collaborative exhibition 2016 published in *Varoom* magazine

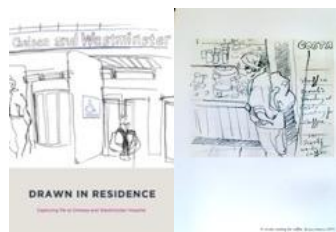


Figure 2: *Drawn in residence* exhibition and publication 2018



Figure 3: Reportage drawing for *Beneficial Shock* magazine 2018

Embury's research has encouraged a greater understanding and debate around reportage drawing, with illustrators seen as pro-active visual journalists. Much of this work is brought together and showcased in the web-based journal and platform [Reportager](#), edited by Embury since 2013, with a membership of some 35 active artists and illustrators (R5). Through practice-based residencies, networks and events, Embury, as a practitioner and researcher, has sought to establish an international community, bringing together artists, art directors, journalists and academics to question the role of the reportage artist and how the artist documents and comments through drawing contemporary society (R3, R4). Embury's research identified a significant gap in the field for critical discussion on the role of the artist reporter (R6). The research has aimed to inspire a new generation of reportage artists to scrutinise and uncover visual narratives, and to disseminate these through a range of online, digital and analogue means; authorially co-designing, self-publishing content and proactively collaborating with journalists as an alternative to traditional print and broadcast journalism (R3).

3. References to the research

R1 Embury, G., Minichiello, M. (2018) *Reportage Illustration Visual Journalism*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/reportage-illustration-9781474224598/>

R2 Embury, G., Mercier, A. (2019) *Drawn in Residence. Exhibition, publication and annual drawing residency, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital*. Topolski studio: London <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/6801183>

R3 Embury, G (2014) The Topolski Studio Residency Programme. *Varoom Lab Interpretation Symposium*. September 18-9. Arts University: Bournemouth <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/2812081/the-topolski-studio-residency-programme>

R4 Embury, G., & Braund, S. (2014). *Illustration Forum 2014 - Witness: Reportage & Documentary*. Falmouth University. Chaired by Embury, the ticketed public day long forum discussed the future of documentary drawing with a panel of contemporary practitioners: <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/820390/illustration-forum-2014-witness-reportage-documentary>

R5 Embury, G. University of the West of England (2020) *Reportager*: <http://reportager.uwe.ac.uk/>

R6 Embury, G. (2012) The new visual journalism. *Boundaries: making and breaking illustration's frontiers symposium*. September 14-15. Plymouth University: Plymouth: <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/2812355/the-new-visual-journalism>

Embury's own creative practice has broadened understanding and illustrated how reportage artists can cross the divide and change the balance from passively making commissioned images to proactively and authorially creating content driven, media rich visual essays. This includes collaborating with designers, journalists and art directors in an equal partnership, to founding and curating the international reportage award and making and curating *Reflections 2016* - a cross disciplinary exhibition. Embury has given many public talks and workshops for prestigious organisations and venues including: Ravenna, Italy at the Komikazen Festival; Temple University Tokyo; the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and the House of illustration in London; and The Arnolfini in Bristol.

4. Details of the impact

Impact on artists, art directors and educators

Embury's research has highlighted and redefined the work of established and emerging artists domestically and internationally to other artists, art directors, educators and the public. It has raised their profile and the work of unknown and early career artists, demonstrating that '*there is in fact a thriving community of critically astute reportage illustrators*' (S1).

As a result of Embury's research, reportage and documentary drawing is now established and underlined as a distinct practice, outlining its specific journalistic intent, which is unique and different to that of 'urban sketching.'

A renowned reportage artist and author of *The Etiquette of the Arms Trade* noted its influence:

'Your [Embury's] research [R1] has had a profound impact on my understanding of Illustration in general, and Reportage Drawing in particular, demonstrating that they can be critically acute, experimental and an innovative means of research and communication. I realise now that I had internalised a number of prejudices, assuming that illustration is primarily decorative, and that reportage drawing made false claims to objectivity' (S1).

Topolski Studio and Chelsea and Westminster Hospital residencies

Feliks Topolski was one of the most prolific and well-known illustrator-artist chroniclers of the 20th century. His work spans over half a century and his legacy is preserved in the Topolski Studio Residency Programme based in his original studio on the South Bank of London.

Drawing on his own research, Embury co-founded and delivered the studio's Chronicle Residency Programme starting in 2013. Funded partly by the South Bank Centre and the studio's external arts activities, the international annual residency has offered thirty six placements in total to selected postgraduate art students. They each received an expenses

paid three months' residency at the Topolski studio, including masterclasses from Embury and internationally renowned reportage artists. This included workshops in printing, culminating in a publication and exhibition in London and nationally.

As part of the residency, students organised public workshops in reportage drawing in and around London's South Bank. Residents also achieved a Silver Arts Award Qualification, managed by Trinity College London in association with Arts Council England. The award is a personal learning programme which develops and assesses both arts-related and transferable skills, such as creativity, communication, planning and teamwork.

Through the Topolski residency:

'Gary has helped to create a community of like-minded practitioners, both on the residency and online on the Reportager website, which has led to more debate around the subject and further opportunities to showcase projects' (S2).

Former residents have gone on to make their living as lecturers, curators, artists and researchers. There have so far been six residencies, including a further recent collaboration with the current permanent artist in residence at Chelsea and Westminster hospital in 2018, culminating in an exhibition at the Topolski studio, a permanent residency at the hospital and publication *Drawn in Residence* (R2). The Topolski studio residency and the subsequent collaboration with Chelsea and Westminster Hospital are significant as there are currently no discipline-specific postgraduate study opportunities for reportage artists available internationally.

An artist, author and instructor at Parsons School of Design in New York complimented Embury's work as researcher and practitioner, noting that she had used it as a resource with her own students because it had:

'brought together many examples of visual journalism and narrative, bringing legitimacy and an academic viewpoint to this important form of communication and citizen journalism' (S3).

Awards, exhibitions and impact on public perception of reportage

As part of efforts to promote and highlight this community of artists to the public, Embury founded an international drawing award and exhibition, re-framing the discipline of 'on the spot drawing' (S4). Through an international call for submissions for entries from professional and student artists, the subsequent award and exhibition promoted, initiated, and repositioned the work of artists as reportage and documentary journalistic drawing within a distinct discipline area. This was the first time reportage drawing had been grouped and exhibited within this new discipline of visual journalism. In total 350 images were exhibited, with entries from artists from the US, China, Mexico, Uganda, South Korea and Australia. The International Reportager Drawing Award and exhibition were sponsored by the Milan-based global company Moleskine. The company funded two awards and drawing travel bursaries, one professional award to Chandigarh in India, and a student award to Cuba. The total funding amounted to GBP4,800 in total including two additional Moleskine Special Mention awards totalling GBP250 each.

Reportage as visual journalism was explored by Embury in the multiple journalism, cross media, 2016 project *Reflections*, culminating in a visual journalistic collaboration involving international journalists, photographers and artists, in the form of a curated parallel exhibition taking place in Nepal and the UK (S5). *'For the first time, someone had started to bring together examples of best practice. It gave the field gravitas' (S6).*

In 2018, together with The House of Illustration (a London based public arts organisation dedicated to illustration, founded by Sir Quentin Blake), Embury organised a sold out ticketed public lecture in front of 70 attendees followed by a panel discussion. The event brought together five leading practitioners and an art director to discuss the future of reportage drawing (S7). The panel discussed the ethics and future of journalistic drawing. This was followed by Embury's book launch for *Reportage Illustration Visual Journalism* (R1) and an exhibition of reportage drawing by leading practitioner and panel member Lucinda Rogers.

A former senior art director of the Times newspaper and House of Illustration panellist said of the research:

'Whereas Reportage is not a new name inside the industry, it has been the label for a very few artists until now. I feel the name has surfaced quite publicly through Gary's work and has now been quite rightly promoted as a positive and exciting movement' (S8).

In July 2019, Embury gave an open public lecture at the V&A in London to an audience of 70 including Alan Male, Emeritus Professor of Illustration at Falmouth University, presenting reportage drawing as a valuable interpreter of contemporary events, offering a different perspective to that of traditional journalism and 24 hour rolling news (S9). In the presentation, Embury reiterated that reportage illustration was now finding a new and powerful role in the era of fake news and disposable fast-moving media, and that reportage art has re-emerged at a time when we are being bombarded by an endless stream of often confusing images, with no explanation of who made them and for what purpose. This theme was revisited and further discussed in 2019 in an interview for *The Journalist* magazine' (S10).

A renowned reportage artist, working as a visual journalist for many newspapers, for *The Times* at London's 2012 Olympics and *The Daily Telegraph* during the 2018 men's football World Cup in Russia, praised Embury for his contribution to reportage:

'Gary has brought together a disparate community and created a vital network in an area where much work is solitary. He has started off a conversation about the future of reportage drawing, demonstrating that it is an activity not merely rooted in the past but with a life in the present and a path towards to the future' (S6).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1 Testimonial from artist, researcher, academic and House of Illustrations panel member

S2 Testimonial from reportage artist and academic

S3 Testimonial from artist, author and instructor, Parsons School of Design (New York)

S4 [Reportage Award, in collaboration with Moleskine in Milan](#) (University of the West of England F block Gallery. Bristol. 08-15 May 2015)

S5 [Reflections 25.4.16 Exhibition](#). cross - media storytelling project, focusing on Nepal in the year since the April 2015 earthquake (University of the West of England Atrium Gallery and The Paten Museum Nepal) 25th April – 6th May 2016

S6 Testimonial from Reportage Illustrator and Professor of Illustration, Bath Spa University

S7 [Reportage Illustration Visual Journalism Panel discussion at the House of Illustration](#), 21st March 2018

S8 Testimonial from former senior designer at *The Times* and House of Illustration panel member

S9 [Lunchtime lecture: Reportage Illustration: V&A Talk](#), 10th July 2019

S10 [Drawing the News in The Journalist](#): October-November 2019 pp.16-18