

Institution: LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY		
Unit of Assessment: Panel D, Unit 32: Art & Design: History, Theory and Practice		
Title of case study: Enriching Lives through Contemporary Site-Specific Art in the Domestic Sphere		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011-2014		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Lin Holland	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Professional Tutor in Fine Art (previously Senior Lecturer from 2006-September 2013)	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1989 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: February 2013 – April 2014		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The research took place in West Everton, one of the poorest wards in England, where residents are at high risk of cultural exclusion. It involved the exchange and analysis of objects between two artists and 18 participants and the production of 17 site-specific artworks by the artists that were temporarily installed in each participant's home. The following impact was achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-creation between artists and participants, through mutual exchange of objects and narratives, leading to new ways of working for the artists and a permanent 'voice' for the participants through the artistic works created • engaging new audiences by bringing contemporary art methodologies and artefacts directly into the homes of participants, enabling them to control the social context of the research • increased cultural participation, social inclusion and improved levels of confidence, through gallery visits, sculpture workshops in a university context, and associated social events • dissemination of the research and its impact through talks, exhibitions, residency, catalogue and website, influencing practitioners, community ambassadors and policy makers • the development of a close community network within the wider community which improved neighbourly communication and social inclusion beyond the period of the research 		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The research took place during a period when the status of the art object was under critical scrutiny and the French curator, theoretician and critic, Nicolas Bourriaud, and other influential stakeholders, had proposed that the role of the artist should be as "... facilitators for audiences to access power, rather than as makers of objects for circulation in a capitalist system" (N.Bourriaud, <i>Relational Aesthetics</i> 1998).</p> <p>Holland's research at this time explored the relationship between artwork/object and site, both within and beyond the gallery system. She employed the wider definition of 'site', to include the social context of spaces and the people who inhabited them. It was within this milieu that the question of the role of contemporary art objects/sculpture, specifically in domestic settings, came to the fore of Holland's research and how, or if, the art object might also have the potential to</p>		

facilitate the audience's '**access to power**'. To this end, the research was designed to employ the dialogic methodologies of relational aesthetics, but its aims were investigated through the interrogation of **objects** and the creative, conceptual and critical processes used in producing them. Her research outputs were disseminated through residencies, talks and exhibitions in England, Europe, Africa, India, Australasia and South America. Since 2008 she has collaborated with artist Jane Poulton under the title of *SiteMaterialObject* (www.SiteMaterialObject). As collaborating artists they have extended this research and disseminated their collaborative outputs through exhibitions, commissions for public bodies, including the NHS Trust, and residencies in spaces including: cathedrals, galleries, hospitals, homes and housing estates, consequently extending its impact (see **Section 3**).

The Object Project: At Home with Art in Everton, by Holland & Poulton, was funded by Arts Council England and took the form of an ethnographic participatory research project from February 2013 to April 2014, with the two artists and 18 stakeholders from 17 households of The West Everton Community Council (henceforth WECC). Research outputs included the production of 17 new site-specific artworks, 2 public exhibitions, 1 catalogue and a residency at *Tate Exchange* Liverpool, and led to subsequent related outputs such as *Invisible Workers*, a commission by the NHS Trust. *Invisible Workers* identified work-related objects used by hospital employees who are not normally seen by the public, resulting in a suite of 18 photographs for installation in the main atrium of the new Royal Liverpool Hospital (see **Section 4B**).

The Object Project: At Home with Art in Everton demonstrably led to: i) the investigation of non-functional, three-dimensional objects in domestic spaces by participants and the artists ii) the interrogation of cognitive gaps between the producers of contemporary sculpture and the participants and iii) making transparent the creative methodologies and practical processes used in the production of contemporary art, specifically by the two artists during the research and more widely through the group's visits to galleries and their participation in sculpture workshops.

The participants were identified by the Family Liaison Officer (henceforth FLO) of WECC, as individuals whom she felt would be willing to participate and benefit the most from doing so. Residents in the WECC community already belonged to a marginalised group (See **Section 4 Nature of the Impact**), and within that group the nominated individuals were proposed for additional reasons including: mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, communication difficulties and deep social isolation. Not all participants had additional reasons for being nominated and the FLO used her long-standing knowledge of WECC members in creating a diverse group of participants made up of 14 females and 4 males with an age range between 6 and 80+ years. The FLO's anticipated benefits for participants included: avoiding social isolation, improving mental health, and providing opportunities to participate in a community project, increasing social communication and access to local cultural resources.

The artists built a trusting relationship with individuals and the group over the period of one year through the process of 'object exchange' which allowed them to jointly explore how non-art objects become imbued with meaning in the lives of their owners and, concurrently how contemporary art objects are developed. This concluded with the artists making a unique site-specific artwork for each of the 17 households. This participatory co-creation was complemented by 3 group visits to galleries, participation in 4 sculpture workshops held at the University and 3 social events held at WECC, hosted by participants, when the group and the artists jointly reviewed the project's development (see **Section 4 The Process**).

Key to the findings was the necessity for the artists to employ their usual conceptual rigour within the critical discourses of contemporary practice, just as they would if they were producing work to exhibit in a contemporary art gallery. Discussing the conceptual and material development of the subsequent artworks in a transparent manner facilitated aim iii) (transparency of methodologies) above. The need to employ critical and aesthetic rigour in making the artworks was crucial to the artists and central to the purpose of the research, and placed the work outside of the *Relational Aesthetics* model proposed by Bourriaud.

The research deliberately situated the project at home, so each participant fulfilled the role of 'host' and the artists became 'guests'. Through well-established social norms, this disrupted the typical power dynamic of the artist-viewer relationship and created a sense of agency in participants, who became confident pro-active individuals, able to shape the direction and outcome of the research. This was evidenced through positive participant engagement over the period of one year and the fact that all 18 participants took part in the final stage of the project when the artworks were installed in their homes.

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

1. Moving Objects Residency at Tate Liverpool: Tate Exchange – 23-29 July 2018 – presenting documentation from *The Object Project: At Home with Art in Everton* and further explored the meaning of objects to a transitory audience within a gallery setting
2. Public Exhibitions – *The Object Project: At Home with Art in Everton*, Cornerstone Gallery, Liverpool Hope University, April 2014 (This was the former school and a social club venue for some participants prior to the University taking over the building)
3. *Legacy2* at Manchester Metropolitan University, School of Art, exhibition of photographic outputs from *The Object Project: At Home with Art in Everton*, January – February 2018
4. Website: www.SiteMaterialObject
5. Catalogue Publication: *site material the object project*, 2015 – published with funding from Arts Council England. Essay by Professor of Public Art Practice, University of Central Lancashire
6. *Patterns of Thought* conference presentation, *At Home with Art in Everton*, 21-22 June 2013, Bluecoat Liverpool, in collaboration with University of Liverpool
7. Arts Council England – Grants for The Arts

4. Details of the impact

Nature of the impact:

Everton has the highest concentration of deprivation in the City of Liverpool, which itself has higher levels than the national average. In 2017 the average household income in Everton was £18,403, less than half the national average of £37,476 with 41.9% of children in Everton living in poverty, compared to the national average of 16.8%

(<https://liverpool.gov.uk/media/9951/everton.pdf>). Residents in Everton face high levels of difficulties including poverty, unemployment, violent crime, domestic violence and substance abuse. 2018 statistics can be found here: <https://www.liverpoolccg.nhs.uk/media/3457/nbh-pack-anfield-everton-2018.pdf>.

This was a research-led participatory engagement with severely marginalised, under-engaged audiences, involving new forms of creative co-production and collaboration resulting in the following impact:

A) Impact on Participants:

- Improved wellbeing
- Increased social inclusion

- Increased cultural participation
- Increased levels of confidence, including to visit museums and galleries independently

These impacts were assessed informally throughout the project, and formally via mid-point (Aug 2013) and concluding (Mar 2014) evaluation questionnaires.

Evidence: The participants reported feeling valued through the process of being listened to, with time being devoted to them and the story attached to their treasured object.

The gallery visits improved levels of confidence to visit galleries independently. 75% of participants who completed the mid-point questionnaires reported that they had independently visited an exhibition (or similar) since taking part in the research. Visits to the galleries were described as “...eye opening. They’re not places I would normally visit but I found it a really interesting experience”. *“I totally enjoyed them and I’ve been back since. I’m taking my granddaughter with me next week.”* *“Out of the 3 visits I loved the Tate – because you were allowed to say what you thought – everyone’s opinion was ‘right’ about the pieces – you weren’t judged. The Walker – I’ve been there before, but I’ve never really thought about the paintings on the wall the way we did when we were together.”*

One participant stated about the sculpture workshops *“I didn’t know that it would bring out ideas the way it did and it was lovely to touch the materials...it made me think differently and gave me a chance to express myself.”*

Another example of impact is that one participant suffered from agoraphobia and low self-esteem body issues. Through participating she felt able to leave the house and take part in social gatherings, four practical workshops and three gallery visits, stating: *“I felt so safe in the group – I could appreciate everything...”* For this participant’s artwork the artists proposed a professional photo-shoot and artwork in the form of a book, in which the participant enacted 10 poses from art history of the figure *Venus* – see [The Everton Venus](#). The impact of the experience led the participant to state...the project *“gave me the fantastic gift of becoming part of art”*. *“I’ve since been to the library on my own...I feel I can walk in there and feel confident and positive about the future because of this project...”*

It was made explicit to participants throughout the research that art collections housed by many cultural institutions are paid for by public funds, which improved participants’ perceptions of their right to access such collections.

B) Impact on the Artists

This process required the artists to change their normal working methods, enabling participants to pro-actively contribute to the project’s direction. The artists became responsive to participant feedback and flexible with their methods.

Evidence: This new way of responding informed their subsequent collaborative work in, for example, *Here We Are* a public art commission by South Liverpool Homes working with a group of residents from Speke ([Here We Are](#)). The project was facilitated by Liverpool City Council’s Public Art Officer and was cited as an exemplar public artwork in her report to the Council. *Invisible Workers* was commissioned by the NHS Trust for the new Royal Liverpool University Hospital ([Invisible Workers](#)). In this work the artists asked those employees in the hospital who are not normally seen by patients to identify an object that represented the work they undertook, resulting in a suite of digital photographs to be displayed in the main atrium of the new hospital.

C) Wider Impacts

The benefits and impact of social inclusion to the participating households also had an impact on their families and friends, although this impact has not been measured. The project created a “community within a community”, according to the Professor of Public Art at the University of Central Lancashire who observed the research from the outset, attended the Private View of the launch exhibition and wrote an accompanying essay in the catalogue.

The project demonstrated to WECC, community ambassadors and local councillors, the power, benefits and impact of this in-depth participatory approach. WECC had reported their engagement in previous cultural initiatives as less than satisfactory, and they were enthused by this new approach with in-depth engagement and meaningful participation (unfortunately WECC suffered a major setback when their building was damaged by fire and subsequently closed. It was, therefore, not possible to undertake further projects at the time).

Evidence: The combination of increased cultural participation, improved wellbeing and increased social inclusion were recognised at the highest level within Liverpool City Council: *“...this was an important project for everyone who took part, it gave them a positive experience of contemporary art and how they could enjoy it, as well as how they saw their own creativity. Lin and Jane made this possible. Working in this way, really listening to people, engaging them in new ways is how we wish to work with artists in the future.”* (Liverpool City Councillor and Mayoral Representative (See **Section 5.1 - Sources to corroborate the impact**) in opening speech at the public launch event April 2014).

The Process: Over the period of one year the artists visited each participant in their homes, where they conducted recorded interviews and made formal photographic portraits of each person and their treasured object. Each participant shared the history and meaning of their object with the artists, who, in turn, responded by making a personal, site-specific artwork for each of the 17 households – they did this by employing their visual arts training, critical knowledge and aesthetic judgements. The home visits frequently lasted several hours as the artists spent time listening to the extended stories of the object, its history and meaning to the owner. Conversations frequently went beyond the remit of the research but as the FLO stated *“this project is about so much more than art”*. Through the shared process of exchanging objects, contemporary sculpture was taken directly into the homes of a culturally marginalised group, going beyond the usual contexts and methods of dissemination for the artform, consequently developing its audience, the participants’ access to it and their enriched enjoyment of it.

A crucial aspect of the project was the carefully planned group visits to galleries: Tate Liverpool (15.6.13) The Walker Art Gallery (8.7.13) and Bluecoat Gallery (29.6.13) and four sculpture workshops held in the Fine Art Department at Liverpool Hope University on 20, 27 July and 3, 10 August 2013. These important experiences developed participants’ confidence and increased group’s appreciation and dialogue relating to historical and contemporary objects – made both by artists and by themselves – evidenced by their willingness to articulate and share their interpretation of the methods, meanings and creative processes behind them.

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

1. Liverpool City Council, Assistant Mayor of Liverpool and Mayoral Lead: Fairness & Tackling Poverty
2. Liverpool City Council, Public Arts Officer
3. West Everton Community Council, Family Liaison Officer
4. West Everton Community Council, Trustee
5. Professor of Public Art, University of Central Lancashire
6. Participant A
7. Participant B
8. Mid-point and concluding questionnaires from participants in August 2013 and March 2014
9. Arts Council England Evaluation Report, Submitted to ACE 4 June 2014: *Developing, promoting and investing in the arts in England: Grants for the Arts – Individuals and Organisations*