

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Leeds Beckett University		
Unit of Assessment: 32 - Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: The Etiquette of the Arms Trade		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2007 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Jill Gibbon	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Reader	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2015-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>Gibbon's research increased understanding among the public and arts professionals of how international arms trading is legitimised by cultural rituals such as music, hospitality, and etiquette. Her insights influenced a play about the arms industry, making significant material contributions to two campaigns that resulted in BAE Systems, Europe's largest defence contractor, withdrawing sponsorship of the Great Exhibition of the North (GEON), and The National Festival of Making. Further acknowledged by artists Tatham and O'Sullivan in their installation at The Baltic, her research has raised international awareness of the ethics of corporate sponsorship of the arts.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>One of the world's largest arms exporters, the UK sells weapons to countries listed as human rights abusers by the Foreign Office, enabling (for example) Bahrain's violent suppression of pro-democracy protests, and Saudi Arabia's airstrikes on Yemen. Through her practice-as-research methodologies, exhibitions, campaigns, and fieldwork at international arms fairs, Gibbon reveals how the arms trade, one of the world's most secretive industries, is validated, normalised and justified. Consequently, Gibbon's research has engendered a major expansion in the range of research into the international arms trade and how this information can be disseminated to the public.</p> <p>Disguised as a security consultant, Gibbon visited 14 arms fairs in Europe and the Middle East from 2007-20. Once inside, she made drawings and collected complimentary gifts, capturing how arms deals are legitimised through polite rituals and corporate hospitality. She produced over 100 sketchbooks depicting the garb, gestures and manners used by the weapons industry to project a respectable image, revealing a culture otherwise hidden from public view: a string quartet playing Mozart in the shadow of a tank; a fashion show in front of a rack of missiles whilst hostesses serve champagne.(3.1) Among the thirty or so complimentary gifts collected from arms companies during fieldwork were stress-balls in the shape of bombs, grenades, and tanks; jellied sweet fighter jets; toffees in wrappers saying 'welcome to hell'; and condoms with the slogan, 'the ultimate protection'.(3.2)</p> <p>This archive of sketchbooks and gifts provides new and novel insights into the disparity between the jaunty presentation of products at point-of-sale and their lethal purpose, showing how the cultural lingua franca of rituals like music, hospitality and etiquette are used to normalise the arms trade. Studies of the arms trade have predominantly been confined to the social sciences' quantitative methods and rational analysis. However, etiquette isn't easily quantifiable or rationalised; it's aesthetic: performed, enacted, displayed.(3.3). Gibbon's research applies practice-led fine art methodologies of drawing, performance and working with found objects to provide qualitatively derived insights into a secretive and problematic industry.</p>		

Beyond the fairs, arms companies' sponsorship of cultural events distracts the public from their military role and monetising of death. Gibbon addressed this by co-founding the campaign group Art Not Arms (ANA) in 2018, petitioning against BAE Systems' sponsorship of two arts festivals (GEON and The National Festival of Making), using campaigning as a critical art strategy allied with her visual artworks, similarly to artists such as Andrea Fraser, Hans Haacke and Micol Hebron. Both campaigns highlighted BAE System's attempt to use arts sponsorship to detoxify its public image.

In 2018 Gibbon was awarded an Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF) Early Career Fellowship, enabling her to disseminate her findings through an exhibition of sketchbooks, gifts, outfit, and photographs at the Bradford Peace Museum, one of the few museums in the world dedicated to peace and social reform, a unique venue for framing her research within a critical analysis of war. This research now comprises a book, and a book chapter. (3.1,3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6).

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

3.1 Gibbon, J. (2007-2020) Sketchbooks, [Pen and Ink]. Exhibitions include: *Up in Arms* Bethanien Gallery, Berlin (2019); *And This Too*, Platform Arts Gallery, Belfast (2017); *Transcriptor: Illustration, Documentary and the Material*, James Hockey Gallery, Farnham (2017); *Visible Women*, Leeds City Library (2016); *Shock and Awe*, Royal West Academy, Bristol (2014).

3.2 Gibbon, J. (2007-2020) Complimentary Gifts, [Collection of complimentary gifts from arms fairs]. Exhibitions include: *Up in Arms*, Bethanien Gallery, Berlin (2019); *Kreig. Mach. Sinn*, Ruhr Museum, Essen (2018 - 2019); *And This Too*, Platform Arts Gallery, Belfast (2017); *Visible Women*, Leeds City Library (2016); *Shock and Awe*, Royal West Academy, Bristol (2014).

3.3 Gibbon, J. and Sylvester, C. (2017) 'Thinking Like an Artist-Researcher about War' *Millennium*, Sage Publications, January 2017, 45 (2).

3.4 Gibbon, J. (2018) *The Etiquette of the Arms Trade*, Exhibition held at The Bradford Peace Museum, Bradford, 13th April - 28th June 2018.

3.5 Gibbon, J. (2018) *The Etiquette of the Arms Trade*, Nottingham: Beam Editions.

3.6 Gibbon, J. (2020) 'This is Not a Bomb', in Maltby, et al. (eds.) *Spaces of War, Wars of Spaces*, Bloomsbury, pp.187-204.

Grants

ISRF (2017-18) ISRF Early Career Fellowship Competition: £35,739.00

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

Gibbon's research highlights how weapons sales in the arms trade are normalised through cultural rituals and sponsorship of events. Her research informed a play on the arms trade and resulted in BAE Systems' withdrawal as sponsor of two national cultural events.

Influencing public awareness of arms trade cultural sponsorship

Gibbon's research enhances understanding of how weapons manufacturers appropriate cultural rituals to 'artwash' products. New insights from her exhibitions on arms fairs were shared with combined audiences of 2,114,442 (Source: Kantar), attracting international press coverage from Al Jazeera (2014), BBC Radio Four (2018), The Guardian (2014; 2018), Folket i Bilt (2019), Frieze (2019), and BBC World Service (2014, 2018), who introduced Gibbon as '*lifting the lid on the murky world of arms sales*'. (5.1)

Exhibitions at Bradford Peace Museum (BPM) and Royal West Academy (2014) attracted high audience numbers.(5.2) Alison Bevan described the 8,046 visitors to Royal West Academy as the *'highest ever visitor numbers for the period'*(5.3), resulting in an 8-month extension of the exhibition in an off-site gallery, attracting 899 visitors (5.2). The exhibition changed people's understanding of the arms industry. For example, audiences *'did not know that the UK makes arms that are sold around the world and that are responsible for harming civilians'*, and also thought that Gibbon's *'eye-opening exhibition unpicks the mystique of the arms trade'*. (5.3)

Raising artists' awareness of arms trade and reshaping arts production

Gibbon's BPM exhibition was instrumental to the development of Common Wealth Theatre Company's play *I Have Met the Enemy*, a scene depicting an arms fair was based on Gibbon's drawings, which revealed a world previously inaccessible to the actors. Co-Director Evie Manning: *'The exhibition's observations and depictions of the 'performance of respectability' has informed our play in such a way that we have built a significant opening scene around this idea and the characters, action and gestures that The Etiquette of the Arms Trade explored'*.(5.4) Audiences of 980 people saw the play in Bradford and Newcastle. The play travelled to Cardiff (2019); and will tour Edinburgh and London in 2021 (delayed by COVID-19). Artists involved with GEON were previously unaware of the arms trade's 'art washing' strategies. Artist Emily Hesse said that Gibbon's work, *'gives us an insight into something that we are not shown, this is a world which is hidden from us, and that's how I really feel that her work was very beneficial to me at that time because it allowed me to see what was really going on behind the scenes in these arms fairs that I would have never otherwise seen.'*(5.5) Hesse documented this experience in an article for the book *Black Birds Born from Invisible Stars* (2018).

Influencing collective action

Gibbon's research made a distinct and material contribution to the campaign that resulted in GEON dropping BAE Systems' sponsorship in three ways. First, Gibbon co-founded 'Art Not Arms' and wrote the petition garnering 2,366 signatures and national press coverage. (5.6) Second, Gibbon's drawings persuaded headliners the Commoners Choir to pull out of GEON, re-joining after BAE's withdrawal. Choir leader Boff Whalley's assertion that Gibbon's work *'alerted me to a side of the international trade in weapons that I hadn't understood – that arms dealing is normalized with music, entertainment, and wine'*,(5.7) is echoed by Hesse's view that *'the campaign did definitely make a lot of artists aware of it [the arms trade's use of art washing]'*.(5.5) Third, Gibbon's research was used by artists Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan's in their installation at BALTIC during GEON (seen by 166,851.(5.8)), which featured a history of anti-power stances, with Gibbon's research an important reference. According to Tatham, the installation *'included a description of Gibbon going undercover into arms fairs, her drawings revealing a world, which, with its string quartets and champagne seeks to create an impression that weapons are no different from any other object of exchange...[her] project provided both a resource for our own exhibition and demonstrated how the forms and approaches of contemporary art practice can enact political enquiry.'* (5.9).

Art Not Arms demonstrably influenced the cultural sector, highlighting arts organisations' responsibility to check sponsors' backgrounds. The BBC cited its impact on Turner Prize sponsorship, stating, *'What has also become absolutely clear over the past 12 months is that arts organisations have to up their game when it comes to basic due diligence before accepting a sponsor's money'* (5.10). Following Gibbon's second Art Not Arms petition against BAE's sponsorship of The National Festival of Making (23/04/2019), BAE was dropped after two days. (5.6)

An ARTnews article 'The Year in Protest' identified activism as a key influence on the art world, especially *'protests and petitions that called attention to abuses of power, inequity, and privilege in the cultural sector'*, citing Gibbon's campaign as example of *'[one of] the year's notable art-world disruptions'*. (5.10)

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

- 5.1** Interview Transcript: Gibbon, J. (2018) Interviewed by Celia Hatton with panel guests Giles Fraser and Milica Pesic for *The BBC World Service*, 28 April.
- 5.2** Exhibition Report: Bradford Peace Museum (2018-19) *Exhibition Report for The Etiquette of the Arms Trade*, the Bradford Peace Museum, Bradford.
- 5.3** Exhibition Report: Bottomley, S. & Cross, S. (2014) *Exhibition Report for Shock and Awe: Contemporary Artists at War and Peace*, Royal West of England Academy, Bristol.
- 5.4** Testimonial: Manning, E. (2019) Testimonial from Evie Manning, Co-Artistic Director of the Common Wealth Theatre Company, 1 March.
- 5.5** Interview transcript: Hesse, E. (2020) Interview with Emily Hesse, Independent Artist. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 27 July.
- 5.6** Art Not Arms Petitions: Art Not Arms (2018; 2019) *Tell the Great Exhibition of the North to Refuse BAE sponsorship and Festival of Making: Drop BAE Sponsorship*. Available at: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/great-exhibition-of-the-north-to-refuse-bae-sponsorship> and <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/festival-of-making-drop-bae-sponsorship-1> (Accessed: 18 March 2020).
- 5.7** Testimonial: Whalley, B. (2019) Testimonial from Boff Whalley, Leader of the Commoners Choir, 29 February.
- 5.8** Archive Information: Bouttell, S (2020) Correspondence and archive webpage from Sarah Bouttell, Producer (Documentation, Library & Archive) at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, 16 March.
- 5.9** Testimonial and Exhibition Newspaper Extract: Tatham, J. (2019) Testimonial from Joanne Tatham, Artist, 25 February; and O'Sullivan, T. & Tatham, J. (2018) Extract from *A Successful Proposition for the Great North Exhibition: Broadsheet*, 22 June 2018.
- 5.10** News Reports: Gompertz, W. (2019) 'Turner Prize drops Stagecoach sponsorship over LGBT controversy', *BBC*, 3 May. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-48142314> (Accessed: 18 March 2020). Selvin, C. (2018) 'The Year in Protest: from the Met to Chapel Hill to Kochi and Beyond,' *Art News*, 21 December. Available at: <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/year-protest-met-chapel-hill-kochi-beyond-11583/> (Accessed: 18 March 2020).