

Institution: Buckinghamshire New University		
Unit of Assessment: 23 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Reactivating industrial craft for cultural change		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 1 January 2000-December 2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Neil Brownsword	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Ceramics	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 95-12.18
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Over the past two decades, Neil Brownsword's research into the legacy of deindustrialisation in North Staffordshire's ceramic manufacturing sector has reactivated associated post-industrial spaces and endangered industrial crafts. Exhibitions seen by over 3,000,000 visitors have generated new insights into the impact of globalization, widening curatorial and public understanding of the value of industrial craft. The research has shaped his co-collaborators practice and helped to attract over GBP1, 000,000 for artistic projects, exhibitions and efforts to safeguard cultural heritage. Cross-cultural exchange between the UK and East Asia and trans-disciplinary working across Europe have extended the international reach of these impacts.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Professor Neil Brownsword's performative, transient and site-specific research has been at the forefront of 'the expanded field' of ceramics over the past fifteen years. Grounded in learning from his employment in the ceramic industry, his sustained body of 'fieldwork' has excavated and reactivated the tangible and intangible heritage of North Staffordshire to address the ongoing reverberations of historic change and lost labour in post-industrial contexts worldwide. A trio of early works seeded ideas taken forward in subsequent projects. In Salvage Series (2005/2008), Brownsword juxtaposed his footage of artisans at his former workplace (Wedgwood) with scenes of former factory sites, shown alongside the material remnants of their processes, which he glazed and fired. Elegy (2009), which won the inaugural British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) prize for 'one off work,' was made in response to the destruction of Royal Doulton's Nile Street factory in Stoke-on-Trent, which had operated since the 1870s. Reimagining by-products of the ceramic manufacturing process as industrial archaeological finds, Brownsword installed them alongside video footage of the factory's demolition. Both works cast a spotlight on the artisans' embodied knowledge and its ongoing potential at a time when technological advances and global outsourcing were displacing their expertise. At the same Biennial, his Marl Hole (2009) project drew together four international artists to explore North Staffordshire's naturally abundant clay deposits. Offering new insights into 'material-led' site-specific interventions, these works stretched the boundaries of 'ceramic' practice [1]. Marl Hole's explorations of 'site of raw material' 'provided the conceptual starting point for Topographies of the Obsolete (ToTO) a research collaboration co-curated with Bergen Academy of Art and Design (2012-2020), which attracted sustained funding (GBP337,761) from the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme and University of Bergen [2]. Project leads Brownsword and Bergen's Anne-Helen Mydland invited interdisciplinary responses to topics including 'the contemporary ruin' and 'the artist as archaeologist' through a broad range of exhibitions, conferences and publications. Offering a reflexive framework for formulating questions and that offered new understandings of ceramics and material and subject in contemporary art practice, their research formed the basis for an expansive programme the of collaborative investigation, which engaged 91 and cultural commentators from 16 institutions internationally. Concurrently, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery invited him to explore new ways of interpreting the social and material histories of its nationally recognised Shropshire ceramic collection. With Brownsword as artist-curator, Divided Labour - The unsung crafts of ceramic industrialisation (2011-2014) illuminated the complex knowledge systems within ceramic</p>		

manufacture through six production-focused taxonomies and dual film installation Divided Labour, made with Marl Hole collaborator Johnny Magee.

National Treasure (2013-18) translated actions and traces from the site-specific performative interventions in ToTO's 'Vociferous Void' exhibition into a film and object-based installation. It appropriated the craft of a former factory worker to provide critical insights into how factory tourism's embrace of the handcrafted obscures the realities of UK outsourcing, mass-automation and indigenous skill displacement. Brownsword hired Anthony Challiner - a china painter with over 50 years of experience - to sit in the former Spode Factory and perform his former role during the BCB. Rather than decorating the factory's blanks with the idyllic scenes for which the brand is famed, he filled the reverse of the plates with images of industrial dereliction. The title underscored the squandered value of this living knowledge and draws unflattering parallels with East Asia where craftspeople who hold endangered skills are designated 'national treasures' and measures are taken to support the transfer of their knowledge to subsequent generations. Challiner has reactivated subsequent iterations of the research at venues nationally and internationally including the Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale (GICB, 2015), where it won the prestigious Grand Prize [3].

Re-Apprenticed exemplified ToTO's 'mapping' of the marginalised industrial. Commissioned by the BCB (2015), the multimedia performative installation saw Brownsword apprentice himself to three master artisans – Challiner, flower maker Rita Floyd and engraver Paul Holdway – in order to explore the transfer of material and procedural knowledge between master and apprentice. Employing the same ethnographic technique as in earlier works, he recorded and edited hours of film footage to expose the hidden rhythms of know how. He showed the film in the former Spode Factory during the BCB and at the V&A accompanied by 'live observations' in which the artisans performed their acts of making. He also extended the work in **Factory: Re-apprenticed** at the Ashmolean museum (2016), bringing Jon Grivil (the model maker to whom he was apprenticed at Wedgwood) in. Both challenged the institutional privileging of material embodiments of knowledge. The series informed object-based works curated for the First Central China Biennale (2016) [4].

As Grand Prize Winner, Brownsword was given a solo show at the 2017 GICB. The live observations that accompanied Re-Apprenticed formed the basis for **Factory** – a performative installation that reflected upon notions of place, skill, people and material objects left behind following the process of industrial change [5]. Under the disruptive instructions of Brownsword, two ex-industry artisans from Stoke-on-Trent, together with four Korean master potters integrated opposing hierarchies of cultural production to re-negotiate a sense of value to people and practices displaced by global economics.

International recognition of Brownsword's research led to an invitation to undertake a joint residency with Korean artist Juree Kim at the V&A (2017-18), responding to the museum's collections. Unable to process the museum objects as he wished, he purchased his own collection, scanning and manipulating them to assemble a '**Pattern Book**,' which captured the transfer of ideas between East Asia and British industry [6]. He invited Holdway to produce a copper plate engraving based on one of his prints live in the gallery, training a microscopic camera on his hands to demonstrate the active process of translation and the skill behind it. The residency informed an ongoing collaboration (July 2018-present) with Dr Karina Rodriguez Echavarria (University of Brighton) and Professor Tim Weyrich (University College London), which explored how the 70,000+ moulds in the former Spode factory might be preserved through digital technologies.

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

- [1] 'Marl Hole.' Collaborative site-specific intervention and exhibition (BCB), 2009.
- [2] 'Topographies of the Obsolete.' Curated multi-part research programme including symposia, publications and exhibitions, 2012-2017, <http://topographies.uib.no/>
- [3] 'National Treasure.' Looped projection (15 mins 49 secs), workstation, residues of china painting, repainted platters salvaged from the Spode factory, 2014-2019.
- [4] 'Re-apprenticed.' Looped projection (15 mins), workstation, ceramic artefact, live performance, 2015-2018.
- [5] 'Factory.' Exhibition and multimedia performative installation, 2017-20.
- [6] 'Pattern Book.' Residency and exhibition, V&A Museum, London, 2017-18.

Indicators of quality

- i. Topographies of the Obsolete [2] received GBP349,525 funding from the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme and University of Bergen (2012-2020) GBP 337,761 whilst Brownsword was at Buckinghamshire New University when impacts claimed.
- ii. Judges 'unanimously' awarded *National Treasure* [3] the Grand Prize at the prestigious Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale (2015) (2629 entries by 1470 applicants from 74 countries) in recognition of Brownsword's '*creativity and contribution to the field*'.
- iii. Re-apprenticed [4] received GBP23,900 funding from Bergen Academy of Art and Design, Arts Council England and British Ceramics Biennial.

Factory [5] received GBP48,618 funding from the Korean Ceramic Foundation, British Council Korea, British Ceramic Biennial, Korea Culture Centre and Arts Council England. It was one of 12 finalists (1,500 applications) for the V&A Woman's Hour Craft Prize.

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

Brownsword's nuanced understanding of immaterial heritage and his work's capacity to articulate its value in the present has had cultural impact at local, national and international level. Raising awareness of industrial craft skill and the threat globalisation poses to them, it has shaped curatorial and artistic practice and, in turn, the decisions made by local authorities and national heritage organisations. This has led to the safeguarding of industrial practice, attracted funding, enhanced international relationships and shaped physical and cultural regeneration.

Regeneration: Brownsword's practice has played an important role in the renewal of Stoke-on-Trent as a centre for excellence in contemporary ceramics. 'Salvage Series' was exhibited in the British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) concept launch in 2008 and Marl Hole in the inaugural festival (2009). He has made significant artistic, curatorial and conceptual contributions to each Biennial since '*enriching the ambition and perspectives of the festival*.' Brownsword staged 'Re-apprenticed' in 2015, 'Factory' in 2017, has led the Topographies of the Obsolete programme (ToTO) since 2012 and is on the selection panel for the *Fresh* award. A project proposal that built on Brownsword's V&A residency was a key part of the BCB's application for Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status. This '*undoubtedly brought a strength and quality assurance to the application*' and ACE awarded the Biennial 700,000GBP to support its activity from 2018-22 and commission his project ('Externalizing the Archive') [A].

ToTO opened up previously inaccessible spaces at the Spode site for exhibitions and events, extending the BCB's capacity and increasing its international profile. Stoke-on-Trent's Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan (2016-20), which centres on '*realising Stoke as the World Capital of Ceramics for visitors*' describes the BCB (69,569 visitors in 2019), as '*Stoke's signature event*.' When it was shortlisted for City of Culture 2021, V&A Director and Stoke-on-Trent Central MP (2010-2017) Tristram Hunt declared: '*what artists like Neil Brownsword and others have superbly explored is the intangible heritage of ceramics and, in numerous installations, sought to give it a cultural permanence*.' He argued the bid '*delivered a new energy to the protection and celebration of the craftsmanship and ethos of 'The Potteries'*' [A].

Artistic practice: Brownsword's research has made a considerable contribution to 'the expanded field' of ceramics, creating opportunities for artists whose work traverses disciplinary boundaries. Curators have acquired his work for permanent museum collections, internationally - SY Series Yingge Museum, Taiwan (2014); Salvage Series, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (Mima), UK (2015), Relic, V&A, UK (2016); Waster, The Potteries Museum, UK (2016); National Treasure, Korea Ceramic Foundation (KOCEF), Korea (2015) - to reference '*new international developments in contemporary ceramics*'. Judges at the 2015 Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale (GICB), South Korea unanimously chose *National Treasure* as the Grand Prize winner from 2629 entries, from 74 countries '*in recognition for [Brownsword's] creativity and contribution to the field*.' This led to his solo exhibition, *Factory*, at the 2017 GICB, which engaged an international public via 30 days of live performances and attracted 235,568 visitors. Arts Council Korea, British Council and Arts Council England made it a key exhibition within the UK/Korea season, to promote cultural exchange and '*showcase the UK's innovation and excellence in the arts and creative industries*.' [B]

A panel of 17 international curators chose *Factory* to represent the UK in the 60th edition of the Faenza Prize (2018), which profiled 53 artists who represented '*the most significant ceramic art research[es]*' in the preceding decade. It was subsequently one of 12 finalists chosen from 1,500 applications for the V&A Woman's Hour Craft Prize. The inclusion of his film and performance-based work within an exhibition that attracted 111,632 visitors and aimed to

'recognise a craft practitioner or designer-maker who is an outstanding artist and who has significantly contributed to craft practice in the last five years' reflected the shift in thinking within the field. His works were also selected for *Terra Nova* at the Yingge Museum, Taiwan (2014) and the First Central China International Ceramic Biennial (2016), which attracted over 995,000 visitors [C].

Topographies of the Obsolete supported the development of artists from 13 countries, shaping their practice and teaching and strengthening international ceramics education networks. For Caroline Slotte it provided an opportunity *'to expand my artistic practice by being pushed into new territory and exciting encounters.'* She takes Topographies of the Obsolete as *'an exemplary model'* of collaborative artistic research in her role as head of Ceramics at Oslo National Academy of the Arts. For Magdalena Gerber, Topographies *'gave maximum freedom to the participants and their individual art projects, and at the same time succeeded in giving us all a unified platform of practice and theory to work, discuss and reflect.'* This led her to work with 30 students and colleagues from the University of Art and Design of Geneva in the near-abandoned porcelain factory in Langenthal, Switzerland, resulting in three new exhibitions. Others, including Sabine Popp, Andrew Brown and Corrina Thornton developed new approaches and non-academic collaborations [D].

Re-apprenticed and Factory also shaped the artisans' perceptions of their work and its value. Paul Holdway spoke of the attention his *'important skill at one time was so valuable to the industry'* garnered when presented for the *'arts and crafts world.'* For Jim Adams, participating in Factory in Korea *'allowed me to see the true value of our traditional pottery skills and the people who worked within the industry, something that I had probably taken for granted over the years.'* This contributed to a decision to change his career path to move closer to his creative side. Crediting *'Neil and his much deeper thinking,'* Floyd also *'began to have a different outlook on my job and also of all hand skills in 'The Potteries.'* *'I realised just how skilled I was and that I too was an artist (which when I worked in a factory would never have entered my head).'* [D]

Curatorial practice: For Alun Graves, the V&A's Senior Curator of Ceramics and Glass, Brownsword has *'arguably had a greater impact on the study and appreciation of the wider field of ceramics than any other contemporary practitioner.'* *'Elegy'* (acquired in 2011) *'provided the central focus'* in the Archaeology and History section of its contemporary ceramics gallery from December 2013 to March 2018 and *'Re-apprenticed'* led to both a special *'Potteries'* event as part of museum's Friday Late programme (2015) and Brownsword's joint residency with Juree Kim (2017-18). Graves argues that together with *'Factory'* and the acquisition of *'Relic,'* these works brought about *'fundamental shifts in the understanding and appreciation of the role and value of craft skill in industry contexts.'* Working with Brownsword has *'enabled the V&A to communicate effectively some of these issues, to reassess their significance, to bring them to the attention of a wider public, and to take forward debate.'* [E]

Marl Hole also shaped Annabelle Campbell's thinking (Head of Exhibitions and Collections, Crafts Council) about the intersection of craft and other media. This led to an exhibition that evolved into Real to Reel: The Craft Film Festival. Running annually since 2016 and touring internationally, it has showcased 136 *'films that will challenge assumptions about craft, creating opportunities for makers.'* Recently, the Council created a Best of Real to Reel showcase with the British Council as part of the cultural and visual arts programme for international territories. Campbell's *'experience of working with Neil, his knowledge, practice and artworks'* also *'contributed to the inclusion of an Off Plinth strand of acquisition in the Acquisition Policy,'* changing the shape of the permanent collection [F].

As an *'ambassador for quite radical contemporary practice but with real historical knowledge'* Brownsword played a critical role in the exhibitions curator at Shrewsbury Museum getting buy-in for the artist-led programme from museum staff. His research *'radically changed how the museum's historic collections were redisplayed.'* This helped to engage audiences such as the young curator's group (aged 14-19), bringing *'something new - something exciting and fresh to the collection that they really responded to incredibly well.'* Illuminating Spode's history, collection and site, Brownsword's research has also had significant benefits for the Spode Museum Trust as they seek to broaden their appeal. Attracting a younger audience, it has shifted the demographic, which *'brings distinctiveness for visitors in relation to [our] competitors.'* Curators have observed a *'surge'* in the national visitor segment, visit numbers and a 200% increase in income from group visits when they show his projects [G].

Brownsword's research has also '*introduced international and interdisciplinary perspectives [...] to the BCB's programming which would not have happened without his involvement*'. He used his GICB Biennial win to initiate a partnership between KOCEF and the BCB, which led to the development of an artist exchange programme (2017- 2021) and secured GBP48, 618 to realise the ambitious project. It facilitated a KOCEF-led MoU between a consortium of international ceramic organisations to encourage partnerships and cultural exchange. The partnership is key to the BCB's international strategy and programming [A, C].

Safeguarding cultural heritage: Brownsword has been vocal about the UK's failure to endorse or ratify UNESCO's *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* and to sustain industrial ceramic skills. In 2016, he shared his research with the Heritage Crafts Association (HCA), drawing attention to the fact that its newly launched Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts contained no industrial craft. They asked him to help them to assess the state of industrial ceramic practice, drawing on his '*unique combination of practitioner knowledge and research skill*'. Their findings spotlighted its endangered status and they added 'pottery (industrial)' to the Red List in 2019. Industrial practitioners are now eligible to apply for funding to facilitate the preservation of knowledge and skill transfer and Brownsword is helping the HCA to identify gaps in support and coproduce solutions with industry partners [H]. He also partnered with the V&A and the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery to tackle the skills shortage in the UK's creative industries, delivering workshops for the Design Lab Nation schools programme (2018) drawing on themes from his residency. 66.9% of the 60 students said they knew more about design industries in their local area as a result. Their confidence in their art and design skills (5.9%) and interest in careers in the creative industries (4%) increased. Qualitative statements also indicated notable improvements in creative and collaborative thinking [I].

In 2016, Brownsword secured GBP7, 000 from the Charles Hayward Foundation to mitigate risk to the Spode collection when the factory went into administration. This funded packing and storage of the collection at a '*pinch point*' when the Spode Museum Trust was trying to establish itself and demonstrate its ability to safeguard the collection. Brownsword's research '*underpins what [the Trust] are trying to do, shows we are moving in a positive direction and gives funders confidence.*' This led them to apply for larger grants, such as a successful GBP20, 000 bid to the Transfer Ware Collector's Club to develop on-site storage. '*Being able to speak at length about [Neil's] projects and the interest they generated*' later helped them to gain GBP10, 000 financial support from the Portmeirion group, which now owns the Spode brand [G]. His research also influenced Stoke-on-Trent Council's Archaeology and Historic Environment records team's approach to the 70,000+ moulds at the Spode factory. '*Notably, our criteria for determining the significance of the moulds was modified to facilitate a broader appreciation of artistic value and to incorporate the notion that examples could represent aspects of 'intangible', cultural heritage.*' This '*more than doubled the number of moulds that were earmarked for retention on site.*' [J].

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

- [A] i Testimonial, Director, British Ceramics Biennial (BCB), ii BCB visitor numbers, press and PR reports; iii Tristram Hunt, '[City of Culture bid 'reveals the wonder that culture can offer every life](#),' Stoke Sentinel, 17 October, 2017; iv Stoke –on-Trent City Council, '[Final Report: Visitor Economy Strategy and Action plan](#),' City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2019, 6.
- [B] Acquisition reports; i Yingge Museum; ii Mima; iii V&A Museum; iv Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, v KOCEF; vi Testimonial, KOCEF; vii [British Council, 'UK/Korea 2017–18'](#) programme.
- [C] i [Faenza prize announcement](#); ii V&A Museum '[About the Woman's Hour Craft Prize](#)' 2017; iii Testimonial, Curator, Terra Nova and First Central China International Ceramic Biennial.
- [D] Testimonials (artists): i Andrew Brown; ii Magdalena Gerber; iii Karen Harsbo; iv Anne-Helen Mydland; v Sabine Popp; vi Caroline Slotte; vii Corinna Thornton; viii Danica Maier; ix Paul Holdway, x Jim Adams and xi Rita Floyd.
- [E] Testimonial, Senior Curator (Ceramics and Glass), V&A Museum.
- [F] Testimonial, Head of Exhibitions and Collections, Crafts Council.
- [G] Testimonials: i Exhibitions Curator, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery, 2000-2015; ii Trustee and Acting Chair, Spode Museum Trust.
- [H] i Testimonial, Heritage Crafts Officer, Heritage Crafts Association ii Heritage Crafts Association, [Radcliffe Red List](#) (2019).
- [I] Elizabeth Dyson, Design Lab Nation 2018-19 report, August 2019 (external evaluation).
- [J] Testimonial, Senior Planning Officer, Stoke-on-Trent City Council.