

Section A		
The fields in this section are mandatory.		
Institution: Leeds Arts University		
Unit of Assessment: 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Reframing Environmental Issues Through Still Life		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2018-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dawn Woolley	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Research Fellow	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: January 2018 - Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2019-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Beneficiaries of this impact are The University of Leeds National Art and Design Club members, online workshop participants, and members of the local community; The Hepworth Gallery, Wakefield Art Social group for young people not in education, employment or training; students from Wakefield Adult Education centre: adult learners at an WDH Independent Living Scheme in Pontefract, and staff and students from Imperial College, London.</p> <p>Workshops aimed to raise awareness of waste in consumer culture. Some of the participants' sculptures were shown on posters in Leeds, a large-scale building wrap in Wakefield, and adverts on Facebook, temporarily changing the environments they were located in and exposing the general public, who may not visit art galleries, to contemporary art.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The research examines and critiques consumer culture, considering the environmental impact of capitalist societies through the history and theory of vanitas still-life paintings. Vanitas still life paintings warn of the damage to the soul that greed, excess and waste may cause. Today, vanitas can warn consumers about irreversible environmental consequences, caused by unsustainable consumer habits. Indelible stains on the soul are replaced by materials that do not biodegrade. The research examines contemporary still life practices, characterised by objects that evoke contradictions, use unexpected materials and contain unusual combinations of objects in order to challenge predominant social values. (Herrington & Woolley, 2018; Woolley, 2018A) The research applies literary concepts of irony and allegorical irony to the interpretation of vanitas paintings and then uses the technique to produce artworks. (Woolley, 2019).</p> <p>The research takes a post-modernist approach that blurs the distinctions between high and low culture, such as fine art and advertising. Destabilising socially constructed hierarchies enables the workshop participants to view adverts and commodities as carriers of potent social messages. Adverts shape the ideals and aspirations of our society by demonstrating what is valued and valuable. (Woolley, 2019) The ubiquity of adverts allows commerce to expand further into social life and causes everyday thinking to become shaped by the marketplace, including the idealization of wasteful consumption practices. This research</p>		

appropriates the rhetorical methods employed in adverts in order to present a counter-discourse that challenges the ideologies of consumer culture. Woolley uses this method to develop and produce artworks (2018B), and design workshops that explore the environmental impact of consumer culture through sculpture-making.

b) An outline of what the underpinning research produced by the submitted unit

Still Life: Things Devouring Time (Woolley & Herrington, 2018) and the symposium paper 'Still Life, Vanitas and Commodity Culture' (Woolley, 2018A) investigate contemporary still life as a method for expressing environmental and social concerns relating to consumer culture. The exhibition presented artworks that contribute to the discussion about consumption, challenge the values championed in consumer culture and also express a sense of urgency for action. Focusing on the visual representation of vanitas, symbolic objects that warn against excess and the shortness of time, it explores how those ideas inform the practice of contemporary artists, working in diverse media, who respond to the social, environmental and sustainability issues produced by consumer culture today. Objects made from non-biodegradable materials and the human inclination to collect possessions contradict the concept of *tempus edax rerum*, time as devourer of all things. The evolution and enduring relevance of the genre of still life is highlighted in this exhibition by the variety of contemporary art.

Consumed: Stilled Lives (Woolley, 2019) comprises photographs, artist books, pop-up display banners, lenticular images, videos, sound and site-specific artworks made for commercial advertising spaces in cities and social networking sites. The artworks explore social ideals, particularly gender norms, and how they are transmitted through commercial visual culture.

'Critical Clickbait: Artist Interventions in Commercial Visual Culture' (Woolley 2018B) presents a selection of Woolley's site specific artwork for commercial advertising spaces on billboards and social media that aim to visualize the how consumer culture informs and influences identities and gendered behaviours.

c) Any relevant key contextual information about this area of research

Hashtags are an important aspect of social media posts that have a number of different functions: they build community groups of like-minded social media users; and they enable posts relating to a particular topic to be grouped and archived (Olszanowski, 2015). A hashtag can also anchor the meaning of a photograph (Olszanowski, 2015) and serve a political function as demonstrated by #blacklivesmatter and #metoo. Through shared uses of hashtags, personal posts become part of a bigger conversation and can be framed by a particular political discourse (Brock, 2012).

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

- 1) Herrington, K., and Woolley, D., (2018) *Still Life: Things Devouring Time*, The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, The University of Leeds, 21 November 2018 – 23 March 2019 [Exhibition Catalogue].
- 2) Woolley, D., (2019) *Consumed: Stilled Lives*, Blenheim Walk Gallery, Leeds Arts University, 11 July – 22 August 2019 [Exhibition Catalogue].
- 3) Woolley, D., (2018A) 'Still Life, Vanitas and Commodity Culture', *Expanding Communities of Sustainable Practice Symposium*, Leeds Arts University, 16 November 2018 [Conference Proceedings].
- 4) Woolley, D., (2018B) 'Critical Clickbait: Artist Interventions in Commercial Visual Culture', *InMedia: The French Journal of Media Studies*, 7:1 <<https://journals.openedition.org/inmedia/1444>>.

The research is estimated to meet the threshold of 2* because all of the outputs were blind peer reviewed. *Still Life: Things Devouring Time* exhibition and catalogue were peer reviewed by the University of Leeds exhibitions committee. *Consumed: Stilled Lives* exhibition and catalogue were peer reviewed by an international external Advisory Board of peer-reviewers. The 'Still Life, Vanitas and Commodity Culture' conference paper was peer reviewed at the abstract stage and prior to the publication of conference proceedings. The 'Critical Clickbait' journal article was also developed and enhanced during three blind peer review stages.

4. Details of the impact

Workshops were held at; The University of Leeds (UoL) (13 participants aged 13-16 years and 14 from the general public) and The Hepworth Gallery, (Art Social group of 9 young people not in education, employment or training), Wakefield Adult Education centre (11 students), and WDH Independent Living Scheme, Pontefract (8 adult learners), and Imperial College London (10 participants). During the Covid19 pandemic the workshops took place online (55 participants). The workshops were funded by Leeds Inspired (Leeds City Council) and focused on local participants, however, the workshops attracted participants from around the globe.

Dissemination was undertaken via workshops, online workshops, shared photographs on Instagram with hashtags devised by participants and the researcher, and posters situated in commercial advertising spaces. The poster featuring artworks by members of the National Saturday Art and Design club was also included in an exhibition in Summerset House, London from 8th – 16th June 2019, as part of the National Art and Design Club summer exhibition. The National Art and Design Club tweeted '*A highlight for the [...] Art&Design Club this year was working with artist and curator [...] to create relic sculptures which Woolley photographed and compiled into a poster to be displayed on advertising boards around the city.*' [1]. Additionally, the UoL National Saturday Art and Design Club leader said '*The University of Leeds National Art and Design Saturday Club really enjoyed working with Dawn to create relic sculptures and explore issues of consumer culture and environmental pollution. The Club members were very engaged with the exhibition and its themes, and particularly liked having a professional photoshoot of their finished pieces. It was incredibly important for Club members to see the final posters of their work displayed in the city centre, and several members reported that they went to look for the posters around town with friends and family*' [2]. Participants of the Relics workshop for the general public said '*Interesting to find out the different ways recycled objects become art*' [3].

Some of the sculptures produced by members of the local community during workshops at The Hepworth were incorporated into a design that features on a protective building wrap for Upper Mill. The design references the history and function of the building and the development of neighbouring land into a community garden. After attending a workshop with a group of adult learners, Wakefield Council's Cabinet Member for Skills, Digital and Technology Capabilities, said '*It is wonderful to see [the class] learning new skills and enjoying themselves with new friends*' [4]. Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Regeneration at Wakefield Council, said: '*The specially designed building wraps have proven to be an effective method of ensuring the continuing preservation of this important listed building. This new cover will not only continue to protect the watermill but with the addition of this thoughtful and imaginative design, created in part by local communities, will make a positive contribution to the conservation area*' [5]. Visitors to The Hepworth have also responded positively to the design, with one visitor commenting '*Saw these the other day and thought they were beautiful*' [6]. Communities Manager said: '*It is important to acknowledge and preserve the industrial heritage that Wakefield waterfront is steeped in.*

This project is an excellent opportunity to merge the old with the new [...] to create a cover that is inspiring and lets the creativity of Wakefield be seen' [7].

Participants of the online workshops said: *'So good to start using all these bits of rubbish I have been collecting for years! [...] it was super great to do something different and be inspired by you and the others.'* *'I was keen to attend due to the re-use and recycling element. I've never thought myself particularly creative. Then 'Bam!' by the end of the session I had my first ever sculpture and I am really proud of it. Sessions were on-line, interactive, and fun. Highly recommended and a great memory of something creative coming out of lockdown.'* *'Gathering together the material really made it clear how much I throw away.'* [8]. Three adverts featuring participants sculptures were displayed on Facebook for one week each. In total the adverts, with a reach of 10020 Facebook and Instagram users, received 469 engagements and produced 428 clicks [9]. Local media also promoted the workshops: Yorkshire Evening News, Zero Waste Leeds Live interview, and BBC Radio Leeds Up for the Arts interview [10].

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

[1] National Saturday Art and Design Club Tweet,

<https://twitter.com/natsatclub/status/1163377582500241408?s=20>, 19th Aug 2019.

[2] Email from the University of Leeds National Saturday Art and Design Club leader, 8th January 2020.

[3] The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds, Relics and Recycling Sculpture workshop feedback excel spreadsheet, Feb 2019.

[4] *Bradford Zone* 'Council class gets visit from Hepworth artist', 12th June 2019.

[5] Sarah Hall, *Wakefield Express*, 'Wakefield's history to get covered by artist', 6th July 2019.

[6] Tweet, https://twitter.com/dawn_woolley/status/1157959570129674240 8th August 2019.

[7] *Wakefield Council Press Release*, 'Artistic wrap for watermill at The Hepworth', 3rd June 2019.

Communities Manager, Education Department, The Hepworth Gallery, Wakefield. Outreach and Saturday Club Project Officer, Arts and Humanities Outreach Team, The University of Leeds.

[8] Online workshop participants comments, June 2020.

[9] Facebook advert posters and statistics, July 2020.

[10] Joanna Wardill, *Yorkshire Evening Post* 'Make sculptures from household rubbish in Leeds artist's free online workshop', 28th May 2020.