

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Worcester		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
<b>Title of case study:</b> The role of public art installations in improving quality of life and urban regeneration.		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2012-present.		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Mark Gubb	Senior Lecturer	2015-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2015-present.		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Gubb's public art installations in the UK and US have had an impact on the quality of life in specific locations, reinvigorating and redefining previously neglected spaces, providing renewed life and enriching experience, increasing footfall and activity, creating new loci, meeting points and imaginative points of navigation. His innovative creative practice-based research has benefitted community knowledge, awareness and understanding of urban social and cultural histories, and increased social well-being. Organisations and businesses such as Admiral PLC, Berkeley Homes, Vista, Bristol City Council and Cardiff Airport, as well as their customers and workers, have benefitted from this impact of Gubb's research.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Gubb's creative practice-based public art research has been driven by the question of how to provide material, imaginative and informative way-markers in redeveloped or new urban locations and otherwise nondescript places. Gubb has been particularly interested in the specificities of objects that become topographical way-markers, and the ways in which such objects might impact upon individual and community wellbeing and knowledge of the places in which they are installed.</p> <p>'Alight' is a major permanent public work commissioned for Admiral PLC alongside the construction of the new Admiral offices in Cardiff city centre. Chosen by the public and the employees of Admiral from a shortlist of three artist designs, the work consists of a 10m tall, steel and glass, illuminated lightning bolt, which reconfigures and redefines this completely redeveloped central part of the Welsh capital.</p> <p>'After the Soft Ascent' was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and permanently installed in a passenger walkway at Cardiff Airport. It was designed to reflect the bilingual nature of Wales, taking an English language line from Wales's most famous poet, Dylan Thomas, ('after the soft ascent') and a Welsh language lyric from one of Wales's most beloved bands, the Super Furry Animals ('pan ddaw'r wawr'), and combining these to create a new mini-poem - (in English) 'After the soft ascent, when dawn breaks...', (yn Cymraeg) 'Wedi'r esgyniad ysgafn, pan ddaw'r wawr...'. The words of the sculpture are sequenced to illuminate one by one, in their English and Welsh language pairings, illustrating the translation between the two, before illuminating collectively.</p>		

'Wassail' was commissioned by UP Projects on behalf of Berkeley Homes. This project developed into a series of eight works sited around a new housing development at Nine Elms, Battersea, London. Notionally based around the idea of developing way-markers to help people navigate around and through the site, Gubb's works here were a result of his ongoing research which examines the ways in which specific objects can renew the cultural and social life of locations in which they are situated. By introducing a range of interesting visual moments into the landscape of this redeveloped site in Battersea, Gubb created informative and useful navigational reference points that help to tie the new development to the cultural history of its location.

'Free For All Forever' is a phrase and an image that has appeared in several of Gubb's works, including a billboard along the I-70 in Missouri and in locations in Bristol and Southampton (UK). These installations ran concurrently alongside each other (in October and November 2016), forming part of the wider 'Revelations' project and the programmes of the I-70 Sign Show and the BAS8 Associate Programme. For example, 'Free For All Forever – Bristol' was commissioned by Bristol City Council to be sited in two pedestrian subways on the edge of the Easton/St Paul's districts of the city.

### 3. References to the research

This impact case study is underpinned by research presented in a multi-component output (Gubb 01). Specific works reflected here (and in that research output) are as follows:

Mark Gubb, 'Wassail' (2018) - funded by Berkeley Homes (£80k total)

Mark Gubb, 'Free For All Forever' (2016) - the Missouri billboard was funded by Arts Council Wales/Arts Council England (£1k)

Mark Gubb, 'Alight' (2014) - funded by Stoford Ltd and Admiral PLC (£170k total).

The following research was completed in 2013 and is not included in the multi-component output Gubb 01:

Mark Gubb, 'After the Soft Ascent' (2013) - funded by Welsh Assembly Government (£20k).

### 4. Details of the impact

'Alight', a major permanent public work commissioned by Stoford Ltd and Admiral PLC alongside the new Admiral offices in Cardiff city centre (close to St Davids shopping centre and the Motorpoint Arena), has had an impact on quality of life, enriching the daily experience of office workers, residents and visitors to this central area of the city. The artwork benefits navigation through the city, providing a new meeting place and a new imaginative and topographical marker. The striking lit thunderbolt has had a profound impact on the architectural surroundings in which it is situated – an otherwise functional, corporate space. As Huw Llewelyn (Admiral PLC: Source A) remarks: 'it provoked much dialogue with our employees and beyond and has since become a much-loved part of the landscape of the city centre. You would often see it used as a meeting place or overhear it talked of as a point of navigation.' Jon Andrews of Stoford developers (Source B) writes: 'The installation of the work quickly became widely recognised in the city and helped transform an area previously occupied by a decaying 1970s car park into a place to meet, dwell and enjoy. The area had previously been a secondary entrance to the adjoining shopping centre, but the redevelopment of the area with updated landscaping and introduction of the Alight sculpture has transformed the public experience of the location, offering a sense of security as an easily identifiable landmark.'

The public artwork 'Free For All Forever' has had an impact on the quality of life and urban culture, enriching the lives of residents and the wider city of Bristol (but also in Southampton and a site in Missouri in the US). As Aldo Rinaldi (Source C) writes, the two underpasses Gubb designed in Bristol 'were hugely improved by [the] artwork which saw them stripped of many years of graffiti and flyposting which had a positive impact on the public, and laid the path for a

reinterpretation of the site.' Rinaldi also writes: 'The council was keen to open up alternative routes to the area by cycles, pedestrians on foot and other non-car modes of travel were central to that research and (Gubb's) artwork supported this aim by improving the area's appearance, adding interest and supporting wayfinding. The route saw increased traffic by these no-car users in the following period, augmented by nearby developments such as the Junction 3 scheme, a community centre and library, that also had an arts commission embedded in it.' Gubb's artwork 'reinvigorated and redefined the location, and enriched and improved local experience and knowledge of the place. It also created a new loci, meeting point/point of navigation due to the inclusion of the community notice board, which was a nice touch that people enjoyed and could use.'

The public artwork 'Wassail' has had an impact on the urban quality of life and culture, enriching the daily experience of the local community in Nine Elms, Battersea and the wider city of London. Commissioned by UP Projects on behalf of Berkeley Homes, this project, developing into a series of eight works sited around a new housing development, has provided the community and other travellers through the city with new way-markers and topographical points of reference. These way-markers have impacted on community knowledge of the history and culture of Battersea. Residents also had their lives enriched by being invited to be involved in the creation of the work. The landscape architect Alex Comrie (Source D) writes: 'It became clear to us that the final installed work had a fundamental impact on the life of the new development, providing residents with new knowledge of local heritage and creating interesting new meeting points/points of navigation through this space.'

The artwork 'After the Soft Ascent' was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and permanently installed at Cardiff Airport. Hannah Firth at Chapter Arts (Source E) writes: 'Conjuring an image of that moment when a plane breaks through cloud to sunlight, or the moment on a long-haul flight when dawn peeps through the window blinds, [the installation] has had an impact on travellers' experiences of the airport, the sculpture enriches the experience of these travellers. The artwork benefits navigation through the building, and is a new imaginative marker. Through its employment of Welsh and English the sculpture has also impacted upon traveller awareness of the bilingual nature of Wales and Welsh culture, and has facilitated not only enjoyment of this part of an otherwise functional, impersonal building but also furthered understanding of the culture of contemporary Wales.'

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

A: Huw Llewellyn, Head of Property, Admiral PLC

B: Jon Andrews, Stoford developers (now at Public Arts)

C. Aldo Rinaldi, ex-public arts officer for Bristol City Council.

D. Alex Comrie, project landscape architect, Berkeley Homes (now Director, Barton Willmore)

E. Hannah Firth, Chapter Arts