

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 15		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Art/Archaeology: Inspiring design and changing practice in Orkney's creative industries		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> Jan 2007 – November 2020		
<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>
Antonia Thomas	Researcher now Lecturer	2007 - present
Daniel Lee	Project Officer now Outreach Archaeologist	2008 - present
Anne Bevan	Head of Art & Design, Orkney College	2013 – present
Jane Downes	Professor & Head of Archaeology Institute	1999 – present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> January 2016 – November 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Orkney's archaeology sparks a unique contemporary creative engagement. Interdisciplinary research in the University of the Highlands &amp; Islands (UHI) Archaeology Institute provides a distinctive Art/Archaeology framework for applied collaboration across professional, business, and voluntary sectors. Community-focused research stimulates the creative and commercial practice of a diverse cohort of designers and artists, supporting Orkney's rural economy. Art/Archaeology collaborations have directly led to the design, development and global marketing of three commercially successful new jewellery collections and one new contemporary fashion range. The research also supports training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses, extending this impact to a wider cohort of practitioners. This has created additional opportunities for community groups to engage with archaeology-inspired creativity to the benefit of participants. By supporting employment, encouraging new pedagogies, influencing business practices and product development, and increasing sales for rural SMEs and Orkney's creative industries, UHI's Art/Archaeology research generates direct social, cultural, and economic impacts.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Over the past 12 years, the UHI Archaeology Institute has established an interdisciplinary research model, with Art/Archaeology as a key theme [3.1 - 3.6]. Fundamental to our research is a focus on process, context, and the medium of creativity – in the past and the present. This has led to distinctive, interlinked areas of research, into interdisciplinary and site-specific art practice [3.1, 3.3, 3.4], prehistoric art [3.2] and experimental mapping [3.5, 3.6]. This research explores creative engagements with archaeology, linking digital recording methods and archaeological representation with contextual understandings of heritage, place and identity.</p> <p>In 2010-11, Thomas and Lee organised a series of knowledge exchange activities focused on Art/Archaeology and involving a diverse group of academics, creative practitioners, and the wider community. These led to the Test Trenches interdisciplinary residency, a collaborative research project undertaken by Thomas and Lee with the Tabula Rasa contemporary arts collective [3.1]. This explored the Neolithic art of the Ness of Brodgar through a contemporary art lens and involved public workshops to encourage the creative interpretation of archaeological artefacts in the setting of the Pier Arts Centre gallery. This project laid the foundation for subsequent Art/Archaeology engagements.</p> <p>Lee's research focuses on experimental mapping and the representation of archaeological landscapes through walking [3.5] using handheld GPS (Global Positioning System) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) [3.6]. This has developed into an innovative research-</p>		

led practice which explores methods of recording and [re]-presenting archaeological sites and landscapes [3.5, 3.6]. This experimental mapping practice formed the basis for illustrative material produced during the 'Wilder Being' participatory art and archaeology project led by Bevan and Downes. This project, part of the 2014 'Being Human' Festival of the Humanities, brought together artists, archaeologists, and the community in an Art/Archaeology workshop [3.4]. Its interdisciplinary model was developed in the 'Archaeology Plus' project, which saw Lee and Bevan collaborate with the Orkney Blide Trust, a local mental health charity.

Like Lee, Thomas also explores lines and process, focussing on Orkney's prehistoric art and archaeology. Her research into stone-carvings (2011-20) has produced the largest catalogue of Neolithic art in the UK, numbering over 900 individual pieces [3.2]. Cataloguing involved new fieldwork and recording at the sites of Maeshowe and Skara Brae, and at the Ness of Brodgar excavations, within the *Heart of Neolithic Orkney* World Heritage Site. Orkney's prehistoric art is dominated by abstract, linear patterns, and Thomas' research into this visual language emphasises the process, rather than product, of this mark-making [3.1, 3.2]. The catalogue produced as part of her research translated the stone carvings into digital line drawings, complemented by contextual analysis.

Bevan and Thomas, with Lee, have drawn on these research projects to create bespoke art/archaeology CPD workshops and educational packages for professional creative practitioners. The interdisciplinary approach has influenced participants' creative practice, kickstarted collaborations with creative businesses and gained new audiences for Art/Archaeology inspired work. These collaborative conversations have generated new ways of working, led to the development of new product ranges, and increased revenue for Orkney's creative industries. Lee's mapping techniques inspired designer Kirsteen Stewart to collaborate on a series of experimental maps, which were then translated into designs for a new clothing and accessories range. Thomas' interpretative research – together with the digital drawings and photographs she produced as part of this [3.2] – have been at the core of the collaborations and impact with Ola Gorie Jewellery and Sheila Fleet Jewellery

### 3. References to the research

**3.1. Thomas, A. 2014.** Creating contexts: between the archaeological site and the art gallery. In I.A. Russell & A. Cochrane (eds.) *Art and Archaeology: Collaborations, Conversations, Criticisms*. New York: Springer-Kluwer, 141-155. (peer review edited book chapter)

**3.2. Thomas, A. 2016.** *Art & Architecture in Neolithic Orkney. Process, Temporality and Context*. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd. (book)

**3.3. Thomas, A., Lee, D., Frederick, U. & White, C. (eds.) 2017.** Beyond Art/Archaeology: Research and Practice after the 'Creative Turn'. *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 4(2): 121-256. (blind peer reviewed edited journal special edition)

**3.4. Bevan, A. & Downes J. 2017.** "Wilder Being: Destruction and Creation in the Littoral Zone." In *Relate North: Culture, Community and Communication*, edited by T. Jokela and G. Coutts. Rovaniemi, Finland: Lapland University Press (peer reviewed journal paper)

**3.5. Lee D.H.J. 2016.** Map Orkney Month: Imagining archaeological mappings. *Livingmaps Review* Vol 1, No 1. <http://www.livingmaps.review/journal/index.php/LMR> (Open Access). (edited journal paper)

**3.6. Lee D.H.J. 2018.** 'Experimental Mapping in Archaeology: process, practice and archaeologies of the moment.' In M. Gillings, P. Hacıgüzeller & G. Lock (eds) *Re-Mapping Archaeology: Critical Perspectives, Alternative Mappings*. London: Routledge, p143-176. (peer review edited book chapter)

### 4. Details of the impact

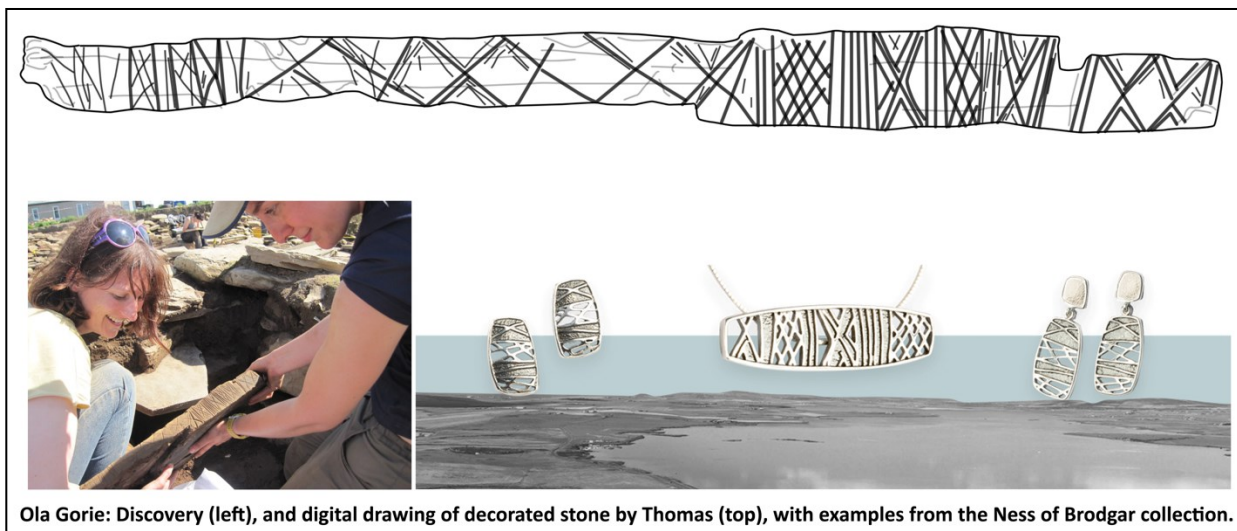
#### **Economic impact: Contributing to Orkney's creative industries**

The UHI's Art/Archaeology research has boosted creative SMEs in Orkney by contributing to the design, development, and marketing of new products and the adoption of new business models. Mike Gardens, chair of Creative Orkney, an industry body of 49 member organisations, recognises that this work "contributes significantly to the 'Orkney Brand, successfully used by Orkney-based

businesses in national and international markets” [5.1]. This research has directly influenced three creative businesses: Ola Gorie Jewellery, Sheila Fleet Jewellery, and Kirsteen Stewart Fashion Design. These have a combined annual turnover of £4.5m, with a global reach evidenced by markets in the UK, Europe, USA and Japan [5.2, 5.3, 5.5].

**Ola Gorie Jewellery** (OGJ), has a turnover of £???, supporting 13 employees. Collaborative discussions between Susan Cross (award-winning goldsmith and designer), Ola Gorie MBE (jeweller), and Antonia Thomas during the 2015 Art/Archaeology CPD course led to the design, development and production of their latest range, the *Ness of Brodgar* collection [<https://www.olagoriejewellery.com/blogs/craft-design/meet-sue-cross>]. For Cross, the engagement with Thomas’ research “had a strong impact on my practice and brought about a new way of working’ [5.4]. As OJG’s director states, “the research of Dr Antonia Thomas was ... absolutely invaluable – the collection would never have been created without the input and inspiration from this process” [5.2]. The collection – one of over 70 offered by OGJ - comprises 22 pieces (brooch, earrings, pendants, in different metals, totalling 41 products). It is the company’s best-selling range, and in 2019 alone, the *Ness of Brodgar* pieces accounted for 25% of sales of OGJ’s Orkney collections [5.2], a significant contribution to this rural SME’s turnover.

Thomas’ research into Neolithic art [3.1, 3.2] directly informed the design process for this collection, leading to increased revenue for the company. Continuing collaborative work between Thomas, Lee, and OGJ, has built on this success, inspiring OGJ to focus their business model on digital studio and web marketing of the archaeology-inspired collections. This will allow global customers to engage with the story behind OGJ’s uniquely important collections from the comfort of their own homes [5.2]. This has become particularly timely, as COVID-19 has devastated Orkney’s creative economy, which relies on physical visitors. The Art/Archaeology collaborative process is impacting on the company’s future business model and commercial strategy, in bringing “changes to the way [OGJ] as a business approach the design and marketing of new collections” [5.2].



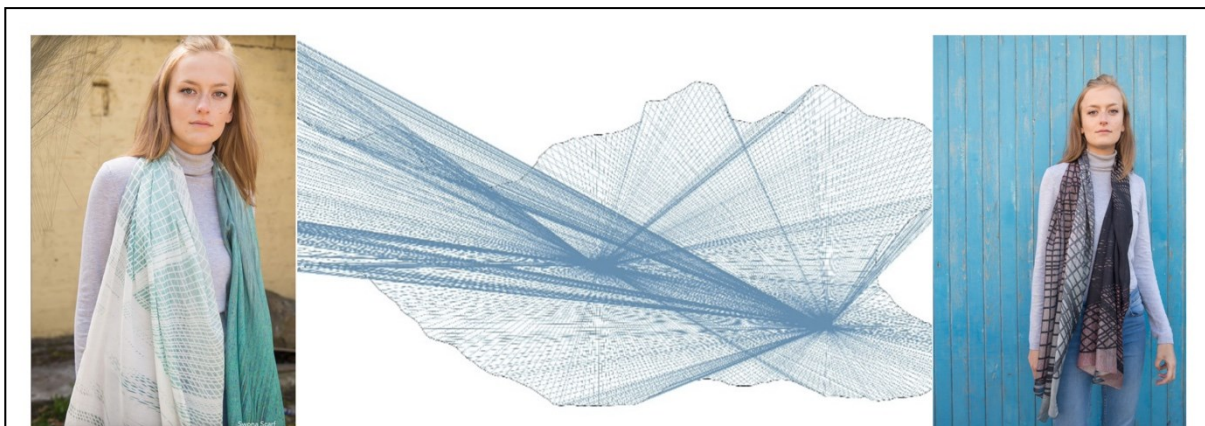
Ola Gorie: Discovery (left), and digital drawing of decorated stone by Thomas (top), with examples from the *Ness of Brodgar* collection.

**Sheila Fleet Jewellery** has been at the forefront of Orkney’s jewellery industry since 1993, with 55 employees in Orkney, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The company has a turnover of £???, with 118 collections sold through retail outlets in the UK and globally online. The design, development, and production of two new collections have been directly inspired by the *Ness of Brodgar* rock art featured in Thomas’ research [5.3]. Launched in 2016, the *Lunar* and *Brodgar Eye* ranges contain 21 and 12 pieces respectively (earrings, rings, pendants, cufflinks, bangles, necklets, bracelets) and have so far contributed £???? to the business [5.3].



Sheila Fleet: Carved stone from the Ness of Brodgar, illustrated in Thomas' catalogue, and the Brodgar Eye, and Lunar ranges

**Kirsteen Stewart Fashion Design** has an annual turnover of £?????. The small but growing sustainable rural microbusiness has 18 clothing and accessory collections which sell in the UK, Europe, and Japan, with a global customer base online. Inspired by Lee's experimental mapping research [3.6] explored in the Art/Archaeology CPD course, Daniel Lee and Kirsteen Stewart developed an innovative creative process linking digital archaeological drawing with contemporary product design. They collaborated on unique place-specific drawings, translated into digital 'maps' and inspiring the *WANDER* collection of 12 items of clothing and accessories: "each a form of mobile map embodying landscape" [5.5]. The collection has contributed £???? to the business since its 2018 launch, but the creative process of working between Art and Archaeology has had wider impacts. For Stewart, the design process "led to changes in practice for me as a designer [and] demonstrated the potential for combining academic research and collaborations in product design" [5.5]. As a result, Stewart is now "pursuing international collaborations in Asia" [5.5]. The collaboration continues with a relaunch planned for 2021.



Kirsteen Stewart: Extract from digital map drawing by Lee (middle), and examples from the Wander collection (left and right).

Building on these successes, a two-day Knowledge Exchange workshop in February 2020, led by Thomas, Lee and Bevan brought together Creative Industries professionals and creative practitioners from across Orkney to discuss the UHI's Art/Archaeology research and potential for future engagement. The participants noted the strong impact that UHI's Art/Archaeology research has made on Orkney's Creative Economy and several further projects are in development. An additional workshop, to explore the role of Art/Archaeology research for Creative Industries in Orkney's post-Covid economy, is planned for Spring 2021.

### **Professional and pedagogical impact: Research-led engagement between archaeologists and creative practitioners**

Bevan and Thomas have used the interdisciplinary research approach of Art/Archaeology to develop a unique suite of professional training courses, including an MA in Contemporary Art and Archaeology, the only course of its kind in the world, and internationally validated for 2020 delivery. It builds on the successful programme of CPD courses which have run since 2016, which have

seen 130 creative practitioners from the USA, Canada, Italy, France, Ireland and the UK engage with the UHI's Art/Archaeology model. Training draws upon a unique combination of Thomas' archaeological study of Neolithic art, Lee's experimental maps, and Bevan's practice-led art pedagogy. For one professional creative practitioner who took the course in 2019-20, the engagement with the research of Thomas, Lee and Bevan, encouraged new "ways of looking and inhabiting the world", inspiring her to "develop further my art practice [and] enabled me to reach new audiences" [5.6]. Of the 27 MA students who started in September 2020, 14 have previously undertaken one of the Art/Archaeology CPD courses run by Thomas and Bevan. Two further CPD alumni are now pursuing PhD research in Art/Archaeology.

### **Social impact: Creative engagement in Orkney's archaeology**

UHI's interdisciplinary Art/Archaeology methodology brings together professionals and the wider community across Orkney, enhancing wellbeing and supporting training. The Test Trenches Art/Archaeology research residency [3.1] in 2011 – together with the 'Wilder Being' Art/Archaeology project [3.4] – established models of interdisciplinary research, bringing together artists, archaeologists and community groups. Participants explored creative interpretations of archaeology using digital and analogue recording techniques [3.1, 3.4], a methodology further developed in the 'Archaeology Plus' Project (2018-2019). This was led by Bevan and Lee in collaboration with the Orkney Blide Trust, a charity offering mental health services for 150 people and their carers across Orkney. Archaeology Plus workshops engaged 30 members, who learned about artefacts, photography skills, and expressed creative responses to the archaeological materials and processes during arts workshops. The project resulted in an exhibition and display at Laura Grimond House which was open to the public on an open day. Service users developed creative responses to archaeological artefacts and excavations, which "taught them new skills and created an atmosphere where they could build up social networks, thereby reducing their isolation" [5.7].

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

- 5.1** Testimonial – Chair, Creative Orkney
- 5.2** Testimonial – Director, Ola Gorie Jewellery
- 5.3** Testimonial – Director, Sheila Fleet Jewellery
- 5.4** Testimonial – Goldsmith and Designer, Susan Cross Jewellery.
- 5.5** Testimonial – Managing Director, Kirsteen Stewart Fashion Design
- 5.6** Testimonial – Self-Employed Visual Artist / CPD course participant
- 5.7** Testimonial – Service Director, Orkney Blide Trust