

Impact case study (REF3)

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| Institution: York St John University | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 32 Art & Design: Theory, History, Practice | | |
| Title of case study: Material-led strategies for greater arts engagement in post-industrial and rural Yorkshire | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010 - 2019 | | |
| 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: |
| Vanessa Corby | Associate Professor Theory, History and Practice of Fine Art | 2006 - present |
| Sally Taylor | Senior Lecturer Fine Art | 2013 - present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018 - 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) | | |
| <p>Our Unit interrogates the significance of materials for art's making and their capacity for communication, community building and inclusivity. This research has catalysed the first phase of an ongoing arts-based HEI and third sector collaboration that has created benefits for hard-to-reach audiences in post-industrial and rural Yorkshire. We have enabled Barnsley Museums and Heritage Trust to develop links with secondary schools and secure external funding by mobilising its collection as tool to engage and support vulnerable young people during COVID-19. In North Yorkshire, we have informed the cultural policy of Ryedale District Council and Forestry England and others by developing grass roots support for artists and raising the aspirations of these organisations have for their roles as arts providers in the region.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) | | |
| <p>The foundations of this case study were laid in 2011, in preparation for the Arts Council England (ACE) funded solo exhibition <i>SALLY TAYLOR drawings</i> at the Ryedale Folk Museum, Hutton Le Hole, North Yorkshire. This show and its catalogue marked the first collaboration between art historian Vanessa Corby and artist Sally Taylor; drawn together by their mutual fascination with the immediacy and physicality of drawing, which had been indebted to the environments and family members that shaped their working-class backgrounds. Working together at YSJU, they opened up a critical space to explore the impact of social class on the practice and reception of art at a time, prior to the 2016 EU Referendum, when the academy's interrogation of difference was largely concerned with questions of ethnicity, gender and sexuality.</p> <p>Contemporary drawing has been described as a fundamentally inclusive practice that has the power to challenge ideologically driven conventions of art and culture, enabling artists to navigate and transform difference into new forms of representation. This stance is enabled by the discipline's emphasis on its capacity for non-verbal communication that dates back to prehistoric times. Taylor's playful drawing-led enquiry builds on this body of scholarship [3.1]. It repurposes the historically weighted signifiers of class, such as ignorance and the masses, to articulate experiences of cultural displacement, countering that isolation by exploring the social dimension of art making through drawing and curatorial decision making.</p> <p>Taylor's body of work <i>That Head That Head</i> [3.1] is comprised of 900 drawings. Driven by an exploration of materials, its interrogation of the 'fear of saying the wrong thing' has been</p> | | |

disseminated in twenty-four exhibitions, and nominated for the Derwent (2014), Jerwood (2014; 2017) and Trinity Buoy (2019) drawing prizes. Its development was facilitated by Taylor's ACE funded project, *Mentoring for Professional Development* [3.1], which developed Taylor's network to generate new strategies that countered the challenges of Taylor's geographical isolation in Ryedale and the self-doubt that was born of social class but augmented by the lived experience of motherhood that took her away from the studio.

Corby has written extensively on the materials and methods of art practice in order to consider issues of cultural displacement and memory, trauma, deindustrialisation, and cooperation [3.3]. **Corby** mobilised *That Head That Head* as a critical lens to consider its treatment of social class and the inherent inclusivity ascribed to drawing. Disseminated in the journal *Drawing: Theory, History, Practice*, **Corby** argued that contemporary drawing's reliance on a vocabulary of the 'primitive' and 'primal', with their connotations of 'unruly' irrationality and 'disorder', can do little to destabilise the tropes of the brutish unthinking herd that has subjugated the working-classes since the 1700s and framed responses to the EU Referendum result in 2016 (Corby [3.2]).

This argument was developed through the *Drawing Matters Symposium* (YSJU, 2017; co-convened with **O'Donnell** and **Taylor**) and **Corby's** contribution to the editorial of the *Drawing Matters* special edition of the journal *TRACEY: Drawing, Visualisation, Research* ([3.4] 2021, delayed by Covid). The title *Drawing Matters* was chosen not simply to affirm an a priori significance for the medium and its materials, but as a provocation that asked participants to consider the matters arising for and from drawing at a time of increasingly unstable socio-political circumstances; in particular, what practical purposes can drawing serve in these uncertain and divisive times? And how enabling or disabling are the current theoretical frameworks at our disposal in the discipline's discourse? **Corby** concluded that to advocate drawing as an inherently 'human' non-verbal communication, is to lessen the imperative to think critically about the difference between reach and impact.

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

Practice Based Output

[3.1] Taylor, S., (2014-19), *That Head That Head*, body of work (drawing), exhibitions, and catalogue (2017) with essays by Kate Brindley, Chief Curator Chatsworth House, Vanessa Corby (YSJU), and Professor Anita Taylor (Dundee). Funded by Arts Council England under project title *Mentoring for Professional Development* (£9,235) [Listed in REF2]

Standard Outputs

[3.2] Corby, V., (2017a), 'The affirmation of social class in the drawings of Sally Taylor', *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice*, Vol.2 No.2 [Listed in REF2]

[3.3] Corby, V., (2017b) 'The Sedimentation of the Social: Spiral Jetty and the Ruins of the Death Drive', *The Sculpture Journal*, Vol. 26.2 [Listed in REF2]

[3.4] Corby, V., and O'Donnell, L., (2021 delayed by Covid), 'Editorial', *Drawing Matters* Special Edition, *TRACEY: Drawing, Visualisation, Research* (DOI pending). [Can be Supplied by the HEI upon Request]

[3.5] Corby, V., (2011) 'Say What You See: The Drawings of Sally Taylor' in *SALLY TAYLOR drawings*, ACE funded exhibition catalogue, Ryedale Folk Museum (with Gavin Delahunty, Head of Exhibitions, Tate Liverpool) ISBN 978-0-9565590-5-0. [Can be Supplied by the HEI upon Request]

[3.6] Corby, V., *Eva Hesse: Longing, Belonging and Displacement*, (I B Tauris, 2010) [Can be Supplied by the HEI upon Request]

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

1. *From the Ground Up* is an ongoing HEI, school, and third sector network developed in collaboration with municipal galleries, Barnsley Museums and Heritage Trust Education Dept, the Cooper Gallery Barnsley (BMHT), The Civic Arts Centre Barnsley, the world-leading open-air museum the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Horizon Community College, one of the largest secondary education providers in Barnsley.

In January 2020 *From the Ground Up* was awarded £3000 by YSJU's Institute of Social Justice to carry out a small pilot that would test the project's material-led method and collate existing data to map the specific barriers to and inequalities of cultural engagement through primary and secondary education, further education and higher education in the Borough ([Report](#)). This pilot was instrumental to BMHT's successful application for £17,000 awarded by the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation.

The purpose of *From the Ground Up* is to explore creative strategies that intervene in the cycle of transgenerational disadvantage that currently impacts on the futures of children and young people in the post-industrial Borough of Barnsley. The Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley is a signature community of post-industrial Britain whose most talented disadvantaged young people struggle to take ownership of their future (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). The pilot funded an artist's residency dedicated to Michael Sadler's Bequest of 200 drawings at the Cooper Gallery and Horizon Community College. Implemented through a series of six workshops, hosted by Karen Wallis (Research Fellow in Drawing YSJU) and Corby (YSJU) working over a period of two weeks with 25 Year 9 (13-14 year-old) students. This marked the first collaboration between a Barnsley Museums and Heritage Trust organisation and a Borough secondary school for many years. The workshops encouraged students to view drawing as means to physically engage with and reflect on the world they inhabit, creating a sense of belonging for them in the gallery space and facilitating participation in the Metropolitan Borough Council 2030 #MyFutureBarnsley consultation [[5.1](#); [5.2](#); [5.6](#)]. The residency was documented by Wallis in her [film](#) *From the Ground Up*, disseminated by Barnsley Museums and YSJU ISJ. The pilot's exhibition was interrupted by Covid-19 but its focus on drawing for mindfulness formed the foundation of Horizon's Lockdown arts activities, rolled out to 1956 students. BMHT education department also used the pilot as a template for their bid to the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation to develop a new museum strategy in response to Covid-19 through a programme of drawing for wellbeing for vulnerable young people rooted in the Sadler collection.

Art Happens Here (AHH) is a new artist run collective in Malton, North Yorkshire. Taylor's pivotal role in the formation and development of the collective has directly drawn on her ACE funded project *Mentoring for Professional Development* and her participation in and role on the selection panel of the ACE funded *Prison Drawing Project* (Curated by Tracey Himsworth, Dean Road Prison, Scarborough, 2016, [catalogue](#)). This pop-up group show attracted 1,400 visitors over one weekend and offered a rare opportunity for mentoring and collaboration for artists in North Yorkshire who predominantly work in isolation. The benefits of this pop-up project highlighted the demand for contemporary arts activities and support for artists in the region. What it also became clear was that if these benefits were going to become sustainable and make a more meaningful impact on communities with high social deprivation like Scarborough, a much more robust arts strategy was needed.

To this end AHH secured and repurposed Community House, an old Council office block in Malton, and transformed it into the first affordable studio complex in the region. Supported by in-kind funding from Ryedale District Council, it has begun to develop a network of mentoring, exhibition collaboration, and professional development for artists in the region with links to national arts organisations such as the Drawing Projects UK, and the Rabley Drawing Centre, Wiltshire. The purpose of AHH is to work with Ryedale District Council, wider councils in North Yorkshire and Forestry England to inform policy and generate

sustainable opportunities that will embed contemporary arts activity in remote rural and coastal north Yorkshire.

Since 2016, **Taylor** has been in dialogue with the Managing Director Forestry Commission, Director of Crescent Arts, Development Manager for the Forestry Commission, Ryedale District Council plus artists across Ryedale to drive the district and Dalby Forest arts strategies. Through this network **Taylor** has facilitated three exhibition YSJU symposia under the title of *SelfScapes* (in collaboration with YSJU colleagues **Adams**, **Kolaiti** and Sperryn-Jones (YSJU 2016-2020); opening up **Taylor's** role as advocate for the arts photography and sculpture and bringing national artists into the region for the first time. These events and the formation of AHH have been instrumental in changing perceptions and lifting ambitions for the arts in the region, leading to a residency at Dalby and exhibitions across Ryedale by Helen Sear, first artist to represent Wales with a solo show at the Venice Biennale 2015, and the permanent installation of *Shy Sculpture* by Turner Prize Winner Rachel Whiteread to commemorate the First World War as part of the Centenary Art Commissions.

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

[5.1] Testimonial: Community Arts Officer, Barnsley Museums

[5.2] Testimonial: Subject Leader for Art, Horizon Community College

[5.3] Testimonial: Chief Curator, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

[5.4] Testimonial: Development Manager, Forestry Commission

[5.5] Testimonial: Arts Officer, Ryedale District Council

[5.6] Report: From the Ground Up, Workshop Feedback

[5.7] Report: Metropolitan Borough Council 2030 #MyFutureBarnsley consultation