Contemporary Interventions and Heritage:

The Theoretical and Methodological Challenges of 'Knowing Engagement'

Joanne Williams

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Leeds

School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies

October 2017

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

Acknowledgements

ii

Abstract

Contemporary art is increasingly present in museum and heritage programming as a mode of interpretation and a method of exploring and understanding particular places, histories or concepts, with the intention of increasing visitor 'engagement'. While this form of programming is becoming commonplace, little research exists in relation to visitor experiences of these works. Undertaken in the context of Arts Council England's agenda of 'demonstrating' the value of cultural engagement through 'robust credible research', this thesis explores the possibilities of 'knowing engagement' with these artwork and the ways in which they might achieve their complex and conjunctive aims of being both an 'intervention' and acting as 'interpretation'.

Working through a case study of artworks at the Imperial War Museum North (IWMN), which employs contemporary art as 'an affective alternative to a text-based, didactic explanation' in order to generate a 'critical historical consciousness' in visitors, this thesis challenges an epistemic deficit evident in current evaluation methodologies that depend on policy driven proxy measures of 'engagement' and neglect the complex ontological nature of visitors' encounters with these artworks in the museum space. Drawing on Rodney Harrison's notion of heritage as a 'collaborative, dialogical and material-discursive process', engagement with contemporary art interventions is considered with respect to instrumentalised cultural policy, affective encounters with the materiality of the case study artworks and notions of intervention and site specificity in aesthetic and institutional discourse.

Considering the artworks as heterogeneous entities in relation to artists, the Museum, visitors, cultural policy and aesthetic discourse, this thesis suggests that prior to producing 'demonstrable' evidence of engagement, it is first necessary to understand the complexity of these artworks and the relationships through which they exist as cultural objects.

iv

Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

Contemporary art interventions occupy a complex space within museum and heritage praxis. As methods of 'engaging' both existing and imagined audiences, artworks are intended to provide new, unexpected and challenging experiences for a broad range of visitors. As modes of interpretation they are often framed as emotive or affective alternatives to traditional didactic panels and labels. As objects of artistic practice, these interventions are rooted in discourses of institutional critique and site specificity. As strategies of audience development and revenue generation, contemporary projects can be positioned in relation to both individual organisational sustainability and sustainability across the sector through the development of paid projects to employ artists in partnership projects, commissioning programmes and residencies. While it has become increasingly commonplace to see these artworks in local and national museums, country houses and landscapes, there is a lack of comprehensive critical research into visitor engagement with these works and the extent to which they achieve their complex and conjunctive aims of development, intervention and interpretation.[1] Framing this investigation with respect to the term 'praxis' is both intentional and critical to the methodological approach of this thesis. Praxis, defined as 'connecting practice to theory and purposive action' provides a processual framing within which the relation between theory, method, practice and policy can be articulated.[2] It also provides a theoretical and methodological grounding for interrogating the relations between art historical and museum discourses, and policy-based issues of value in the arts and culture sector that have contributed to contemporary interventions becoming embedded in curatorial and interpretation strategies across museums and heritage sites. An understanding of praxis as 'the synthesis of theory and practice seen as a basis for the

---

[1] This thesis will focus on the latter two issues. An analysis of 'audience development' would require a much broader survey across the sector beyond the bounds of this case study approach.
[2] 'Praxis' as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149425?redirectedFrom=praxis#eid> [Accessed 28 October 2017]

condition of political and economic change', supports a process of drawing connections between theoretical and methodological concerns which encourage shifts in thinking around knowledge production in museum and heritage spaces in the context of economically driven modes of evaluation. The IWM North's intention of constructing a transformative experience which facilitates a 'critical historical consciousness' in visitors is embedded in this notion of praxis, wherein the philosophical underpinnings of the museum institution and the practice of commission and displaying contemporary art interventions provide a basis for this intended shift in critical thinking in visitors. In this sense, the facilitating of a 'critical historical consciousness' in visitors can be understood as a form of political intervention. Therefore, this thesis draws on a breadth of theoretical work on the governance of the museum institution and its ideological groundings, art historical discourse centred on institutional critique and methodological concerns relating to knowledge production, in order to challenge contemporary forms of evaluation through a visitor study at the IWM North. Therefore, as a form of political intervention, this research explores alternative 'ways of knowing' visitor 'engagement' to challenge policy driven forms of demonstrable, measurable evidence production. This form of political intervention is this responsive to the notion of praxis as an 'action entailed, required or produced by a theory, or by particular circumstances', wherein contemporary intervention programmes are understood as contingent objects related to specific forms of instrumental policy and organisational activity, as well as connected to art historical discourses around practices of site-specific intervention and critique.[3]

Art interventions have a traceable trajectory in art historical discourse associated with the institutional critiques of the 1960s, intervening in spaces and displays with the intention of exposing the institutional and ideological framing of museums and galleries.[4] Often this

---

[3] 'Praxis' as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149425?redirectedFrom=praxis#eid> [Accessed 28 October 2017]
[4] Benjamin, H. D. Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', *October*, 55 (1990), 105-143; Miwon Kwon, 'One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity', *October*, 80 (1997), 85-110.

activity extended to broader socio-political critiques that addressed systems of power and

knowledge production, including now seminal works by artists such as Fred Wilson, Andrea

Fraser and Hans Haacke.[5] Current high profile examples of these interventions in

contemporary heritage practice include: the *Trust New Art* programme at a number of

National Trust properties and heritage sites which 'explore the spirit of place through

creative programming' to connect people to places, reveal hidden stories and to help 'see

special places in different ways;[6] Harewood House, Yorkshire, which has 'enjoyed a very

special relationship with contemporary artists throughout its history';[7] the Freud Museum,

London, who make the claim that 'art and analysis work with the same "stuff" and the Freud

Museum is saturated with memories, myth and fantasy' and that 'the museum is also a

challenge and provocation to the artist';[8] and arts organisations such Mid Pennine Arts, who

echo the National Trust's focus on connecting people with places in their aim to 'originate

exciting creative work that has lasting impact for participants, audiences and [our] project

partners';[9] Meadow Arts, who make clear their role in supporting work opportunities

through their role in bringing 'unique contemporary art projects to places where art is not

usually shown, supporting artists by commissioning new work and creating inspiring events

and exhibitions';[10] and Arts & Heritage, whose approach is 'to address and challenge

audience expectations and preconceptions by producing contemporary projects that are

imaginative, engaging and encourage further investigation into context and history'.[11] While

the development of these programmes across varying sites may all have different

organisational trajectories, they demonstrate concurrent concerns, with themes centred on

relationships between people and places, and the process of challenge, creativity and

---

[5] Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum* (1992); Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights* (1989); Hans Haacke, *MoMA Poll* (1970).
[6] National Trust, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/trust-new-art-contemporary-arts-inspired-by-our-places [Accessed 25 October 2017].
[7] Harewood House Trust <http://harewood.org/explore/art/> [Accessed 10 May 2017].
[8] Freud Museum <https://www.freud.org.uk/events/74796/contemporary-art-inside-the-freud-museum/> [Accessed 10 May 2017].
[9] Mid Pennine Art <http://midpenninearts.org.uk/> [Accessed 10 May 2017].
[10] Meadow Arts <http://www.meadowarts.org/> [Accessed 10 May 2017].
[11] Arts and Heritage < http://www.artsandheritage.org.uk/about-us/> [Accessed 9 May 2017].

'engagement'. Some initial research has been conducted on the efficacy of projects such as these by the Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past (IPUP) during 2009-2010 at the University of York.[12] Interviews were undertaken at three sites throughout York during the 2009 'Illuminating York' event, and from these is was determined that visitors responded to art interventions developed for that specific event in a positive way, as long as they were viewed as being appropriate to the setting. The IPUP research concluded that 'there needs to be alternative forms of representation that go beyond formal interpretation, and art provides an avenue to engage with dissonant and traumatic pasts by appealing to empathy, and thus challenges audiences in provocative ways'.[13] However, one of the outcomes of the IPUP study also highlighted a neglected area of research, that of the processes of engagement by which audience encounter these works of contemporary art at heritage sites.[14]

All of the projects and programmes mentioned above are funded, at least in part, by Arts Council England. As an 'arm's length partner' of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Arts Council England (ACE) defines itself as an 'investor, developer and champion of the arts', and as such is the largest investor in the arts in the country.[15] During the period 2011-2015 they invested £1.04 billion of public funds from both the UK Government and the National Lottery in the National Portfolio programme along with £440 million made available made available for strategic funding.[16] The *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* report was published by ACE in October 2013, following the organisation taking on the responsibilities of the Museums and Libraries Association in October 2010 and the culmination of the Cultural Olympiad accompanying the London 2012 Olympic and

---

[12] IPUP <http://www.york.ac.uk/ipup/events/seminars/ntp-art-heritage-report.html> [accessed 20th January 2014].

[13] IPUP <http://www.york.ac.uk/ipup/events/seminars/ntp-art-heritage-report.html> [accessed 20 January 2014]

[14] For one recent contribution this emerging field of research, see Nick Cass, 'Contemporary Art and Heritage: Intervention at the Brontë Parsonage' (unpublished thesis, University of Leeds, 2015).

[15] Arts Council England, *The Arts Council Plan 2011-2015* (London: Arts Council, 2011), p. 5.

[16] <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/arts-council-publishes-funding-plans> Accessed 5 December 2015.

Paralympic Games.[17] This report amalgamated the responsibilities relating to museums and libraries into a previous strategic plan, *Achieving great art for everyone: a strategic framework for the arts*, which was produced as a result of a body of on-going research into the public value of the arts.[18] The updated report outlined a five goal strategic framework through which ACE aimed to achieve excellence in the arts over the ten year period from 2010 to 2020, and provided a framework within which its success can be evaluated. The focus on 'engagement' is clear:

> Our core mission can be distilled into two goals: we want excellent arts and culture to thrive, and we want as many people as possible to *engage* with it. These are goals one and two. The importance of excellence and *engagement* cannot be understated. For example, the value of museums is not only generated by their collections, but by how these collections are interpreted, how they inspire, and how they change the people that visit or encounter them. Arts organisations can also achieve excellence when their work fully *engages* with, challenges or connects with an audience [own emphasis].[19]

The intentions of contemporary programmes, such as those by organisations such as Arts & Heritage and the National Trust, and the relationships they hope to engender through the introduction of artworks, echo this framing of engagement articulated by Arts Council England and the role of the arts and artistic creativity as a mechanism through which challenging and transformative encounters can take place. Funded in part by ACE, the intention of the 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14' (ATM14) festival aimed to provide the opportunity for people to experience Asian contemporary arts and culture and to 'challenge perceptions about Asia'.[20] An introduction to the ATM14 festival was provided by the Arts Council in a promotional video, which stated that audiences are entitled to see the best work from artists around the world, and that artists need the opportunity to 'test themselves

---

[17] Arts Council England, *Great Art and Culture for Everyone: 10-year strategic framework 2010-2020*, 2nd Edition, Revised October 2013 (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2013)
[18] Arts Council England, *Achieving great art for everyone: a strategic framework for the arts*, (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2013).
[19] Arts Council England, *Great Art and Culture for Everyone: 10-year strategic framework 2010-2020*, 2nd Edition (Revised) (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2013), p. 39.
[20] *Asia Triennial Manchester 2014: Festival Guide* (2014), p. 3.

against other artists and drive up standards and performance'.[21] It is pertinent to ask here: what are the standards of quality? Arts Council England address issues of quality through the notion of excellence in *Great Art and Culture for Everyone*: 'by which we mean the creation of work of artistic and cultural excellence and the way this work engages with audiences. We acknowledge that excellence is difficult to define, and that it will always be, quite rightly, the subject of debate'.[22] It is evident in these remarks that, while excellence may evade concrete definition, ACE locate it as intrinsically connected to the concept of 'engagement'.

Through a case study of the ATM14 exhibition 'Conflict and Compassion', undertaken at the Imperial War Museum North (IWM North) in Salford Quays, this thesis explores the complexity of understanding the *processes* of visitor engagement in relation to these specific contemporary projects as a response to the deficit in knowledge as proposed by the IPUP research.[23] I will argue that these commissioned projects have not emerged by happy accident, but are instead located at historically specific intersections of cultural policy, art historical and institutional discourses, and as such manifest both parallel and contradictory logics of intent through their positioning as mechanisms of engagement, interpretation and organisational sustainability. Undertaken in the context of Arts Council England's agenda of demonstrating the impacts of public engagement with arts and culture through 'robust credible research', one of my main concerns is the extent to which the lived and embodied experience (or 'affective' experience, as framed by the IWM North's own interpretation strategy) of both the Museum visitor and myself as a researcher can be known and specifically articulated as evaluative knowledge.[24] While Peter Bazalgette, then Chair of Arts Council England, has remarked on the assumed 'intrinsic' value of arts and culture in

---

[21] Arts Council England <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdsoGKDyGho> [Accessed 14 September 2017].

[22] Arts Council <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/exploring-value-arts-and-culture/quality-metrics> [Accessed 25 October 2017].

[23] Full details of the 'Conflict and Compassion' can be found in the exhibition leaflet and text panels in Appendix 1.

[24] Arts Council England, *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: an evidence review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014), (p. 47)

the March 2014 literature review *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience*, it is acknowledged that this is a 'philosophical assertion that cannot be measured in numbers'.[25] Bazalgette reiterated the ongoing task being addressed by academic and museum researchers, of developing a framework in which to explore and understand 'engagement' with arts and culture: 'One of the main problems is finding the framework and language with which to express these benefits… But we've got a lot more work to do in just learning to ask the right questions'.[26] Therefore, a central concern is the friction which arises when the notion of a framework – which implies a metric based on stable and comparable definitions wherein 'engagement' is positioned as a pre-designated outcome – is challenged by a work of intervention which, by its very nature, intends to challenge, disrupt and reconfigure relationships and experiences. It will be argued that in order to understand what engagement might mean in this context, it is necessary to consider knowledge as an embodied and emergent process, and as such one that refuses the standards of quality of traditional empirical research.[27]

In *Curious Lessons in the Museum: The Pedagogic Potential of Artists' Interventions*, (2013), Claire Robins approached art intervention projects from the perspective of pedagogy, unpacking these artworks and their potential for museum and gallery based learning in the context of their position within art historical discourse.[28] This much welcomed research has begun to make inroads into the complex nature of these projects and how audiences and visitors might engage with them, and raises questions with regards to their potential to operate as interpretive mechanisms whilst also requiring a particular skill set to ensure understanding.[29] My research seeks to broaden this exploration by looking at the contexts of public policy (the public value debate and instrumentalisation

---

[25] Andrew Mowlah, Vivien Niblett, Jonathon Blackburn and Marie Harris, *The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society: an evidence review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014), p. 4.
[26] ACE (2014), p. 5
[27] Standards such as validity, 'robust credible' research, and forms of data will be addressed throughout this thesis, with more focused attention in the case study in Chapter Three.
[28] Claire Robins, *Curious Lessons in the Museum: The Pedagogic Potential of Artists' Interventions* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016)
[29] Peter Vergo, 'The Reticent Object', in *The New Museology,* ed. by Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1989, 2006) pp. 41-59.

of cultural policy), art and cultural discourses (both art historical and aesthetic traditions and the assumptions bound up in these traditions of value and universalising tendencies), knowledge practices (resulting in specific forms of measurement in the form of metrics and the construction of 'engagement' as a 'demonstrable measure') and museum praxis which has produced contemporary projects and programmes across museums and heritage sites which are expected to perform multiple roles of interpretation, audience development, opportunities for artist career development and partnership working. I will argue that in order to understand visitor 'engagement' with these works and how they might construct meaning in and through our encounters with them, we must first understand their role in these spaces and appreciate the multiple points of entry when studying them as cultural objects.[30]

Relational Ontology in Heritage

Rodney Harrison's relational approach to heritage as a 'collaborative, dialogical and material-discursive process' offers the potential to account for these relations, in addition to introducing that which is lacking in current processes of outcome-based evaluation and knowledge production – a consideration of the material encounter with the artwork.[31] Contemporary approaches to heritage studies manifest a concern for the material nature of heritage and the practices of connectivity that are embedded in constructions of the past, present and future.[32] Developed from a criticism of a social constructivist approach favoured by a Western conceptualisation of heritage which positions nature and culture in a dichotomous relationship, Rodney Harrison has proposed an ontological pluralism through which 'we might instead see heritage as collaborative, dialogical and interactive, a material-

---

[30] This sentiment of the art intervention as a cultural object is shared by one of the ATM14 artists, Nalini Malani, as will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

[31] Rodney Harrison, 'Beyond "Natural" and "Cultural" Heritage: Toward an Ontological Politics of Heritage in the Age of Anthropocene', *Heritage & Society* (8) (2015), 24-42, p. 27.

[32] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006)

discursive process in which past and future arise out of dialogue and encounter between multiple embodied subjects in (and with) the present'.[33]

In its broadest sense, social constructivism has been defined by John Creswell as an interpretive framework within which subjective meanings of experiences, formed through social interaction and historical and cultural norms, are directed towards certain objects or things.[34] This manifests in a research methodology that looks for a complexity of views and relies on participants' perspectives in order to generate a theory or a pattern of meaning.[35] This approach is grounded in an exploration of the processes of interaction and interpretation that include the researcher's own interaction in the research setting, and an acknowledgement that this is shaped by their prior experiences and knowledge.[36] This attitude to research, taken from the perspective of lived experience, produces context specific knowledge through an assertion of the social contingency of meaning, and the processes through which meaning is embodied in action and language.[37] Thomas Schwant has highlighted the distinction between social construct*ivism* and social construct*ionism*: construct*ionism* produces knowledge a process of collective social exchange, whereas for construct*ivism*, knowledge and truth are created as a 'pluralistic and plastic character of reality' being rooted in the experience of the individual.[38] Constructionist meaning-making is therefore a fundamentally social exercise wherein knowledge and reality are constructed through human interactions and transmitted in social contexts, and constructivist knowledge is located in the experience of the individual.[39] These two approaches were developed as a critical rebuttal of positivism, a philosophical system that recognises scientific, data driven knowledge generated from processes of observation and the production of measurable

---

[33] Harrison, p. 27.
[34] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd Edition (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2013), p. 24.
[35] Creswell, p. 24.
[36] Creswell, p. 25.
[37] Thomas A. Schwant, 'Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 118-137 (p. 118).
[38] Schwant, p. 125.
[39] Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: meaning and perspective in the research process* (London: Sage Publicationd Ltd, 2003), p. 42.

evidence. Such language is evident in contemporary policy and the focus on 'demonstrable, measureable' evidence of value constructed through engagement with arts and culture. The central role of specific, *quantifiable* forms of evidence and measurement, which manifest in the use of indicators, metrics and toolkit approaches, sits within the framework of post-positivism as reviewed by Creswell, in that while this approach can recognise multiple perspectives and consummate levels of data analysis, they remain cause and effect orientated and based on a priori theory. The systematic and analytic procedures employed within this post-positivist framework are evident in the approaches to value and 'engagement' addressed throughout this thesis. Particular attention is dedicated to the knowledge deficit around engagement and process of meaning-making that have resulted from a policy driven focus on 'demonstrable, measureable' forms of evidence as a means for advocating for the art and public spending on the arts and culture sector.[40] This task is undertaken through an analysis of UK cultural policy documents, research literature on the issues, and an institutional ethnography of Arts Council England through their research and funding focus – as demonstrated in their literature – as a response to policy driven agendas.

The critical alternative proposed by Rodney Harrison instead locates the production of meaning not in individuals, but in forms of dialogue constructed with other human and non-human actors. Harrison has criticised a Cartesian type dualism that has separated natural and cultural heritage – where culture is positioned as 'civilized' development over nature – as no longer tenable, and has called for a reconsideration of the assumptions of universality and homogeneity of existing models of heritage production. Harrison connects to this a critique of the tangible/intangible dualism manifest in Western notions of heritage which reinforce the notion of ontological separateness that his approach intends to overcome. Explicitly intended to disrupt 'anthropecentrism', wherein humans are centred as the primary force of change in the world, Harrison's view of culture and cultural heritage is one which works to 'flatten' models of social and material relations in a 'connectivity

---

[40] Arts Council England, *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: an evidence review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014), p. 47.

ontology' wherein, 'being is inherently, inescapably, and necessarily relational. An ontology

of connectivity entails mutual causality; organism and environment are recursive, meaning

that events come into, become entangled with, and then re-enter the universe they

describe'.[41] From this perspective, Harrison proposes a hybridity which includes ecological,

material and social life in which humans are considered within a broader assemblage

combining the natural and the cultural world. Culture is therefore rooted in both tangible

and material relations. While the focus of this thesis does not include non-human actors and

environmental concerns, the notion of 'a collaborative and dialogical process arising from

an encounter between multiple embodied subjects' resonates with the dialogue the IWM

North intends to construct between their visitors, the artworks and artists in their

contemporary programming. Thinking through this dialogue as a material-discursive

process provides a framing within visitors' lived, embodied encounters with material

artworks can be considered relation to the discursive context of the Museum. Introducing

the materiality of the artwork into the dialogue provides an opportunity to make these works

visible with respect to evaluating knowledge about visitors' encounters with them, and to

produce concrete knowledge relating to the specificity of these encounters that does depend

solely on the concept of 'engagement' as a cultural indicator. A material-discursive

approach also brings to the fore the connection between the artworks and the political and

art historical discourses that contributed to intervention works being both an artistic mode of

practice and an institutional response to particular policy agenda's relating to 'engagement'

with arts and culture. The notion of heritage production being an 'encounter between

multiple embodied subjects in (and with) the present' is also central to the concerns of

contemporary art intervention practices.[42] The artworks included in the 'Conflict and

Compassion' exhibition at installed at the IWM North were direct responses to issues of

trauma and conflict concretely located in the present and in the artists' personal and cultural

experiences.

---

[41] Harrison (2013), p. 216.
[42] Harrison (2015), p. 27.

This relational approach to understanding processes of heritage production will inform the exploration of the theoretical and methodological challenges of 'knowing engagement' and provide a critical starting point from which to consider Harrison's criticism of constructivist approaches, that is, the neglect of the material relations of heritage construction. Karen Barad, whose work informed Harrison in the development of his own critical thinking, has approached the issue of knowledge construction from the discipline of theoretical physics and articulated a similar dissatisfaction with social constructivism and its neglect of the ontology of the world that has been overshadowed by a privileging of epistemological issues.[43] Referencing Donna Haraway's notion that 'what counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about', Barad's task became one of reconciliation; in seeking to understand the relationships between the 'nature of the material and the cultural' she has argued that ontology is not an issue outside of epistemology, and as such the articulation of a framework must acknowledge both its ontological and epistemological underpinnings.[44] With respect to ontology, Barad defines the realist stance occupied by her philosophical account of 'agential realism', concerned with 'the sense in which access to the ontology of our world is possible'.[45] Barad's theory is articulated as a response to the 'linguistic turn' in which language is positioned as an access point to cultural representations but not to the things themselves being represented.[46] The critique central to Barad's proposition is that, within this linguistic turn, matter is treated as passive, deriving its potential from language and culture. In a counter to this, Barad frames performativity as 'a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real', thus undermining the ontologically a priori status of discursive practices and the ability of words to represent pre-existing things, and reorienting the discussion towards questions of

---

[43] Karen Barad, 'Meeting the Universe Halfway', *Feminism, Science and the Philosophy of Science*, eds. L. H. Nelson and J. Nelson (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996) p. 162
[44] Barad, p. 164.
[45] Barad, p. 165.
[46] Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs*, 28 (2003), 801-831, (p. 801).

ontology, materiality and agency.[47] It is this shift in focus towards a material-discursive

approach and the notion that matter is an 'active participant in the world's becoming' that

informs Rodney Harrison's ontological pluralism.[48]

This relational ontology, to some extent, sits within the conceptual framework

Actor-Network Theory (ANT), initially suggested the work of Bruno Latour and Michel

Callon. As a 'method of analysis that treat[s] everything in the social and natural worlds as a

continuously generated effect of the web of relations within which they are located', ANT is

material-semiotic approach which refuses the distinction between the human and non-

human.[49] Roland Munro has referred to this as an introduction to sociology of a

heterogeneity which 'does not privilege mind over materials', but instead concentrates on

the notion of 'agencement'.[50] According to Munro's detailed summary of ANT, the concern

is not for the actors themselves, but a concern for 'what effects are being generated by virtue

of an arrangement'. John Law supports Munro's account with a description of ANT as being

concerned with a network of elements that are not structured within an overall framework,

and therefore not conducive to concrete distinctions between micro and macro structures,

other than those which are performed and thus 'made real' through the effects of relations

within networks; for Law, it is those defining relations which are the subject of study.[51]

While this approach demonstrates many synergies with Harrison's theoretical approach, the

reason why I have opted to frame my research specifically within Harrison's 'collaborative,

dialogical and interactive, a material-discursive' notion of heritage production, is that

highlights processes of dialogue and collaboration which can translate into a research

methodology which creates space for the voices and experiences of the visitors to be

present, along with the materiality of the artworks. I have used dialogue as a method of both

conceptualising the relationships between the museum, artworks, artist and visitor, and also

---

[47] Barad, ibid, p. 802
[48] Barad, ibid, p. 803.
[49] John Law, 'Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics', in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. by Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2009), pp. 141-158.
[50] Roland Munro, 'Actor-Network Theory', in *The Sage Handbook of Power*, ed. by Stewart R. Clegg and Mark Haugaard (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2009), pp. 125-139.
[51] Law, p. 145.

used dialogue as research method in my visitor study, which enables me to interrogate the role of these actors as well as the relations between them. My research does, however, still employ elements of ANT in the presence of the material artworks within the 'network' of visitor experience, and in the relationship between theory and practice. ANT is grounded in empirical cases, and as such theory is embedded in research practices, and those practices are also necessarily theoretical.[52] The use of a case study has allowed me to work concurrently with the theoretical and methodological concerns of knowledge production in a practical context of the IWM North, and locate those processes across the different spatial scales of visitor encounters with artworks, the discursive space of the museum, and the rhetoric of public cultural policy.

Both Harrison's approach of 'flattening' social relations and Actor-Network Theory draw on the philosophical work of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and assemblage theory through the notion of 'connectivity ontologies', articulated with respect to the possibility of alternative, future orientated heritage practices that 'enact new realities through contingent processes of assembling and reassembling bodies, technologies, materials, values, temporalities and meanings'.[53] The notion of assembling and reassembling focuses attention on the relationships between entities and the nature of their configuration, as opposed to defining those entities through relationships viewed to be entirely constitutive. The notion of 'assemblage' was proposed in the text *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, initially published in French in 1980 and later in English.[54] Offered as an 'alternative logic

---

[52] Law, p. 143.

[53] Harrison, (2015), p. 28.

[54] Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massuni (London: The Althone Press, 1996). The concept of assemblage requires closer consideration with respect to its translation from French to English. John Phillips has addressed this issue of translating the French word *agencement,* and its being as being 'in connection with', aligning with Spinoza's 'common notion'. Phillips associates *agencement* with the notion of a common unity, understood with respect to notion of event, becoming and sense. Phillips problematised the translation of *agencement* as assemblage: 'The translation of *agencement* by *assemblage* might have been justified as a further event of *agencement* (assemblage) were it not for the tendency of discourses of knowledge to operate as statements *about* states of affairs'. I aim to consider what it might mean to be engaged *through* contemporary interventions as a response to the nature of policy driven knowledge production being inadequate when applied to an encounter with an artwork. Therefore my position is one of thinking about the concept of engagement through art interventions and their connective relations, the overall sense of which (of engagement) is contained in but not

to that of unities', an assemblage/*agencement* is a configuration of heterogeneous elements that is bound together by a set of conditioning relations.[55] While Deleuze and Guattari do not present a concrete theory of assemblage, the concept is a useful lens through which to understand the relations between agents and the effects these relations have on social and material configurations.

In his review of assemblage theory and the concept of social complexity, Manuel DeLanda has addressed processes of configuration through a consideration of 'relation of exteriority'.[56] In contrast to 'relations of interiority', a concept in which 'component parts are constituted by the very relations they have to other parts in the whole', relations of exteriority do not require that the parts of the whole are not self-subsistent, as is necessitated by the organismic metaphor often used to conceptualise parts to whole relationships in sociology.[57] These relations of exteriority imply a level of autonomy for the entities they relate to, and as such the properties of the whole are not reducible to the characteristics of its parts. Rather, the properties of the whole are the result of the exercise of the capacities of those parts, which themselves involve a reference to the properties of other interacting entities.[58] From this re-conceptualisation of relations between parts and wholes, DeLanda asserts that relations may only be contingently obligatory and not logically necessary, and thus the heterogenenity of components is centralised.[59] In these terms, analysis in assemblage theory becomes causal rather than conceptual, 'concerned with the discovery of the *actual mechanisms* operating at a given spatial scale.[60] It will be argued that public policy governing arts and culture has been centred on economically and socially driven forms of value which are themselves historically specific. In addition, artistic practices of site-specificity and institutional critique developed within historically specific aesthetic and

---

reducible to one or any of its parts. John Phillips, '*Agencement*/Assemblage', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23 (2006), 108-109.

[55] Thomas Nail, 'What is an Assemblage?', *SubStance*, 46 (2017), 21-37.

[56] Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006).

[57] DeLanda, p. 10.

[58] DeLanda, pp. 10-11.

[59] DeLanda, p. 11.

[60] DeLanda, p. 29.

political discourses, prior to and distinct from current neoliberal forms of governance that have produced the rhetoric of 'public value' and forms of measurement and accountability that have become embedded in the arts and culture sector. These 'entities' thus exist with a certain level of autonomy. However, the contingent relations between them operating on and within the specific spatial scale of the museum, have contributed to contemporary art interventions being commissioned as elements of interpretive programming in order to facilitate wider public 'engagement' with the arts and thus contribute to the broader agenda of public value.

Spatial scales are integral to this analysis articulated by DeLanda in relation the ways in which thinking sociology through assemblage theory can connect the micro and macro levels of social reality. This is achieved by understanding the processes of assemblage as recurrent at any one spatial scale and at successive scales.[61] This issue of scaling is pertinent to the methodological challenges of 'engagement' when considered in the contexts of: the encounter between a visitor a contemporary art intervention, the role of the museum institution or heritage in constructing the terms of this encounter, and cultural policy in framing 'demonstrable, measureable evidence' as the mechanism through which 'engagement' is to be known and articulated. With respect to this issue of scaling, DeLanda equates assemblages to flat ontologies which, due to the contingent nature of their relations, have a precarious identity that must be understand as the product of a process; that is, a process understood through the relationships between entities. According to DeLanda, these flat ontologies contain differently scaled individual singularities which he identifies in contrast with taxonomic essentialism in which 'genus, species and the individual are separate ontological entities' through which it is possible to work backwards in order to discover common and inherited elements. Instead, these individual singularities are understood through historical (rather than taxonomical) process which take into account cosmological, evolutionary and human history. This notion of historically-located entities is

---

[61] DeLanda, p. 17.

particularly useful when considering contemporary art programmes and the multiple

contexts in which they have been embedded and developed and the relations through which

they connect to public policy and aesthetic discourse. To consider the relationships between

policies, the museum and the artwork as a taxonomic one – framing policy as genus, the

Museum institution as species and artwork as individual in a hierarchical taxonomy erases

the nuances and complexities embedded in the development of contemporary programmes

in museum and heritage sites.

In order to undertake a comprehensive approach to researching 'engagement' with

respect to contexts of cultural policy, lived experience and art historical discourse, it is

useful to think with it as concept. Thinking with the concept of 'engagement' as a tool of

inter-subjectivity allows 'engagement' to travel across disciplines and between historical

frameworks.[62] Responding to a shift in the humanities towards an interdisciplinary way of

working, Mieke Bal suggested that a heuristic and methodological basis for research could

be found in concepts rather than methods.[63] Fields of study in this instance are not restricted

to disciplinary boundaries nor are they firmly delineated, allowing for a 'travelling' of

concepts as 'sites of debate, awareness of difference, and tentative exchange'.[64] As the key

to intersubjective understanding, Bal therefore asserts that concepts need to be 'explicit,

clear and defined', whilst also being 'a flexible framework or systematic set of

distinctions'.[65] These seemingly contradictory definitions require for concepts to be kept

under scrutiny as they are amenable to change; I argue that 'engagement' is an example of

such a concept. In order to thinking with the concept of 'engagement' in relation to cultural

policy, visitor experience and art historical discourse, it necessary to demonstrate how

'engagement' is framed by each approach and how 'engagement' might be a lens through

which to think through each of those conjunctive spatial and scaled contexts and the

relationships between them.

---

[62] Mieke Bal, 'Working with Concepts', *European Journal of English Studies*, 13 (2009), 13-23.
[63] Bal, p. 13.
[64] Bal, p. 18.
[65] Bal, p. 19.

'Engagement' as a Travelling Concept

I initially began my postgraduate studies thinking about the moment of 'engagement' with a contemporary art work when it is encountered by a visitor in a museum or heritage site, and how my own understanding of what it might mean to be 'engaged' has shifted over the course of my recent studies and employment in the heritage sector. This focus developed from a small study undertaken at the Imperial War Museum North during my Masters dissertation research; I was interested in the extent to which contemporary art interventions, specifically in this instance *The Crusader* by Gerry Judah, could provoke a range of emotional, intellectual and critical responses from individual visitors in order to catalyse an engagement with a particular collection or history(s).[66] In order to investigate the efficacy of IWM North's use of contemporary art interventions as an interpretation strategy, I conducted a small sample of exit interviews with visitors in order explore how they understood *The Crusader* in the Main Exhibition space. The dialogues with visitors, generated through a short questionnaire, as they prepared to leave the Museum left me feeling frustrated and disheartened at what I perceived to a be failure on behalf of the Museum to adequately contextualise *The Crusader*, and to make clear and visible to visitors its purpose in the exhibition. Visitors mistook the work of art for a 'spacecraft' and an aeroplane hangar, dismissed it as unnecessary in relation to their own motivations for visiting and expressed a dislike for the use of contemporary art as a means for addressing the topic of war.

The Museum conducts regular research on their visitors, and at the time of my initial study had identified visitor satisfaction as 'exceptionally high, with the proportional of visitors likely to recommend the Museum at 99%'.[67] While this figure indicated a positive reaction to the Museum overall, it provided no information as to what may have been of significant value to the extent that they would recommend it to others, or how this recommendable

---

[66] Joanne Williams, 'Contemporary Art Interventions: An Investigation into the Status of the Art Object and the Facilitation of Visitor Engagements' (unpublished masters dissertation, University of Leeds, 2012)
[67] Imperial War Museum, *Annual Report and Account 2011-12* (2012), p. 22.

experience was facilitated. *The Crusader* was an artwork included in the exhibition spaces as an element of the organisation's *Fit for the Future* plan, which aimed to ensure 'a strong audience focus and the public programme has been designed to appeal to target markets'.[68]

The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons
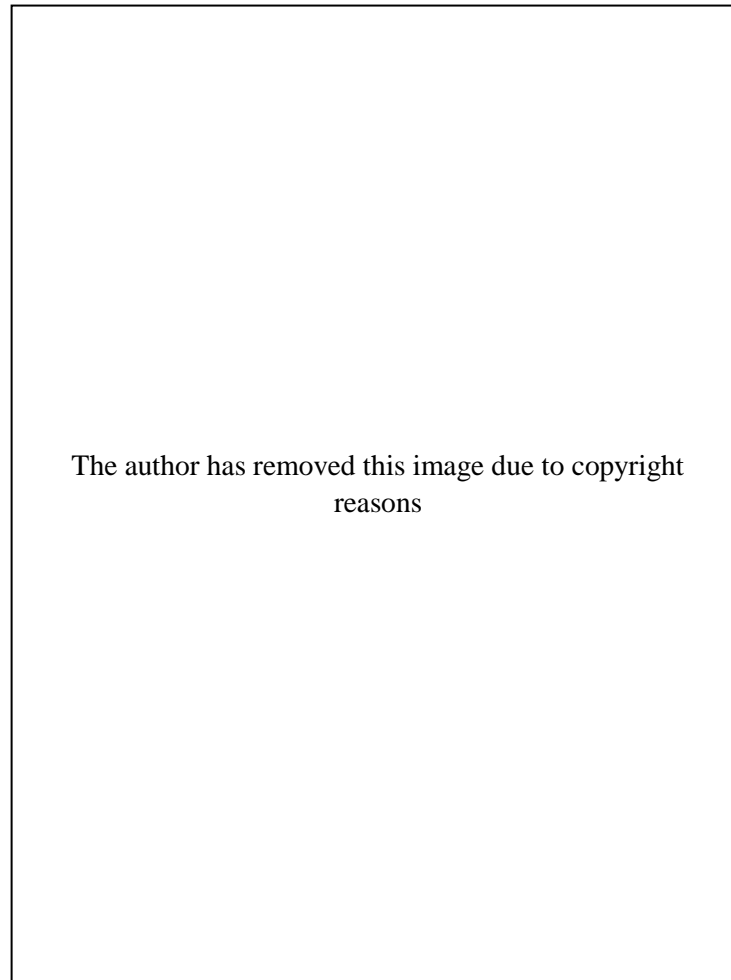
Figure 1: Gerry Judah, *The Crusader*, IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2012.

The results of a survey conducted by the Museum indicated that while 80% of visitors they talked with had spent time in the Main Exhibition space, only 16% had engaged with this artwork.[69] No definition or conceptual framing of engagement is offered throughout *Fit for the Future* and so there is no concrete understanding of what was being measured or

---

[68] Imperial War Museums, *Corporate Plan 2012-15* (2012), p. 11.
[69] Imperial War Museum North, *April-June 2012 Visitor Survey Statistics*, MHM Market Research, (2012)

quantified with respect to the figure of 16%, and no elucidation of what this information articulates about the use of contemporary art as a programming strategy. Given that the aim of exhibition programming in the Museum is 'to engage diverse audiences and encourage new visitors, as well as providing something for regular visitors', such a low response to the artwork indicates that it was not facilitating engagement with the collection and narratives on display as intended, nor was it a significant element in their experience that would motivate them to recommend it to others.[70]

The artwork was, and still is, the first object encountered upon entering the Main Exhibition space. Suspended from the ceiling, the seven metre white sculpture provides a stark contrast to the imposing dark walls and juxtaposing Harrier jet. The contextualising panel (which has since been replaced with a newer version) contained the following interpretive text:

> Reactions: Artist Interventions at IWM North
>
> **The Crusader, 2010**
>
> **By Gerry Judah**
>
> **Mixed media**
>
> **Artist Gerry Judah's new sculpture The Crusader is a personal response to global conflict. It is his comment on modern day wars while also resonating with the history of world conflict.**
>
> The work has been commissioned as part of the Reactions series at Imperial War Museum North, a programmed which encourages artistic responses to the themes, architecture and collections of the Museum.
>
> The towering sculpture is covered by a network of war damaged building. Water towers, communication wires and satellite dishes can be identified amongst the debris. This devastated urban landscape echoes the themes within the Museum's architecture of a world shaped by conflict.
>
> 'The Crusader combines the contradictions that preoccupy me as an artist. It explores the violence of conflict against a perceived righteousness of purpose. The beauty of the sculpture contrasts with the darkness of the subject matter.'
>
> Gerry Judah, 2015

This text prioritised the voice of the artist as an interpretive frame within which meaning can be constructed in relation to the wider narrative of conflict, understood at a personal and

---

[70] Imperial War Museum, Annual Report and Account 2011-12 (2012), p. 11.

relational level. Discussing the centrality of buildings to the piece in an interview with Dan

Feeney, Gerry Judah addressed the nature of the symbolic elements present in the work:

> I saw the photographs of Beirut, a few years ago, it was extraordinary the way these buildings were just ripped apart and you could see inside these buildings and you saw inside people's lives, and I've always been drawn to, not just buildings destroyed by conflict, but destroyed by neglect and by the environment, but regardless of what causes them it's what happens inside those buildings, it's the lives that were lived and left because of these conflicts......The thing about this is that people reinvent their lives, cities reinvent themselves, and that process of reinvention is the process of hope so, you know, we're not trying to say look how awful war is, but look how great were are because we can come out of this.[71]

However, this framing of the artwork was not evident in dialogues I had with visitors. While

all of the visitors interviewed expressed a strong interest in the personal experiences of

individuals and with the broader themes of war and history explored in the Museum's

collection displays – both of which are addressed by the artist through this artwork – only

one of the six visitors interviewed referred to *The Crusader* without prompting, describing it

is an 'abomination of an excuse for a piece of art'.[72] The other people interviewed did recall

the work when prompted; two misidentified it as a spacecraft or aeroplane hangar, and all

six responded negatively when asked if the artwork had helped them to understand or think

about other parts of the overall display and its themes. The issue here was not necessarily of

contemporary art being conceptually inaccessible to visitors – as some did explicitly

indicate an interest in contemporary art and stated that they visited art exhibitions regularly

– but that a war museum is not the appropriate space for contemporary artworks. One visitor

felt that the IWM North is not the place for art and the Museum should instead make people

think about history and politics, while another felt that the artwork was not appropriate, as

art 'should be able to be understood by people without needing walls of text and labels to

---

[71] Gerry Judah, < http://audioboo.fm/boos/221859-gerry-judah-discusses-why-buildings-are-so-central-to-the- crusader-with-dan-feeney?playlist_direction=forward> [Accessed 22 August 2012].
[72] Williams, p. 40. The Main Exhibition Space includes a Timeline which 'narrates' war, starting at 1914 moving through to present day, and thematic Silos which explore 'Experience of War', 'Women and War', 'Impressions of War', 'Empire, Commonwealth and War', 'Science, Technology and War' and 'Legacy of War'.

explain it'.[73] The responses indicated that *The Crusader* was being conceptualised as an autonomous object and not as an object continuous with the other objects of social history in the museum. This issue has been addressed to some degree by Christopher Whitehead in relation to the 'instability of art as a philosophical concept' and the ambiguity of the relationships between what we think of as art and what might be presented to us as art.[74] He notes that while the status of an object as 'art' might be frequently questioned, particularly in contemporary artworks that do have the historical distance seemingly required to negate this question, the statement of 'this is not social history' is rarely encountered.[75] I propose that intervention projects such challenge this dichotomy often present in visitors, one which I have also encountered in both my own research and work in the heritage sector, wherein the conceptual leap required to perceive artworks as social history is not evident.

I therefore concluded from this Masters study that the conversations I had with visitors did not support the efficacy of contemporary art interventions in achieving an engagement with the Museum's tag line of 'war shapes lives', and that while *The Crusader* had the potential to provide a crux for visitor engagement – given the connection between Judah's own focus on the physical traces of war as a lived experience and the Museum's tag line of 'war shapes lives' – it was the responsibility of the Museum to facilitate a dialogue between the visitor and the artist via the work of art, in order for a critical encounter to occur.[76] Concluding this study I proposed that Susan Crane's process of *musealisierung*, in which an awareness of the museum's functions are internalised by the visitor, could provide a potential framework for structuring the interpretation of art intervention projects through the acknowledgement of the interactions between personal and public memory, historical

---

[73] Williams, p. 42.

[74] Chris Whitehead, 'Visiting with suspicion: Recent perspectives an art and art museum', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Gerard Corsane (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 89-101.

[75] Whitehead, p. 39.

[76] Williams, pp. 51-52.

consciousness, and an excess of memory.[77] While Crane was using the concept of *musealisierung* to conceptualise artworks that problematise the construction of historical consciousness through the introduction of artists' fictional narratives in social history displays, a specific form of artistic practice quite different to that being employed by the IWM North's introduction of visual art, the process of disrupting traditional narratives and encouraging visitors to approach them through both personal and contemporary experiences is the stated intention of the Museum's contemporary approach.

During the year between completing my Masters degree and beginning my postgraduate studies I was employed at Harewood House, Yorkshire, as a House and Collections Assistant. This position involved a front of house role, supporting visitors with general information and ticketing in relation to their visit, as well as providing information about the house, family and exhibitions on display. My supporting role in relation to exhibitions and collections involved assisting in research and administration, cataloguing and archival work, working on a publication and being a first point of contact for visitors and other organisations with enquiries about Harewood and its archives and collections. This role provided me with a broad access to Harewood House, its history and motivation, the narratives through which it intended to engage with visitors, and the opportunity to map visitor responses onto these intentions through my conversations with them. As such, it enabled me to begin to render visible the synergies and discords between visitor responses and organisational intent.

Harewood is an eighteenth-century country house, open to the public since the late 1950s as an independent charitable educational trust, gaining its designated museum status in 1998, and as such was 'set up to maintain and develop Harewood, its collections and grounds, for the public benefit'.[78] As one of the Treasure Houses of England, Harewood

---

[77] Susan Crane, 'Memory, Distortion and History in the Museum', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 2nd edition, ed. by Bettina Messias Carbonell (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012), pp. 303-314.

[78] Harewood House Guidebook (Leeds: Harewood House Trust)

presents itself as a place of 'historic and cultural interest and natural beauty' with the arts being positioned as central to the identity of the Trust and to the Lascelles family, still in residence at the property.[79] The interpretation provided on the State Floor focused on the family's history of commissioning and collecting throughout the construction and development of the house and grounds, an activity that has continued to present day with the Terrace Gallery, a dedicated contemporary art space in the house. Opened in 1989, this space is positioned in this trajectory of collecting, from J. M. W. Turner and Thomas Girtin in the eighteenth century, relatively unknown artists at the time, and the contracting of the local Chippendale studio and Robert Adam fresh from his studies in Italy to undertake the interior decoration, to the present day activities of Diane and David Lascelles, the current Lord and Lady Harewood. While the Trust and family view contemporary art to be integral to the identity of the house, throughout my year working there I frequently struggled to engage visitors in dialogue about the contemporary exhibitions, most often due to them being there specifically to see an eighteenth-century country house and expressing a disinterest and dislike for the contemporary artworks as being disruptive or irrelevant to their experiences. Their expectations of an eighteenth-century country house and its heritage often did not permit for the intrusion of the contemporary, even though the Lascelles family and their personal connections with contemporary arts in various forms were still very much present.

Both of these experiences with visitors prompted me to think further on engagement and what is actually means to be 'engaged'. Revisiting my notes from the IWM North dialogues I came to challenge my own preconceptions of what I understood engagement to be. At the time I had interpreted the lack of interest or negative views of *The Crusader* as a failure on behalf of the Museum's interpretation strategies, causing me to overlook the complexities of the dialogues which had resulted as consequence of asking visitors about their thoughts on the artwork. One visitor had been quite emphatic in his view that a

---

[79] Harewood House Guidebook (Leeds: Harewood House Trust)

Museum about the history of war was not an appropriate place to display contemporary art, and that art should be able to be understood without the need for walls of text to explain it. Another gentleman did not see the relevance of contemporary art and was quite concerned that the Museum failed to explicitly address the politics of contemporary conflict, and felt strongly that it was the Museum's responsibility to do so. Another visitor did not feel that he knew how to talk about contemporary art or works that were not 'literal', but expressed a dislike for the name of the work, as the word 'crusade' invoked a certain political rhetoric that he disagreed with as an American citizen. So, while the responses of these visitors did not explicitly connect *The Crusader* to the Museum's broader narrative of 'war shapes lives', they did address issues which were both complex and specifically related to the role of the Museum; the status of the art object and the modernist concept of the autonomous art work, and whether this type of object has a role in a space (presumably) dedicated to social history; the role of the Museum and its social responsibility to address contemporary issues; and the symbolic nature of language and how it connected to his personal experience of contemporary conflict and political rhetoric.

Upon reflection, I had found these dialogues to be challenging to grasp as a researcher and thought that they demonstrated a level of criticality in visitors that I had not expected to be generated through questions around a single work of art (even though the work itself was barely mentioned by them). I have come to understand these dialogues as 'evidence' of visitor engagement. The same can be said of the many dialogues I had with visitors at Harewood House, in that sometimes a disinterest in the contemporary works prompted further discussion around what they thought 'art' should be or represent and the appropriate place for it, and what they felt Harewood was as a heritage site and what it should present and represent. My conceptualisation of engagement had thus shifted away from visitors understanding the intention of the Museum/heritage site in their use of art work as an interpretive strategy, or their connecting the intention of the art work itself with the broader themes of the Museum/heritage site narrative, towards a critical dialogue facilitated by the art work and their encounter with it in the space.

As a student of art history and museum studies and a person who has worked in gallery and heritage contexts, this should not have come as a revelation. I have been accustomed to conceptualising visitors as complex individuals, who bring to the visit their own motivations, expectations and narratives, but in the process of trying to theorise experience in relation to one specific encounter I lost sight of this and became focused on the intended outcome of the encounter as prescribed by the institution. This realisation prompted me to consider how I could move beyond the institutional framing of these artworks and begin to understand them as they were encountered by visitors as lived, embodied experiences. While these experiences would still be negotiated within the physical and discursive space of a museum or heritage space, the experience rather than the institutional framing would be the starting point, providing the opportunity to move between scales and hierarchies within a broader ideological framing. Thus, a concern for 'engagement' with an artwork as an experience in and of itself, rather than being a product of an externally choreographed process from which 'engagement' is a predetermined product, became the focal point of this body of research.

> *engage*
> 1. [with object] occupy or attract (someone's interest or attention
> (engage someone in) involve someone in (a dialogue or discussion
> 2. [no object] (engage in or be engaged in) participate or become involved in
> (engage with) establish a meaningful contact or connection with
> 3. [with object] arrange to employ or hire (someone)
> [with infinitive] pledge or enter into a contract to do something
> 4. (with reference to a part of a machine or engine) move into position so as to come into operation
> 5. [with object] (of fencers or swordsmen) bring (weapons) together preparatory to fighting
> [with object] enter into combat with (an enemy)
>
> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*[80]

The etymology of the word 'engagement', rooted in the Late Middle English 'ingage' from the base 'gage', provides both a point of departure for this thesis and the conceptual frame within which contemporary interventions will be explored. Originally meaning 'to pawn or

---

[80] Oxford Dictionaries < http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/engage?q=engage> [Accessed 26 November 2013].

to pledge' something, the word came to mean 'to pledge oneself' and to enter into a contract. This invokes the notion of an obligation and commitment on behalf of an individual. From the seventeenth century onwards, 'engagement' came to refer to circumstances of employment, personal relations and physical actions. When understood in these terms, engagement becomes a state of action or a performative gesture existing only through processes by which entities are brought into contact. In the first and second of the contemporary definitions offered by the *Oxford Dictionary*, cited above, there is an element of participation, indicating an active involvement in a process or encounter. Notions of involvement and meaningful participation are juxtaposed with conflict and opposing sides (in combat with 'an enemy'), which opens up questions of how these seemingly antagonistic principles can work together to produce a meaningful encounter, and to what the notion of 'meaningful' might pertain. As a 'custodian of public investment' and national development agency for the arts, museums and libraries in England, Arts Council England prioritise public 'engagement' with arts and culture from which a broad range of benefits for both individuals and wider socio-economic impacts are assumed to develop and flourish in society.[81] The strategic framework set out in the Arts Council's ten year plan, *Great art and culture for everyone*, stresses the importance of engagement and its relationship to the value of the museums and arts organisations it supports in its core mission, as previously referenced, which centralised the importance of the relationship between excellence and engagement. Engagement with arts and culture is positioned as a potential catalyst for change through relationships constructed between visitors, artists, objects and artworks, as well as a criteria and measure of excellence in relation to arts practices. *Achieving great art for everyone: a strategic framework for the arts*, published earlier in 2010, prior to ACE taking on the responsibilities of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA),

---

[81] Arts Council England, *Great Art and Culture for Everyone: 10-year strategic framework 2010-2020*, 2nd Edition, Revised October 2013 (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2013). Since the devolution of Arts Council of Great Britain in 1994 the Arts Council England was established with a remit for England, with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland having their own governing bodies; this research is undertaken within the remit of Arts Council England.

offered a concrete definition for the term 'engagement' as 'more people feeling that the arts are meaningful to them'.[82] Echoing the possible definitions of engagement as a form of meaningful contact, ACE position engagement as a desired outcome of subsidised activity, wherein the public comes into contact with an entity defined as 'arts and culture'. While little knowledge is evident in relation to the mechanisms through which engagement with the arts might become meaningful, this 2010 report does state ACE's organisational commitment to 'provide a powerful, longer-term evidence base for policy making and demonstrating public value', indicating that the strategic framework's role in evaluation will be orientated towards advocacy for arts and culture in relation to public sector funding.[83] The evocation of public value as a core driver for arts and culture based activity has become embedded in contemporary cultural policy resulting in a wealth of literature and research into the public value of arts and culture as a response to increasing austerity measures in the UK and fiscal cut backs following a global financial crisis.[84]

This thesis will thus explore how richer knowledge of processes of engagement with the arts might be produced in order to interrogate how 'engagement' might be understood as a meaningful encounter. Undertaken in the context of the 'public value' debate, this research will problematise specific forms of evaluative knowledge that have been produced in response to Arts Council England's goals of excellence and engagement and their organisational agenda of advocacy. In order to do this, particular assumptions of value that underpin contemporary cultural policy agendas need to be historicised. This task will be undertaken through approaching policy processes as a cultural objects, located within

---

[82] Arts Council England, *Achieving great art for everyone: a strategic framework for the arts* (London: Arts Council England, 2010), p. 24.
[83] Arts Council England, (2010), p. 13.
[84] See: John Knell, & Matthew Taylor, *Arts funding, austerity and the big society: Remaking the case for the arts* (London: RSA, 2011), Eleonora Belfiore, '"Impact", "value" and "bad economics": Making sense of the problem of value in the arts and humanities', Arts & Humanities in Higher Education, 14 (2015), 95-110; Maria Miller, Keynote Arts Speech (2013) <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/testing-times-fighting-cultures-corner-in-an-age-of-austerity> Accessed [4 September 2017]; Adrian Harvey, *Funding Arts and Culture in a Time of Austerity* (London: New Local Government Network, 2016); John D. Carnwaith and Alan S. Brown, *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: a literature review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014); John Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: how culture has become a tool of government policy* (London: DEMOS, 2004)

specific socio-political contexts. The intention is to produce a critical reading of the ATM14 'Conflict and Compassion' exhibition of contemporary art in the Imperial War Museum North (IWMN) as way to examine the problematic tensions and contradictions around knowledge production and evaluation. The aim is not to provide a theory of engagement, but to work through a case study in order explore the possibilities of alternative approaches to understanding these complex intervention projects and how we might understand the mechanisms through which visitors construct meaning through encounters with contemporary works in heritage spaces.[85]

Responding to issues raised by Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett in their critique of evidence based policy and its 'instrumental rationality' this thesis therefore explores the priority assigned to the technical role of the arts over their cultural role, and aims to develop a broader understanding of intervention artworks as cultural objects rather than focusing on their technical role of audience development and constructing instrumentalised forms of 'value' and 'impact', as is evident in the formal evaluation produced with respect to the ATM14 exhibition.[86] Belfiore and Bennett have considered the problematic concepts of 'measurable' and 'evidence-based policy making' and assert that it is essential to examine the intellectual origins for the transformative claims made by contemporary cultural policy. This thesis will thus consider how this task might be

---

[85] While Harewood House would comfortably in the concept of 'heritage', including a national museum within this same framing may not seem as usual. Considering the following definition of heritage, it may become clearer as to why I have categorised the IWM North as a heritage site: 'Heritage is a broad concept and includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as biodiversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. It records and expresses the long processes of historic development, forming the essence of diverse national, regional, indigenous and local identities and is an integral part of modern life. It is a dynamic social reference point and positive instrument for growth and change. The particular heritage and collective memory of each locality or community is irreplaceable and an important foundation for development, both now and for the future.' A museum is a site which houses a collection; explores, curates and displays both past and contemporary experiences, knowledge and historic development; operates as a site of cultural and identity production; if we are to understand the museum in this way, then I feel it is appropriate to describe the IWM North as a heritage site. ICOMOS, *International Cultural Tourism Charter*, 2002, p. 6.
[86] Belfiore, Eleonora, and Oliver Bennett, 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach"; Arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14 (2010), 121-142.

undertaken with respect to intervention programmes, taking a relational approach in order to provide a more rigorous explanation of the complex issues and assumptions that underpin contemporary cultural policy and value rhetoric that have contributed to the instrumentalisation of contemporary art within the museum and heritage sector. This critique offered by Belfiore and Bennett is orientated around a lack of critical knowledge on arts and culture resulting from this technical focus, and so construct the problem of contemporary forms of knowledge production as inherently methodological relating to the challenges of measurement.[87] Belfiore and Bennett refer here to work undertaken by Susan Galloway who has argued that the issue has been framed as a technical one rather than an ontological or epistemic one.[88] Galloway argues that the central focus for advancing our understanding of the effects of arts interventions is ontological, and thus redirects the questions away from research methods and towards the most appropriate 'logic of enquiry'.[89] Located with respect to these concerns, this thesis explores the possibilities of enriching knowledge of a specific art intervention project through an approach that recognises the complex ontological nature of the artworks and the constitutive relationships through which they can be understood. It will engage with both the critical and theoretical concerns of the artworks as interventions and with the methodological concerns implicated in this task when attempting to account for visitor experience of them and how this might be understood as 'engagement'.

It has been argued that impact has been implicit in UK research agenda since the publication of the 1993 *White Paper Realising our potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology*.[90] The *White Paper*, a policy document with the purpose of setting out future legislation, advocated impact specifically through the promotion of

---

[87] Galloway, Susan, 'Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts', *Cultural Trends*, 18 (2009), 125-148 in Belfiore and Bennett, (2010).

[88] Belfiore and Bennett (2010), p. 123.

[89] Susan Galloway, 'Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts', *Cultural Trends*, 18 (2009), 125-148, (p.126). Galloway is drawing on the 'logic of enquiry' here articulated by Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey, & Walshe (2004) as a framework that generates research strategies and designs.

[90] Simon Smith, Vicky Ward and Allan House, ''Impact' in the proposals for the UK's Research Excellence Framework: Shifting the boundaries of academic autonomy', *Research Policy*, 40 (2011), 1369-1379

knowledge transfer by way of government supported links between research and industry

and the importance of this activity to the UK's economy. However, with respect to concrete

public policy, this concept was evident in the economic instrumentalisation of cultural

policy throughout the 1970s and 1980s, during which the UK underwent a period of

privatisation under a Conservative government. Drawing on Clive Gray's concept of 'policy

attachment', Eleonora Belfiore has discussed at length the underlying motivations for

attaching cultural policy to other, more prominent and visible issues of the 'welfare state' in

order to partake in greater political relevance.[91] This shift is evident in the rhetoric around

arts and culture, particularly manifested in literature produced by Arts Council England,

especially in an economic climate of decreased public-sector spending that will explored in

this thesis. Through an analysis of Arts Council England literature in conjunction with

broader public policy, it will be argued here that contemporary art instrumentalised as

interpretation and intervention occupies a particular space within current programming

strategies encouraged by policy and funding agendas, that prioritise the demonstration of

economic, and to some extent the social, impacts that public engagement with arts and

culture are assumed to produce. The notion of 'impact' continued under the leadership of

New Labour between 1997 and 2010 in relation to reducing social exclusion, with issues of

measurement and evaluation brought to the forefront of cultural policy.[92] Tessa Jowell, then

Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport from 2001 to 2007,

specifically addressed the measurement of value with the question: 'how, in going beyond

---

[91] Eleonora Belfiore (2010) and (2012)

[92] Eleonora Belfiore, 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8 (2002), 9-106; Juston O'Connor, 'Assessing the Cultural Impact of Economics', *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement*, ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 67- 86; Eleonora Belfiore, '"Defensive Instrumentalism" and the legacy of New Labour's cultural policies', *Cultural Trends*, 21 (2012), 103-1; Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach"; Arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14 (2010), 121-142; Emma Blomkamp, 'A Critical History of Cultural Indicators', in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement*, ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 11-26; Susan Galloway, 'Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts', *Cultural Trends*, 18 (2009), 125-148; John Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: how culture has become a tool of government policy* (London: DEMOS, 2004)

targets, can we best capture the value of culture?'[93] The 'value' of culture is not questioned

in this statement. Instead, the issue is centred on the *demonstration* of value, which serves to

naturalise the assumptions that engagement with arts and culture produces tangible social

and economic benefits. The processes of instrumentality at play here are described by

Belfiore as having a self-justifying aim; arts and culture, when defined through the 'impacts'

and benefits they create, introduce legitimacy to public sector funding whilst simultaneously

side-stepping more complex and problematic questions which underlie the assumptions

made of the arts in this process.[94] This centring of measurement and evaluation has

continued along much the same lines in more recent Government rhetoric with much less

attention paid to what value actually is and how we can come to understand it.

For Belfiore and Bennett there is a pressing need to engage with the complexity of

aesthetic experience in order to address three key issues: the theoretical and methodological

challenges of articulation and evaluation, the role of evidence in policy making, and the

tension between genuine research and arts advocacy.[95] Their article calls for a humanities

based approach to the value and impact debate in order to critically interrogate the

assumptions of the transformative potential of the arts, as exemplified by the following

passage delivered by Estelle Morris in 2003 as then Minister for the Arts in the Labour

Government:

> I know that Arts and Culture make a contribution to health, to education, to
> crime reduction, to strong communities, to the economy and to the nation's
> well-being but I don't always know how to evaluate it or describe it. We have
> to find a language and a way of describing its worth. It's the only way we'll
> secure the greater support we need.[96]

From this, the authors draw out four presumptions which frame the cultural policy debate

and inherent problematics: 'arts' and 'culture' constitute clearly identifiable entities; that

---

[93] Tessa Jowell, 'Why Should Government Supports the Arts', *Engage*, 17 (2005).
[94] Eleonora Belfiore, '"Defensive Instrumentalism" and the legacy of New Labour's cultural policies', *Cultural Trends*, 21 (2012), 103-11 (p. 105).
[95] Belfiore, Eleonora, and Oliver Bennett, 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach"; Arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14 (2010), 121-142
[96] Estelle Morris (2003) quote in Belfiore and Bennett (2010), p. 124.

these entities also have specific and recognisable impacts; that these impacts are expected to be positive; that these impacts can (and should) be evaluated and described; and that the challenge is finding the appropriate methods and language through which this task can be achieved.[97] While this speech by Morris was delivered almost a decade and a half ago these presumptions are still evident in current rhetoric. For example in Peter Bazalgette's remarks, as chair of ACE in his introduction to the 2014 literature review *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience* in which he states that 'one of the main problems is finding the framework and language with which to express these benefits… But we've got a lot more work to do in just learning to ask the right questions'.[98] Here, Bazalgette acknowledged that while cultural value cannot be measured in numbers, the positioning of the intrinsic value of arts and culture as a philosophical assertion underpins the ACE agenda of proving those values taken as *a priori*.

It must also be noted, that while there is much research aligning against an instrumentalisation of cultural policy that will be explored throughout this thesis, there is an argument in favour of an alternative perspective on instrumentality that also accounts for a critical engagement with the practicalities of cultural administration. Proposed by Lisanne Gibson in her 2008 article 'In Defence of Instrumentality', this argument responds to the notion of instrumentality as a threat as articulated by theorists such as Eleonora Belfiore, Clive Gray, Sara Selwood and Clive Gray by drawing attention to a lack of alternative proposals which actively combat the elite and exclusionary policies characteristic of the sector prior to this (historically specific) instrumental turn.[99] In response to Belfiore's critique, that in the current policy context culture is framed as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, Gibson suggests that the challenge for analysts and practitioners is to identify the ways in which culture can be funded, supported or created with public money that are both democratic and accountable. The emphasis here is on the practicalities of

---

[97] Belfiore and Bennett (2010), p. 124.
[98] ACE, March 2014, p. 5
[99] Lisanne Gibson, 'In Defence of Instrumentality', *Cultural Trends* 17 (2008), 247-257.

delivering cultural programmes and the pragmatic need to address the mechanisms and

processes through which decision making can be democratic, while retaining the

requirement of accountability.[100] Therefore, this thesis will use a case study in order to

explore the possibilities of alternative forms of knowledge production within the context of

instrumentality that account for the practicalities of museum and heritage work, whilst also

engaging in critical thinking with regards to the potential of alternative responses to

evaluation.

It will be argued that 'engagement', as it is conceptualised in contemporary policy

and arts and culture rhetoric, presupposes that arts and culture are an ontologically distinct

and identifiable category and their assumed value is created through the impact of their

interventions in social and economic configurations. This proposition will be unpacked

through a consideration of contemporary art intervention programmes that are framed as a

means of 'engaging' the public and as a catalyst for some form of critical transformation in

museum and heritage visitors. In this respect, contemporary art interventions manifest the

same ontological position as being external or separate to that which they are intervening in

and so provide a rich opportunity to explore alternative conceptualisations of engagement in

response to the visitor encounter with these works, by considering the works through their

relationships with cultural policy agendas, the IWM North institution and visitors who

experience them in situ.

Methodology

In order to explore the concept of 'engagement' and how it might be 'known' in response to

the deficit identified in arts evaluation, I undertook a case study of visitor encounters with

the ATM14 exhibition 'Conflict and Compassion' at the IWM North. This case study was

situated within a broader ethnographic approach investigating 'engagement' at points of

intersection within cultural policy, visitor experience and museum praxis. This approach

created space for a focus on lived, embodied encounters with the artworks in the exhibition,

including my own experiences as a researcher and my motivations driving this critical

---

[100] Gibson, p. 248.

inquiry into engagement with contemporary intervention projects. A focus on processes of 'knowing engagement' was informed by Tim Ingold's employment of Delueze and Guattari's notion of assemblage, synergetic to Rodney Harrison's proposition of a relational ontology, which assigns a primacy to the 'processes of formation, to flows and transformations of materials', framed against the notion of products and states of matter.[101] Rather than thinking of knowledge about engagement as a product of research, to be separated from the processes of knowing from which it was developed, this encouraged me to consider the research processes as integral to and an essential aspect of 'knowing engagement' and to 'think *with* it as it unfolds in the world [original emphasis]'.[102] Thus, throughout the study I was attentive to my own working processes and any internalised notions of what engagement might mean across the difference areas of research, and explored my own processes of meaning-making as a central element of the project. Therefore, I tried to remain sensitive to direction the research material and dialogues were taking me.

I approached contemporary forms of knowledge production about engagement as an institutional ethnography, undertaken within respect to cultural policy and Arts Council England literature, taking the boundaries of my study as the *White Papers* on arts and culture; the first of which was produced in 1965[103] and the second more recently in 2016.[104] Understanding institutional processes as mediated by text in the form of policy, evaluation and research and funding agendas, I approached engagement within the arts and culture sector through an interrogation of pulic cultural policy and Arts Council literature and the everyday experience of it as navigated by professionals working in the sector.[105] Through dialogues with Oliver Mantel (The Audience Agency), Natalie Walton (Freelance Arts Project Manager), Gillian Greaves (Arts Council Relationships Manager) and Katie

---

[101] Tim Ingold, 'The Textility of Making', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34 (2010), 91-102.
[102] Ingold, p. 92.
[103] Lee, Jennie, *A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps* (London: HM Secretary Office, 1965)
[104] Department of Culture, Media and Sport, *The Culture White Paper* (London: DCMS, 2016)
[105] Dorothy E. Smith, ed. *Institutional Ethnography* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), pp. 6-8

Stoddart, Lucy Chard and David Fitzer (Belton House), I developed knowledge of how

working practices relating to 'engagement' are framed by policy-driven evaluation methods

and how their professional perspectives are mediated by 'technologies of text and

textuality'.[106] Their knowledge and professional experiences of how these particular

technologies of accountability frame their various practices are woven through this research,

and have been integral to constructing a rigorous approach to how engagement is

conceptualised in both abstract and concrete forms throughout the sector,[107] rendering

visible how 'institutional language [of knowledge and engagement] organises ways of

knowing in the world in institutionally accountable ways'.[108]

Taking an ethnographic approach thus allowed me to transpose interdisciplinary

boundaries of policy, the humanities and social sciences by engaging with the lived

experience of the research. Given that I was also framing my research as an alternative

response to the 'robust, credible' research methods required by Arts Council England, issues

of rigour were also central to my theoretical framing. In their discussion on ethnography as

a research methodology, Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner proposed that the struggle of

gaining legitimacy for alternative modes of expression can be located in 'genres of writing

responsive to calls for self-conscious dialogue and multiple voices'.[109] As such, I responded

to this issue with written ethnographic and auto-ethnographic accounts of the encounters I

shared with visitors in the IWM North alongside the voices of arts professionals in order to

include multiple perspectives on the concept of engagement. Throughout this study it was

imperative to take a reflexive approach and make my research process explicit in order to

maintain a sense of academic rigor.[110] Therefore, I have written myself into this research,

---

[106] Smith, p. 65.

[107] Smith, p. 86.

[108] Liz McCoy, 'Keeping the Institution in View: Working with Interview Accounts of Everyday Experiences', in *Institutional Ethnography*. ed. by Dorothy Smith (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), pp. 109-125, (p. 122).

[109] Carolyn Ellis, and Arthur Bochner, 'Talking Over Ethnography', in *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*, ed. by Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1996), p. 29.

[110] John D. Brewer, 'The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography: Sectarianism in the RUC', *Sociology,* 28 (1994), 231-244, (p. 234).

using my personal narratives reflect on my position within the research and the dialogues through which I was producing knowledge about engagement.[111] In doing so, I acknowledge my own privileged position with respect to knowledge production, embedded in the complex relationship of ethnography to its anthropological roots and ideology expressed in producing knowledge on a subjected 'other'.[112] I worked to overcome the inherent problems of an object/subject dualism by prioritising visitors' voice in the dialogues I had with them in the exhibition spaces and drawing from this material the themes which informed theoretical discussion, working in an iterative process, moving between dialogues, theoretical literature and my own experiences. In working through this process, I hoped to also overcome a theory/practice dualism wherein theory is 'applied' to a practical context, positioning on against the other as dichotomised ways of knowing.[113] In doing this, theory was generated through dialogues between multiple interlocutors, including museum visitors, arts professional, artists, the museum intuitional, and myself as a researcher.

Particular moments of reflexivity were embedded in processes of transcribing the research dialogues and my field notes from the shared encounters with visitors in the exhibition spaces. As an active process of sense-making, I was aware of transcribing as a processes of transforming a 'multi-channelled' account into a written, linear form.[114] This interpretative process carried with it issues of emphasis and marginalisation, positioning my own decision making as a central authority within this process of meaning-making, making it apparent that while I was creating space for multiple voices to be heard, those voices were still subject to framing through my own interpretive choices.[115] The dialectic relationship between 'doing and writing'[116] is therefore embedded in my study through the production of

---

[111] Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography* (London: Alta Mira Press, 2004). Throughout this thesis, I will make my own experiences evident in ethnographic accounts in italics.
[112] Steven Jordan and David Yeomans, 'Critical Ethnography: problems in contemporary theory and practice', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 16 (1995), 389-408, (p. 391).
[113] Jordan and Yeomans, p. 394.
[114] Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 9.
[115] Emerson et al, p. 13.
[116] Emerson et al, p. 15.

fictiō or 'fictions',[117] constructed through processes of 'textualization' where lived experience is translated through interpretive process into a narration, anchored by my own position as author.[118]

Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis will reflect this theoretical approach and critically examine the possibilities of knowing visitor engagement with contemporary art interventions through an explorations of 'entry points' at different scales of visitor experience, museum and aesthetic discourse, and public cultural policy. Chapter One will introduce the Imperial War Museum North (IWMN) as the case study site and explore the use of contemporary art as an element of the Museum's affective mode of interpretation with the intention of constructing a 'critical historical consciousness' in its visitors. The contemporary approach taken by the Museum in its approach to war and conflict will be considered in relation to the 'Conflict and Compassion' exhibition displayed throughout the Museum from 7 September to 23 November, 2014, as an element of the city-wide 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14' (ATM14) festival. My own experience of contemporary art displayed in the IWM North will be introduced in this chapter with respect to the 'Catalyst' exhibition, displayed prior to the ATM14 as an exercise through which I began to unpack the role of contemporary art within the Museum's narrative and the possibilities of understanding the constitutive relationships within which the artworks might be embedded.

Chapter Two will address the methodological development of an exploratory visitor study undertaken in the Museum during the ATM14 festival and the challenges encountered in attempting to 'know engagement' with respect to the affective intentions of the Museum and the desire to facilitate a particular mode of historicised critical thinking. In this chapter, I will discuss my experience of developing a report for the Museum to contribute to their evaluation of the 'Conflict and Compassion' exhibition as an aspect of the ATM14 and the challenges of producing knowledge that both critically engages with the theoretical tensions

---

[117] Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)
[118] Emerson et al, drawing on Clifford Geertz (1986) p. 16.

of knowledge production within a relational framework, and with the pragmatic impetus to produce 'useful knowledge' for the Museum within the boundaries of policy driven evaluation.

Chapter Three will position the concept of 'engagement' with respect to a UK cultural policy context that has prioritised particular 'ways of knowing', resulting in a concern for 'demonstrable, measureable' outcomes within a historically specific form of instrumentalised cultural policy.

Chapter Four will then address the 'ways of knowing' visitor experiences with contemporary art in this setting, which are currently employed in formal evaluation. I aim to render visible the epistemic deficit evident in current methodologies which fail to account for the *process* of meaning-making which occurs when a visitor encounters these artworks as both material and discursive objects within the institutional framing of the IWM North.

Chapter Five will work through the possibilities of ethnographic and auto-ethnographic writing and a mode of knowledge production and articulation in order to explore ways of being with visitors in their encounters with the contemporary artworks. This chapter will include my own working through of how affective experience can be understood from the position of a researcher in the Museum space, and the possibilities of developing a richer understanding of what 'engagement' means with respect to these contemporary works through the lens of an 'affective encounter'. It will unpack the notion of dialogue with respect to 'affective encounters' within the complex sites of contemporary interventions into museums and heritage sites through the ATM14 exhibition, 'Conflict and Compassion', in order to consider how dialogue is being constructed, by whom, and who the visible and invisible interlocutors are within this complex set of relations.

Through re-imagining the landscape of these complex interventions, I hope to open up a space for critical reflection on the epistemic and ontological framing of evaluation in its current forms and propose that 'engagement' might be more usefully considered as a process of articulation rather than a pre-defined outcome or intention. The heterogeneous nature of the agents involved and the relations between them, plus the multiple sites and processes of

knowledge production and articulation with respect to art objects within the context of the publicly subsidised arts and culture sector does not easily lend itself to a neat and linear narrative. Instead, a mapping of these issues and relations aims to enable spaces of critical intervention within which these assumptions can be made visible and alternative conceptions of what it might mean to 'be engaged' with contemporary art and heritage may be proposed.

Chapter One: Contemporary art at the Imperial War Museum North

Research Site

The Imperial War Museums (IWM) are a group of five Museums located across England.[119] The IWM positions itself as 'a leading authority on conflict and its impact, focusing on Britain, its former Empire and the Commonwealth, from the First World War to the present' through its role in recording and illustrating 'all aspects of modern war and of the individual's experience of it, whether allied or enemy, service or civilian, military or political, social or cultural'.[120] Initially founded as the National War Museum on 5 March 1917 by the War Cabinet, the name was changed to Imperial War Museum later in 1917 following interest from the Dominion governments, and in 1920 was formally established by an Act of Parliament to be governed by a board of appointed trustees. It is clear from the explicit aims articulated by the Museums that the IWM's remit is extensive and this is reflected in the broad range of materials collected including photographs, oral histories, writings, objects and art. As a group of national museums, the Imperial War Museums receive just under half of their funding directly from the DCMS as grant-in-aid, and the remainder is raised through sponsorship, charitable giving, admission charges and other commercial activities.[121]

The IWM North opened at Salford Quays in July 2002 as the fifth of the Imperial War Museums sites. Designed by architect Daniel Libeskind, the aluminium-clad building was conceived as a disorientating and unsettling space, representing a world fractured by conflict into three shards of land, air and water.[122] The particular form of unconventional architectural design employed by Libeskind has been defined as a 'planned chaos with a

---

[119] IWM London; IWM Duxford: Cambridge; Churchill War Rooms: London; HMS Belfast: London; IWM North: Manchester.
[120] Imperial War Museum <http://www.iwm.org.uk/corporate/about-IWM> [Accessed 20 July 2017]
[121] Imperial War Museum <http://www.iwm.org.uk/corporate/procurement< [Accessed 8 October 2017].
[122] Imperial War Museum <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/8-things-you-didnt-know-about-the-iwm-north-building> [Accessed 8 October 2017].

pedagogic function' based on the concept of a journey with a beginning and an end, constructed through a disjointed sequence of movements and perceptions: a labyrinthine aesthetic.[123] Described by Paul Basu as the embodiment of a paradox that embraces the contradictions of order and disorder, unity and multiplicity, this aesthetic is a 'powerful technology to think with and to engage with the epistemological dilemmas of a late modern age that has rejected absolute truths'.[124] Basu evokes Edmund Husserl's phenomenological theory of time consciousness which constructs narrative as a particular form of sense making. Visitors' routes through the museum construct spacio-temporal experiences that have no intrinsic meaning in themselves, but form a sequential process through which what came before and what comes after becomes a configuration through which the experience is understood in the mind of those visitors.[125] While this heavily theoretical articulation of the intention of the space may resonate with the Museum's aim of creating powerful physical experiences that engage visitors of all ages with the issues of war and conflict, it has become evident that visitors find their experience of the interior spaces of the building difficult to navigate and this impacts negatively on their ability to connect the space to the narratives and content on display.[126]

The IWM North approaches war and conflict explicitly through the impact it has with the tag line of 'war shapes lives', repeated throughout exhibition displays and literature, and the intention to 'inspire and encourage debate' which underpins its programming.[127] The Museum describes its purpose and vision as follows:

> 'We try to tell every story in as vivid a way as possible, *creating powerful physical experiences* that engage visitors of all ages with the issues of war and conflict. Our collections are unique and constantly evolving and we try to exhibit them in as relevant a way as possible to contemporary audiences [own emphasis].'[128]

---

[123] Paul Basu, 'The Labyrinthine Aesthetic in Contemporary Museum Design', in *Exhibition Experiments*, ed. by Paul Basu and and Sharon Madonald (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) pp. 47-70.
[124] Basu, p. 51.
[125] Basu, p. 53.
[126] Suzanne MacLeod, Jocelyn Dodd and Tom Duncan, *Developing the IWM North* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2014)
[127] Imperial War Museums, *Summer at IWM North: Press Release* (2015)
[128] Imperial War Museums, *IWM Corporate Plan 2014-17*, p. 2.

Through the use of a chronological time line along with thematic silos, object handling sessions, talks and tours, special exhibitions, the Big Picture Show film projection and new apps and social media technologies, IWM North intends to construct a 'highly interpretive and affective environment where the physical material of the museum is put to work in engaging visitors' senses, feelings and emotions', achieved through 'provocative juxtapositions of object and story'.[129] This approach, embedded in the labyrinthine architecture, aims to facilitate multiple possible paths through an exhibition space and narrative, which utilize a range of interpretation and display models in order to facilitate 'affective forms of experience and a more active generation of historical consciousness'.[130]

In May 2014 the Research Centre for Museum and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester published the *Developing IWM North* report. Commissioned by IWM North working in partnership with the University of Leicester, RCMG and Duncan McCauley, this piece of research was undertaken in order to better understand visitor experience in relation to war and conflict in the specific architecture of the IWM North, using existing research and documentation commissioned by the IWM North over a ten year period.[131] While contemporary art is employed by the IWM North very specifically as an interpretive tool intended to engage visitors with the challenging issues addressed in the display narratives, conceptualised in the *Developing IWM North* report as a 'terrible gift', it is acknowledged that this technique does not necessarily support visitors to overcome the challenge of the Museum's complex architectural spaces:[132]

> The contemporary art approach preferred by the IWM North where high quality, demanding artworks, are presented as a route to suggesting – rather than explicitly detailing - the horrors and impact of war and where art is utilised as an affective alternative to a text-based, didactic explanation, places, intentionally, further demands on visitors.[133]

---

[129] MacLeod et al., p. 8.
[130] MacLeod et al., p. 9.
[131] MacLeod, et al, p. 5.
[132] The 'terrible gift' referred to here is that of an inheritance or bequest described by Roger I. Simon in relation to witness testimony from the Second World War Ghettos intended for future generations. Roger I. Simon, 'The terrible gift: Museums and the possibility of hope without consolation', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 21 (2006), 187-204.
[133] MacLeod et al., p. 11.

The report here draws from research undertaken by Andrea Witcomb on curatorial practices in Australia, which addresses contact histories and histories of migration. Witcomb suggests the possibility of sensory exploration with respect to forms of pedagogic practice in the museums and the development of a form of historical consciousness that encourages a critical engagement with history and the relationships between past and present.[134] Acknowledging that there is a lack of research in relation to audience engagement with exhibitions which employ dynamics of recognition and identification rather than linear narratives, Witcomb explored a small number of exhibitions through the concept of affect and how embodied forms of knowledge might be expressed in response to the aesthetic and spatial qualities of the exhibition interpretation.[135]

Exploring these exhibitions through her own experiences of curatorial strategies which encourage both a recognition of personal experience in relation to an established narrative and the recognition of affective space within interpersonal encounters, Witcomb explores the possibilities of inhabiting different subjectivities within the exhibition space. The exhibitions she considered included a map geographically locating the presence and absence of communities, objects created to highlight the constructed nature of heritage sites, and the juxtaposition of objects intended to unsettle and problematise historical narratives and make visible power relations and positions of complicity. In working through her own responses, Witcomb identified provocations intended to unsettle the viewer but which require emotional and intellectual labour on behalf of the visitor in order for affective encounters occur.[136] The proposition that this form of provocative curation can create forms of affective space – spaces of recognition, grief and empathy in the specific examples the author explores – between people and the materiality of objects is useful with respect to the IWM North and its focus on the impact of conflict on people's lives:

> Our unique Collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal
> stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal

---

[134] Witcomb, Andrea, 'Understanding the role of affect in producing a critical pedagogy for history museums', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28 (3) (2013), 255-271.
[135] Witcomb, p. 256.
[136] Witcomb, p. 267.

> stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.[137]

Witcomb proposes that these exhibitions evoke Walter Benjamin's use of the concept of *erfahrung*, knowledge through lived experience, in contrast to exhibitions that rely on didactic forms of pedagogy in the form of *erlebnis*, meaning knowledge akin to information.[138] This distinction between forms of knowledge, framed in relation to Benjamin's writing on the work of Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust, suggests a useful concept through which to discuss material encounters and the affective forms of knowledge necessary to enable the forms of critical engagement through physical and affective experiences constructed by exhibitions such as those at the IWM North intend to provoke. Witcomb draws here on Walter Benjamin's writing 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', wherein Benjamin discusses Proust's distinctions between voluntary and involuntary memory, and the mechanisms through which the human consciousness seeks to protect itself from external stimuli. With respect to Freud's work on consciousness and Proust's *mèmoire involontaire*, Benjamin describes *erfharung* as impressions that enter experience through a bypassing of the consciousness (by means of a 'shock factor'), in contrast to *erlebnis* which tend to 'remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one's life'. [139] The IWM North states it focus on affective experience and the ways in which it prioritises 'sensory experience and emotion', which suggests that it intends to facilitate an experience which speaks less to the intellectual consciousness as with more traditional didactic forms of interpretation. While the 'shock factor' may not necessarily be the Museum's intention, there was certainly an element of a bodily or sensory experience present in visitors which preceded, and sometimes hindered, an intellectual response evident in the case study of artworks displayed

---

[137] Imperial War Museum, Press Release (2017) < http://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/press-release/Press%20Release_IWM%202017%20Programme_2.pdf> [Accessed 25 October 2017]
[138] Witcomb, p. 268.
[139] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. by Harry Zohn, ed. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) pp. 159-163.

in the 'Conflict and Compassion' exhibition, explored in depth in Chapter Five of this thesis.

While the primary focus of the RCMG report was to better understand how to support visitors in their experience of the architecture, the research also raised specific questions in relation to the interpretation of art in the Museum space; how does the use of contemporary art as an interpretive strategy affect visitors' perceptions of IWM North?; how might we understand visitors' needs and what additional dimensions of a visitor experience might be required to encourage repeat visitors?; how could IWM North make more use of questions to enable dialogue and exchange?; how might we understand visitors' needs and what additional dimensions of a visitor experience might be required to encourage repeat visitors?[140] These questions circle the nature of visitors' encounters with the artworks and the processes through which meaning might be made through these experiences. Before exploring what additional dimensions might be required, it is first essential to understand current visitor experience and how these interventions works might fit within the narratives they construct as they move through the Museum.

Contemporary Art in the Museum

In order to develop an understanding of visitor engagement with the artwork on display in the ATM14 exhibition, it was first necessary to position the exhibition in the context of the IWM North's particular approach to the subject of war and conflict. As previously discussed, the research undertaken by the RCMG in partnership with the IWM North conceptualises this approach as follows:

> IWM North prioritises sensory experience and emotion. The intention here is to create the potential for a museum experience and a form of sensory knowledge which generates in visitors what is sometimes referred to as a 'critical historical consciousness' – an ability to reflect on the past, draw parallels to the present, and consider other peoples' stories in relation to one's own.[141]

The IWM North displays art from the Museum's permanent collection, founded on

---

[140] MacLeod et al., p. 6.
[141] MacLeod et al, p. 8.

works commissioned by the official War Artists' Scheme set up by the British Government in 1916 and a larger scheme established under the War Artists Advisory Committee during the Second World War.[142] The Museum has continued this activity of commissioning through the Art Commissions Committee (ACC) since the early 1970s. War art schemes were initially developed under the rubric of propaganda through the production of eyewitness images by the then Department of Information.[143] Artworks from this continually developing collection are displayed throughout the Main Exhibition Space alongside the core object collection displays and, as such, are integral to the broader historical and thematic narratives. The *Reactions* programme, beginning in 2010 and supported by Arts Council funding, has commissioned contemporary artworks, events, workshops and live performances by artists which respond to the Museum's collection, architecture and theme of 'war shapes lives', and has become a prominent feature in the Museum's programming.[144] The Museum group launched their contemporary programme in 2013 with the premier of Omer Fast's '5000 is the Best' film at IWM London in July, followed by an exhibition at the IWM North showing from October 2013 to February 2014 which displayed the IWM's collection of contemporary works produced since the First Gulf War; 'Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War'. The contextualisation of this exhibition through panels, labels and the exhibition catalogue communicated the framing of contemporary art with respect to current forms of media information and the internet, but it also signified the role of art within a broader institutional rhetoric:

> What do artists contribute to our perceptions of war and conflict in a time when our general understanding of conflict is increasingly shaped by the media and the internet?

> Working outside the pressures of journalism, artists can propose ideas, urging

---

[142] Imperial War Museum North, *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War*, exhibition catalogue (2013), p. 2.
[143] Imperial War Museum North, *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War,* p. 2.
[144] The recently revised website now features a full page dedicated to the Reactions programme which includes a brief introductions to the works currently on display and their relationship to contemporary conflict. This presence demonstrates a response to the findings of the Developing IWM North report in providing the visitor with knowledge of the intention of these artworks prior to their visit.

the viewer to think deeply about what war it, about its immediate impact, its long term repercussion and how we remember it. They invite us to consider our definition of conflict in a time when war no longer has easily defined geographical limits. Often taking their personal history as a starting point, many artists navigate this broad-ranging subject matter as observers, activists or philosophers.[145]

The role of art and artists in 'catalysing' critical thinking and processes of remembrance outside of the more familiar images and narratives presented within the public realm is apparent, as is the position of authority assigned to artists and their ability to navigate complex issues. Attending 'Art, Justice and Terror', a conference focused on the representation of conflict in contemporary art and the impact of artists' work on the impact of and understanding of conflict, Hilary Roberts, a curator at the Imperial War Museum, spoke of her role as being that of a bridge between artists and their audiences.[146] Roberts also drew attention to the role of the Museum as being apolitical, and striving to present the 'facts' in the most truthful way possible. The Museum is thus positioned here is a space for debate, without itself providing a position or viewpoint. It must be noted here that this comment maybe have been one spoken as a personal perspective and not necessarily how the Museum perceives itself – no qualification was given to indicate that either was the case. It is, however, important to make note of the sentiment of this statement, that being the impetus to maintain the perception of neutrality to whatever degree that might be possible. This positioning of the artist as a voice able to say the difficult things which cannot be spoken by a museum or organisation is familiar in the institutional logic of intervention projects. This sentiment was articulated at a recent symposium at the Freud Museum, 'Beyond the White Cube', which explored their own contemporary programme and how 'visits can be deepened by engaging with contemporary art',[147] and the ways in which 'the artist can say things that the museum finds difficult to say'.[148]

---

[145] Imperial War Museums, *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War* (Manchester: Imperial War Museums, 2013), p. 1.
[146] Imperial War Museum London, *Art Justice and Terror*, Conference, 17 June 2017.
[147] Carol Seigel, Director of the Freud Museum (April, 2017)
[148] Danny Birchall, *Ropes, tropes & bots (or: What the Museum Finds Hard to Say)* in reference to a talk given by Mark Dion at the National History Museum <https://museumcultures.wordpress.com/>

This position has been addressed by Claire Robins in her work on artist interventions as pedagogic tools in relation to visitor experience.[149] While Robins' focus is on particular forms of intervention, those which engage critically with museum discourse through tropes of irony and parody, her work makes some important contributions to the under-researched field of interventions as part of museum praxis. Framing these works as orchestrated legitimate transgressions, reclassified from being in need of interpretation to themselves performing interpretive acts, Robins draws attention to both the work required by visitors when they encounter these pieces and to what I will refer to as 'the institutionalisation of institutional critique'.[150] The heterogeneity of these works is made apparent when their role in the museum display is considered in relation to the historical discourse from which they are constructed. Situated as a pedagogic tool, these works are burdened with the task of performing interpretive tasks and, as such, are subsumed, at least in part, into the internal logic of museum displays, whilst also analogously refusing traditional models of learning through mimicry of familiar modes of classification or narrative tools in order to subvert such epistemic traditions. For Robins, this role of the art work serves to destabilise the trust visitors often have in the museum as reliable source of information, and thus the artworks are presented with 'the possibility of simultaneous and contradictory meanings' which perpetuates a state of flux, within which visitors are expected perform acts of learning and/or engagement.[151] The sentiment expressed by delegates at the 2017 Freud Museum conference is echoed by Robins in her reference to art as being able to 'perform the unspeakable'[152].

With respect to this notion of speech, Robins asked in an earlier article 'how did the reticent object become so obliging?'[153] Drawing on Peter Vergo's concept of the art work as

---

[Accessed 19 May 2017].

[149] Claire Robin, *Curios Lessons in the Museum: The Pedagogic Potential of Artists' Interventions* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016).

[150] This concept will be address in detail in Chapter Five with respect to critique by Hal Foster and the artistic and theoretical writings of Andrea Fraser.

[151] Robins, p. 101.

[152] Robins, p. 100.

[153] Claire Robins, 'How did the Reticent Object Become so Obliging? Artists' Interventions as Interpretive Strategies', *Engage 20 Strategic Interpretation*, ed. by Karen Raney (London: Engage,

a reticent object, Robins uses this article to briefly outline the trajectory of the art intervention as a site of ideological contestation in reference to Benjamin Buchloh's description of these works as an 'assault on the false neutrality' of institutions, by exposing institutional framing and suggesting alternatives and strategies of change.[154] The concept of the 'reticent object' is situated in relation to exhibitions of contemporary art, criticised by Vergo as manifesting an arrogant and uncompromising aesthetic which obligate the visitor to 'read around' the subject stemming from a frequent failure on behalf of institutions to adequately structure the experience for a casual viewer.[155] For Vergo, the position that 'elucidation must necessarily take the form of words' is one which should be reconsidered, and that other visual objects and carefully considered juxtapositions can 'stand for' interpretation and explicitly written context; these objects can, instead, 'speak for themselves'.[156] This mode of curatorial practice can engender 'the reticent object for once coaxed into loquacity by the efforts of selector and designer'.[157] Vergo's focus is also on the educational remit of museums, and the extent to which aesthetic objects can be curated in displays, however ephemeral, for the purposes of learning. This notion of contemporary art as an interpretive technique and one which can 'elucidate' in place of a more traditional interpretative text is, in itself, quite problematic. As suggested by Robins and Vergo, contemporary art can challenge visitors' interpretive skills and, while that may intend ben the intention of work for the purposes of subversion or in the service of wider critiques, employing these works as a route to understanding is heavily dependent on visitors' ability to 'decode' them. This issues is solely attributed to contemporary art in museum or heritage settings, but effecting experience of art more widely. Pierre Bourdieu has discussed this issue extensively in within the field of sociology. Following a large study of visitors conducted in European art museums in the 1960s with Alain Darbel, Bourdieu has written

---

2007), pp. 23-28.
[154] Robins (2007), pp. 24-27.
[155] Peter Vergo, 'The Reticent Object', *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1989, 2006), p. 50.
[156] Vergo, pp. 53-54.
[157] Vergo, p. 54.

about the role played by the education system in the relationship between cultural reproduction and social reproduction.[158] The research concluded that 'cultural capital' that is, the ability to appropriate cultural goods as symbolic goods, is 'only possible for those who hold the code making it possible to decipher them'.[159] In the context of contemporary art interventions, this suggests that prior to being able to engage with the museum 'through' the art intervention as a specific form of interpretation, a visitor must first have possession of the cultural knowledge required to decipher the art object. For instance, referring back to Robins' writing on the subject, visitors must be able to recognise tropes of irony and parody that might be embedded in the work, but in themselves require the viewer to be able to recognise other cultural 'clues'. This layering of interpretive skills embedded within the role of works of intervention as interpretation are not only (intentionally) challenging for visitors, but also highlight certain social and political issues still prevalent in museums decades after Bourdieu and Darbel's initial research, that of cultural capital being disproportionately possessed by visitors from wealthier and higher educated socio-economic groups.[160] Given that the introduction of art as a means of intervention and interpretation may thus exclude visitors lacking the necessary 'cultural capital' required to decipher, them, this form of programming become problematic, and entrenched in issues of social exclusion. The extent to which this effects the possibilities of visitor engagement requires a much broader consideration than is undertaken in this current thesis, but it is a question which must be taken up by future research.

The issue of exhibitions being ephemeral is also one that also requires attention. Intervention projects are often in situ for a limited time period and, especially with a national museum such as the IWM North, the visitors may be large in number, but the

---

[158] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', in *Adult and Continuing Education: Major Themes in Education*, ed. by Peter Jarvis and Colin Griffin (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 173-184. (Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art: European art museums and their publics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), trans. from French edition published 1969.
[159] Bourdieu, p. 174.
[160] This is addressed more thoroughly in the report produced by the Warwick Commission which examine the disparity in access to publically funded arts and culture and arts education. The Warwick Commission, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (Coventry: The University of Warwick: 2015).

duration and frequency of each individual's visit may be limited. The temporality of both the exhibition projects and the nature of the visit must be taken into account when researching engagement and this type of encounter. For Vergo, however, the ephemerality of encounters does not constrain the possibilities for learning and education, and the success of an exhibition is determined not by an external standard – such as the demonstrable measures of engagement we see in contemporary evaluation – but by the internal logic of the display and its narrative intention:

> Even the more cursory glance at the objects presented for our inspection, the most private act of communion between ourselves and a work of art represents a broadening of our intellectual horizons, a deepening and enriching of our experience – and hence of our education. The temporary exhibition or museum display will succeed or fail in reinforcing that experience and making it more vivid, more memorable, more lasting not in terms of some 'objective' standard imposed from outside, but according to criteria which the exhibition itself and those responsible for its making must propose.[161]

The issue of art interpretation as being a process which 'represents a broadening of our intellectual horizons' is complex. The nature of interpreting contemporary art in a more general sense has been addressed by Jane Deeth, who has proposed that representational and formalist aesthetic codes of art appreciation art still dominant in the minds of museum visitors.[162] Deeth identified a shift in museological practice from the transmission of specialist knowledge to a focus on visitor experience which necessitates a change in relation to interpretation strategies. Locating this with respect to a constructivist learning theory which actively encourages the visitor to interrogate art and museum displays, as opposed to learning from text in a more traditional, didactic fashion, Deeth suggests the potential for visitors to make 'comparisons and connections between that which is unfamiliar to them [in this case, the ATM14 artworks] and their own prior knowledge and experiences.[163] However, she asserts that 'while narrative and aesthetic codes are familiar and operational in the art museum, the code for engaging the strange and unfamiliar that is often the space

---

[161] Vergo, pp. 58-59.
[162] Jane Deeth, 'Engaging Strangeness in the Art Museum: an audience development strategy', *Museum and Society*, 10(1) (2012), 1-14, (p. 1).
[163] Deeth, p. 3.

of contemporary discursive art practice, is rarely made apparent. Instead, interpretations by others, such as the artist or the curator, are offered to viewers as a bridge to engagement'.[164] It must be recognised that, particularly within the ATM14 exhibition of works that are culturally specific in their designation as Asian contemporary art, that the discursive space of art is itself a political, historical, social and cultural space. As such, the act of interpretation with respect to these artworks is also a political act, an issue which is explored at greater length in Chapter Five with respect to the shifting of cultural 'work' from the Museum institution onto the artists' and their works of intervention into the Museum spaces.[165]

Rather than adopt Vergo's idealised concept of the potential for engaging with objects, Robins acknowledged complex role of the art work as intervention – which draws on the act of curation as a form of coaxing objects into speech – taking account of the role of the artist and the institution in relation to the potential for dialogue constructed through the particular juxtaposition of objects. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of 'parrhesia', a technique and an ethics concerned with the process of speaking truthfully, Robins considers the artist as parrhesiate and their gaining of trust through the process of free speech and risking discussion around difficult and controversial issues.[166] This conceptual framing is particularly useful in the context of a war museum and the complex narratives it must engage with given that violence and contestation are at the very core of its subject matter, as is the issue of institutional power and responsibility raised by Robins' acknowledgement of the risk undertaken by the artist and the notion that the person the speaking cannot be uncoupled. The museum can, to some extent, distance themselves from what is being spoken by explicitly assigning to the artwork the role of being an artists' voice, with the artist being a position to say what the museum cannot. This results in the explicit institutional framing of the intervention artworks, or the Museum's 'voice',

---

[164] Deeth, p. 11.
[165] Christopher Whitehead, *Interpreting Art in Museum and Galleries* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. xvi.
[166] Robins, p. 208.

becoming even less visible. The ethical implications of this act of transposing responsibility of the speech act onto an individual artist are explored by Robins through the role of a public institution to diffuse hostility by providing an arena for antagonism to be transformed into agonism, and thus the implication of the museum in the right to dissent. For Robins, this translates into a form of agonistic pluralism which provides an alternative to the traditional concept of democracy that emphasises consensus as a desired outcome. This idea will be explored through the case study of IWM North, with particular attention to the production or lack of space within which this process can occur in a concrete form, moving from an imagined dialogue to a substantive one. It will not be presumed that the mere presence of an intervention work is alone adequate to facilitate an active democratic and transformative space. The artist as *parrhesiate* does, however, present itself in some of the responses in my visitor study, and therefore will be used as a conceptual tool when approaching the conservations I had with visitors as a way to understand the mechanisms through which they construct meaning in their encounter with the ATM14 artworks. For example, consider the following dialogues, held at the IWM North during encounters with *ATM14* artworks shared between myself and visitors to the Museum. Curtis was visiting the Museum alone and, having recently moved to Manchester, was interested in exploring the Salford Quays located close to his workplace. I had engaged in conversation with Curtis by introducing myself and my research and he was happy to agree to an accompanied visit. We began our conversation directly next to Aman Mojadidi's artwork *Commodified*, a work which provoked the most dialogue throughout my visitor study.

> [Aman Mojadidi, *Commodified*]
> I can see you smiling; you seem quite interested in it?
> Curtis: Yes I just think it's quite an interesting approach. I think obviously,
> they're trying to be a bit controversial.
> Do you think that helps get the point across?
> Curtis: Yes it gets the point across, I guess. You know straight away that
> they're going to be from somewhere that has, I imagine, some sort of conflict,
> so you know they have seen some sort of conflict or had conflict in their life,
> because if I did some of this stuff it would be a hell of a lot more controversial.
> Sometimes coming from someone who has experienced it, it doesn't seem so
> bad, it doesn't seem so offensive.
> Like they have a bit more of a right to comment on it maybe?

Curtis: Yes, it's sort of like they can get away with it.[167]

This artwork provoked a similar sentiment from Colin who was visiting the Museum with

his partner, both of whom took part in my case study by agreeing to an accompanied visit.

While Louise decided that she was 'not sure' about her feeling in response to *Commodified*

and preferred to speak to a Museum volunteer standing close by, Colin was keen to discuss

the impact this work could potentially have in offending people:

> [Aman Mojadidi, *Commodified*: we were discussing how this work uses
> humour and the aesthetic qualities of the objects on display to draw attention to
> itself]
> Colin: There are so many different museums doing that same thing that it's just
> a wander around look at a picture, right next one done that, then it's interesting
> to be challenged a bit more and made to think about things
> I think it's good that you like the idea of being challenged [Colin: Yes] it's not
> an easy thing to do.
> Colin: No because it's also finding, it takes a lot to offend me, quite a lot, but I
> don't get offended because of people saying something. But I think it does
> depend who's saying it, if you're in a position where you can make that joke
> and it's coming from one side of the fence, but then when it comes from
> another it can actually become more offensive.
> So if a white, 'born and bred' British artist…
> Colin: Yes, so if I did that, then I think some people would find that offensive
> because they'd think I was taking the mick out of them, but because it's
> coming from their side, or that side, then it's not my place to be offended by it,
> because it's not in any way […] Because this person has got an Afghan
> background as well, then in a way, if we're there, then he's entitled or anyone
> from Afghan is entitled to tell us to [indistinct] and also if they want to make a
> joke about it or deal with it in that way that's their … so if the troops who are
> there are offended by it that's their job to be there to do it so…
> I think it's interesting that you do see it from an artist point of view, [Colin:
> Yes] and that they've got a particular place in that dialogue.[168]

The comments made by Curtis and Colin both related to notions of controversy and offence,

and the position from which the artist was speaking in their work; being able to 'get away

with it' or creating something that may cause offense is mitigated by the sense that the artist

is speaking from a position of direct, personal experience. As such, the artist, in this case

Aman Mojadidi, is framed as a *parrhesiate* in being able to speak a very particular truth,

and being in some way protected or entitled to have a viewpoint that may be quite

---

[167] Conversation with Curtis, 8 November 2014.
[168] Conversation with Colin, 5 November, 2014.

contradictory or divisive. Colin referred to 'the person who's saying it' and that 'he's entitled to tell us', in a similar vein to Curtis, who explained that 'you know straight away that they're going to be from somewhere […]'; the artist, as an identifiable individual, is producing the artwork as a form of speech, as so the artist is present as an interlocutor, and credited with the role of speaking a legitimate 'truth'.

'Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War'

It is appropriate here to address a contemporary artwork I encountered at the IWM North on an initial research visit prior to the 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14' exhibition, *For Queen and Country* (2007) by the artist Steve McQueen. The work was included in the 'Catalyst' exhibition displayed in the Special Exhibitions Gallery 12 October 2013 – 23 February 2014.[169] The contemporary artworks displayed in this exhibition were not framed as interventions in the explicit sense of the ATM14 artworks which intervened in and responded directly to the architecture, display material and physical interiors of the Museum. Instead, I propose that the works included in this exhibition suggest an intended intervention into cultural consciousness, with the Museum framing artists' responses to war and conflict as an invitation 'to think deeply about what war is, about its immediate impact, its long-term repercussions and how we remember it'.[170] My experience of this exhibition provoked me to consider how artworks in this Museum are encountered and how they might provide an opportunity to critically examine the complex and contingent relations within which they exist as intervention. This informed my later thinking with respect to the specific space of the IWMN, with a view to how the ATM14 works came to be commissioned and curated.

McQueen developed *For Queen and Country* (2007) from the impossibility of filming in Basra during the artist's visit, and, at the time of my viewing it, consisted of 136

---

[169] The *Catalyst* exhibition will be addresses in more detail later in this thesis with respect to its position with the Museum's broader contemporary programming

[170] Imperial War Museum North, *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War* (Manchester: Imperial War Museums, 2013), p. 1.

portraits of British military personnel who lost their lives on active service in Iraq printed

onto stamps.[171] The portraits include those who died as a consequence of friendly fire,

traffic accidents and suicides who would not usually be included in the Ministry of

Defence's (MoD) description of personnel who had lost their life 'in action'. McQueen

initially intended for the stamps to go into circulation with the Royal Mail as 'real'

commemorative stamps in order to 'enter the lifeblood of the country', an ambition that was

thwarted by Royal Mail declining to use McQueen's images.[172] Likewise, the artist also

experienced some challenges to his relationship with the MoD:

> The Ministry of Defence were polite about the idea of the stamps. I gave the
> MoD my idea, and this man asked me, why couldn't I do a landscape? I said,
> 'Are you telling me you are ashamed of these people? A landscape? Hello?
>
> Then they tried to stop me getting in touch with the families. So we hired a
> researcher. Of the 115 families we tried to contact, we got 102 responses. Four
> said no, and 98 said yes. We had a sort of cut-off point. We didn't want to ask
> people who had suffered their losses too recently. You need to give people time
> to grieve. And I know it is one thing to show your son or daughter in a cabinet
> in a library, another to put them on a stamp that you can buy and stick on a
> letter. But I think the majority do want it. When the families came to the
> unveiling, it was one of the most humbling experiences of my life. People were
> very moved.[173]

So, while it was commissioned by the Museum (in partnership with the Manchester

International Festival) and produced by McQueen as a way of intervening in public

consciousness and understanding of official forms of commemoration, the final form of the

work as I encountered it was restricted to the institutional setting of the Museum, with the

stamps being displayed in a wooden cabinet with sliders holding sheets of the miniature

portraits that had been selected by families of the deceased:

I encountered this work in person in the Museum during the last week of the

Catalyst display. A route had been constructed within the Special Exhibition Gallery to

---

[171] http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/18675 - other sources cite a higher number of portraits, suggesting that this work has been added to over time.

[172] Imperial War Museum, *Queen and Country* <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/18675< [Accessed 25 October 2017].

[173] Adrian Searle, Last Post <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/mar/12/iraq.art> [Accessed 25 October 2017].

guide the visitor through the thematic display in a linear fashion, with this artwork being displayed in its own white cube space towards the end of the route. Walking into the space was surreal and strangely uncomfortable. The artworks encountered prior to this had been incredibly unsettling. Many images and objects instilled a feeling of the uncanny. Images of houses, scenes and landscapes that were recognisable but that I could not immediately identify, places that bear traces of the lives that occupied them looking not too dissimilar to my own or to places I have found myself standing in, created a strange feeling of recollection, yet with a concrete recognition of them being just out of reach. For example, I encountered Ori Gersht's film of the dancer Yehudit Arnon, Will You Dance For Me, screened in a darkened room in the furthest corner of the Gallery space. Images of a snow-covered landscape fading in an out were juxtaposed with close ups of the now elderly dancer and were haunting and beautiful. While the experience of watching was incredibly moving and intimate, I left with a feeling of being an intruder in a private space of memory. Emerging back through the curtain which separated this enclosed room from the rest of the exhibition, my eyes took a few moments to adjust to the brighter lights of the space and the surrounding white walls. Walking into the next section of the display, I was confronted by Darren Almond's 'Border', consisting of two road signs for Oświęcim which I walked under and through with curiosity until I read the accompanying label; Oświęcim is a town in Poland more commonly known as Auschwitz. My feeling of curiosity was quickly displaced by a very visceral feeling of both shock and shame for having wandered through them with disrespect and unknowingly treating them as benign objects.

Following these pieces, an encounter with a simple wooden box in an otherwise empty white space should have been a welcome relief. Through my experience with archives I instantly recognised the format of the object as one often used for the storage and display of print works, drawing and textiles – delicate materials to be hidden from the light for the sake of preservation made available to view through pulling out each slide and exposing its contents. What would, in its usual context, be a purely functional and almost inanimate/invisible object, in this white cube space, encountered after the numerous works

before it, it carried a palpable weight and a certain denseness embedded its material beyond the woodenness of its sides and metal of its supporting frame. Pulling out the first slide, picking one at random around somewhere around the middle, I was surprised to see something as ordinary as a sheet of stamps, initially not recognising them portraits. After a moment or two the realisation occurred, as I recognised the repeated face as a solider with the simultaneous realisation that he was deceased. Again the feeling of the uncanny – the recognition of the format of a commemorative stamp which I was used to seeing frequently, and also see the face of a stranger knowing, without having to look at the accompanying interpretive text, that this sheet of stamps was commemorating the loss of his life. Pushing the slide back into place, I opened another, and another, conscious of taking them out to look, and to see each face. This work was unsettling – looking and recognising them as service men and women, looking to mark my respect of seeing each face, of each individual, this looking was accompanied by an odd feeling of voyeurism, knowing that my pulling out of each slide was an act of exposure. While I felt the huge gravity of this work and the importance of seeing each individual life that had lost, there was also an uncomfortable feeling pushing each one back into place, back into a hidden space.

This artwork engendered questions relating to the institutional boundaries of artistic or aesthetic interventions, not limited to the IWM North, but inclusive of external institutions which enable or restrict the potential of an artwork and the space it can occupy. The collaboration of a community outside of the institution made up of the families of those who were represented in the portraits also introduced an additional interlocutor into the dialogue constructed by the placement of this artwork in the Museum. Their choice to take part represents an agency and intention being enacted, along with the artist's, that is then constrained by the institution of the MoD and the Royal Mail after being initially given a platform by the institution of the Museum. This complex network of agency and action/constraint embedded in this artwork moves beyond a taxonomic tracing of common or grounded elements as referred to previously in the work of Manuel DeLanda on thinking with assemblage and encourages thinking through flat ontologies as a mode of identifying

the relations which construct the final artwork. To think of the work with respect to a taxonomic structure, wherein the Museum (as genus) might commission a contemporary art programme of which Steve McQueen represents the level of individual, removes from view the complicated relationships between the artist's practice of social intervention and its wider discursive context beyond the Museum, the Royal Mail as an external institutional with its own internal constitutive relations, and the involvement of the community of bereaved families which act as a counter narrative; it is the contingent relations between these actors, arranged within a moment of historical specificity, which constitute the final work. The same might be said for all of the work produced on behalf of the Imperial War Museum and the Museum's commissioning programme, in that they fall within a particular institutional rhetoric of documentation and operate as elements within processes of heritage and memory construction, however considering these works as sitting *only* within this particular framing is very problematic. They have been commissioned by the Museum, and as such do have the characteristics of material documentation that exist within the Museum, but along with this, they also manifest an aesthetic, historical, personal and political context beyond that of the Museum and its development, and beyond that of an agenda derived from cultural policy agendas relating to value and engagement; especially so an artwork such as *For Queen and Country* which holds within it, in material form, the representation of those who lost their lives and their families.

Experience as Evidence

In the context of the Arts Council's focus on robust indicators, rigorous approaches and empirical results, the imperative for a research methodology which meets these standards in order to be considered valid is very much apparent. The difficulty, however, is one which has been evident in many existing visitor studies, that of using experience - such as my own experiential account of artwork in the 'Catalyst' exhibition - as 'evidence'. Experience has been addressed by Ann Gray in the context of research practices in cultural studies. In defining experience as both a political and critical category, Gray draws on the work of Raymond Williams, Elspeth Probyn and Stuart Hall in order to advance experience as

legitimate and essential to research.[174] Gray's theoretical discussion of experience positions it a category that 'can function as a "way of knowing" both our own and others' "ways of being"'.[175] This conceptualisation opens up the potential for centralising lived experience in research and, through invoking the work of Stuart Hall, Gray proposes experience as a 'site of articulation', wherein the relationship between individual action (subjectivity) and social (determining) structures can be explored.[176] In the context of the current research project, this approach creates a theoretical space in which experience, the discursive space of the museum and cultural policy can be analysed as concurrent and converging concerns.

In order to relate this particular conceptualisation of experience to a practical research process, Gray invokes three analytical propositions made by Raymond Williams: experience can be overwhelming and work to conceal the connections between the different structures; experience itself speaks of the composition of the social formation; the critic's own experience can impel the analysis of his or her differentiated relations to level of the social formation.[177] A consideration of the first point is essential to my research. In exploring an alternative approach to understanding visitor experience of art and heritage I do not wish to simply 'bolt on', as Gray puts it, new data without critically challenging the theoretical and methodological assumptions which are currently embedded in contemporary cultural policy. Gray suggests posing questions such as: 'why have *these* accounts been rendered invisible? What is it about the established methodologies which hierarchise particular ways of knowing? Is it possible, using existing and "legitimate" theoretical approaches to, in Gayatri C. Spivak's words, "make visible the assignment of subject positions"?'[178] While Gray's questioning is orientated towards the material and discursive processes by which identities are constructed and maintained, these questions are still pertinent to the context of museum and heritage visitor research and the problematic concept

---

[174] Ann Gray, *Research Practices for Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2002).
[175] Gray, p. 25.
[176] Gray, p. 32.
[177] Gray (adapted from Elspeth Probyn, 1993), p. 27
[178] Gayatri C. Spivak (1987), quoted in Gray, p. 31.

of 'valid knowledge', with the second question having particular relevance.[179] Through explicitly engaging with the ontology of experiencing contemporary artworks, this research intends to challenge the current epistemological assumptions which underpin an emphasis on empirical and corroborated findings, and in doing so, explore the *processes* of knowledge which can be generated through shared encounters with visitors and understanding their 'ways of being' in relation to artworks as opposed to constructing 'knowledge' about impact as a defined and concrete outcome of research.

With respect to the notion that experience itself speaks of the composition of the social formation, Gray has framed articulation as a methodological consideration of social formations, using Elspeth Probyn's writing on the use of experience as a possible form of representing the self and others: '...at an ontological level, experience speaks of a disjuncture between the articulated and the lived aspects of the social and, at an epistemological level, experience impels an analysis of the relations formulated between the articulated and the lived'.[180] The challenges of researching experience, particularly the experience of someone other than the researcher, is the possibility of 'knowing' what is lived, when research is often granted access only to that which can be articulated. The epistemological level to which Probyn is referring indicates an analysis of the social (power) formations that structure *what can be known* about lived experience. Thus, at an ontological level the methodological challenges of 'knowing' experience are worked through, and at an epistemological level the discursive processes which enable or constrain knowledge are interrogated. With Gray's concepts of articulation and experience as a political and critical category in mind, I considered various qualitative methods in order to identify an appropriate research method that would engage with the lived experience of visitors without taking a positivist stance which would abstract experience and the potential knowledge about it from the lived mechanisms and process embodied in an encounter with an art work. This impetus to

---

[179] These issues raised by Gray are still pertinent to the material and discursive spaces of museums and heritage sites (even after decades of 'new museology' and reflexive academic and museum praxis) given their specific historical role in the shaping of national, class and cultural identities, but a thorough exploration of these are beyond the scope of the current research project.
[180] Elspeth Probyn (1993) quoted in Gray, p. 31.

engage in knowing *with* visitors rather than to undertake research *on* visitors resulted in a consideration of participatory and action research methodologies.

Returning here for a moment to Rodney Harrison's framing of an ontological pluralism through which 'we might instead see heritage as collaborative, dialogical and interactive, a material-discursive process in which past and future arise out of dialogue and encounter between multiple embodied subjects in (and with) the present', the notions of 'dialogue' and 'encounter' appear to offer critical potential when attempting to understand the relationships between agencies and materialities. The notion of a 'critical historical consciousness' embedded in the IWM North's approach to narrative and display construction around war and conflict was discussed by Hans-Georg Gadamer with respect to the concept and processes of interpretation. Taking the act of interpretation as being fundamental to both processes of dialogue and to the role of contemporary art in the Museum, Gadamer's discussion of the issue seems to be a discernible point of departure. While Gadamer did not suggest a theory of historical consciousness *per se*, his discussion of the concept with respect to interpretation and processes of dialogue is particularly pertinent to a framing of the contemporary artworks displayed within the Museum's interpretative strategies, and also within the rhetoric of dialogue manifest in the ATM14 artworks. In his philosophical article *The Problem of Historical Consciousness*, published in 1975, Gadamer refers to the historical consciousness which he perceives as characterising the contemporary man as 'a privilege, perhaps even a burden'. This is a sentiment akin to that of Roger I. Simon's notion of the 'terrible gift' in relation to witness testimony from the Second World War. Gadamer frames historical consciousness as a reflexive process that is aware of the historical position from which understandings of historical pasts are constructed:

> Having an historical sense is to conquer in a consistent manner the natural naiveté which makes us judge the past by the so-called obvious scales of our current life, in the perspective of our institutions, and from our acquired values and truths. Having an historical sense signifies thinking explicitly about the historical horizon which is co-extensive with the life we live and have lived.[181]

---

[181] Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'The Problem of Historical Consciousness', *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal,* 5 (1975), 8–52, (pp. 8-9).

Here, a self-conscious reflexive stance replaces the continuation of traditions with

historical context in order to see the significance and relative value of a historical

narrative, a value which is located in its singularity.[182] The concept of interpretation

to which Gadamer refers implies the 'foreign' character of what is yet to be

understood and finds a synergy in Claire Robins' framing of Peter Vergo's concept of

the 'reticent object' as one which first requires interpretation in order to act as a

conduit to a critical form of understanding. Gadamer's discussion of interpretation is

undertaken with respect to the 'epistemological problem of the human sciences' and

philosophical and methodological challenges related to producing knowledge within

these disciplines; this very much echoes the problematic task here at hand.[183] The

problematic issues recognised in this thesis are in synergy with the challenges that

have been addressed by Gadamer, in that the 'natural sciences' (what we would refer

to as the physical or 'empirical' sciences) and 'human sciences', fundamentally differ

in their notions of knowledge and truth. Here Gadamer claims that it is 'useless to

restrict the elucidation of the nature of the human sciences to a purely methodological

question'.[184] The pertinent issue is that knowledge in the natural sciences pertains to

the elucidation of 'a concrete phenomenon as a particular case of a general rule'.[185]

The human sciences, on the other hand, requires a specificity (in the instance of a

notion of historical consciousness, they requires a historical specificity) in order to

understand a historical phenomenon in its uniqueness, in contrast to the generality

required by the natural sciences in their practical task of developing accurate

predictions about regularities.[186]

In essence, this is the task faced by the arts and culture sector. The need to

produce a framework of understanding the value of engaging with arts and culture in

---

[182] Gadamer, p. 9.
[183] Gadamer, p. 8.
[184] Gadamer, p. 10.
[185] Gadamer, p. 13.
[186] Gadamer, p. 13.

order to advocate for the sector has resulted in a focus on forms of 'demonstrable, measureable' knowledge and the production of metrics which can operate as empirical forms of evidence. This task of producing forms of measurement than can be generalised and therefore standardised, is in conflict with the nature of encounters with artworks and culturally framed experience that are located in specific space, places, cultural discourses, art forms and socio-political and temporal contexts. Gadamer calls for a reconfiguration of notions of knowledge and truth that are grounded not in the category of 'explanation' – akin to Benjamin's concept of *erlebnis* – but instead in *understanding* [emphasis in original].[187] For Gadamer, historical knowledge, or consciousness, is thus not an objectivist mode of knowledge, but rather a continuing process which itself has all of the characteristic of a historical event; thus, our understanding of history is always historically located and embedded as an 'existential act' of being in the world.[188]

Conclusions

The commissioning, collecting and exhibition of contemporary art is embedded in the institutional practices of the Imperial War Museum. Employed as an affective modes of interpretation within the IWM North's strategy can be understood with respect to the concept of *erfahrung* – knowledge constructed through lived experience as framed by Andrea Witcomb. The Museum displays contemporary art in both discrete and intervention exhibitions as a means of creating a specific physical and emotional experience, intended to construct a 'critical historical conscious' in visitors, wherein the art facilitates a mode of thinking catalysed by visitors' direct experience of the artworks in the Museum spaces.

Claire Robins' framing of the artists as *parrhesiates*, speaking from a perceived position of truth, is useful in making visible the terms of dialogues taking place with respect to the artworks, raising questions as to who is given the space to 'speak', and the extent to

---

[187] Gadamer, p. 15.
[188] Gadamer, p. 39.

which the interlocutors are visible to visitors who may not be able to 'speak the language' of the artworks curated through the lens of cultural difference, some of which being deeply embedded in personal histories of the artists.[189] Thinking with this concept in relation to the problematic concept of 'engagement' encourages a questioning of the artworks and relationships they construct through being an 'authorised transgression' operating as a mode of critique within the Museum institution while also, somewhat paradoxically, also operate as an interpretive conduit through which visitors are expected to make meaning in relation to the narratives and perspectives on display. It also encourages a questioning of the extent to which the institution is made visible within these dialogues as a discursive space of politics and power relations.

Ann Gray's articulation of experience is pertinent to this issue of making visible interlocutors within dialogues. Through approaching the lived encounters with artworks, experienced by myself and visitors to the Museum, as sites of analysis, it becomes possible to explore embodied processes of meaning-making which illuminate socially and politically formulated modes of knowledge production.[190] Gray's concept of knowing through 'ways of being' informs the methodological approach taken to knowledge production throughout this thesis.

---

[189] Claire Robins, *Curious Lessons in the Museum: The Pedagogic Potential of Artists' Interventions* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016)
[190] Gray, Ann, *Research Practices for Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2002)

Chapter Two: Methodological challenges of 'knowing' the Asia Triennial Manchester 14

My case study explored the possibility of knowing visitor engagement with contemporary art in the IWM North through shared encounter with Asia Triennial Manchester 14 exhibition artworks. It was undertaken in response to a lack of critical knowledge relating to the aims of the IWM North and the effectiveness of employing contemporary art as an affective form of interpretation, and how visitors' encounters with these works might facilitate a 'critical historical consciousness' in visitors' relating specifically to issues of war and conflict.

Criticisms of the current evaluation processes have been centred on a dependence on proxy measures of 'engagement', developed in response to instrumental forms of values that speak to a need to advocate for arts and culture in the climate of contemporary public policy.[191] Specific forms of desired knowledge have driven methods of evaluation which speak to the instrumental impetus of cultural policy. Consequently, forms of artistic and cultural interventions are framed within the economic language of return on investment, and as such the concept of 'engagement' is positioned as a desired and definable outcome engendered by these forms of intervention. Thus, one of the core concerns of my study was the methodological challenge posed by alternative modes of knowledge production which refuse the ontological separateness embedded within the notion of 'engagement' as a pre-determined outcome, defined with respect to the terms of traditional empirical approaches. The challenge here was the extent to which it was possible to render visible the

---

[191] Posed by Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett , 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach"; Arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14 (2010), 121-142; Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, 'Rethinking the social impacts of the arts', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13 (2007), 135-151; Guy Redden, 'Culture, Value and Commensuration: The Knowledge Politics of Indicators', in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement,* ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 27-41; Emma Blomkamp 'A Critical History of Cultural Indicators', in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement*, ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 11-26; Dave O'Brien 'Cultural value, measurement and policy making', *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14 (1) (2015), 79-94.

configuration of relations which contribute to processes of meaning-making taking place when visitors encounter contemporary artworks in the Museum. The intention was not to produce a 'theory of engagement' or a framework within which it can be measured, but instead to create a space for a richer account of visitor experience to be articulated and to explore how a 'critical historical consciousness' might be encouraged by the presence of contemporary intervention works in the physical and narrative space of the IWM North.

Recalling my own experiences with visitors, it was the conversations I had experienced during my work at Harewood House and previous study at the IWM North that initially sparked both my interest and my critical concern with the implications of employing contemporary art as a mode of interpreting and communicating issues relating to history and heritage. In order to respond to the impetus to produce demonstrable and measurable forms of knowledge,[192] I undertook this case study research with the aim of centralising these conversations with visitors and their lived experiences of artworks in order to widen the forms of measurement currently expressed in metrics and framework approaches, and propose a shift towards a more relational understanding of engagement within evaluation.[193] Andrea Witcomb's evocation of Walter Benjamin's use of the concept of *erfahrung*, knowledge through lived experience, was useful to my theoretical development.[194] In order to move beyond the notion of *erlebnis*, or knowledge akin to information, expressed in the formal ATM14 evaluation report conducted by The Audience Agency, it was necessary to critically interrogate both the epistemic and ontological underpinnings of my approach to visitor research.[195] While the aims of the formal evaluation conducted by The Audience Agency were mapped out prior to the relevant gathering of comparable data in order to respond to, a critical interrogation of 'visitor experience' was significantly lacking.[196] The challenge in developing a critical response to the deficits made

---

[192] Arts Council England (2014)

[193] As informed by Rodney Harrison's notion of a 'relational ontology' as discussed in the Introduction.

[194] Andrea Witcomb, 'Understanding the role of affect in producing a critical pedagogy for history museums', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28 (2013), p. 268.

[195] Witcomb, p. 268.

[196] The Audience Agency, (2014)

apparent by The Audience Agency's report, was the extent to which a lived and embodied experience of art could be both understood and articulated as 'robust, credible' knowledge, with respect to Art Council England's research priorities. It was imperative to my aims that, whilst offering an alternative approach to knowledge with respect to engagement with arts and heritage, my case study also engaged with the rhetorical field of cultural value. Therefore, the methodological development of my study was focused around the reasons why 'engagement' is desired, and what about 'engagement' is deemed knowable.

'Knowing' museum visitors

The notion of engagement with the arts and culture being transformative and therefore associated with instrumentality is not confined to contemporary rhetoric. The formative intention of the museum, and its role in social improvement and the construction of 'productive citizens' who each make a useful contribution to wider society, can be traced back to the development of the modern museum during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This constitutive role of museum institutions has been identified by Tony Bennett as one of the primary justifications for development of museums as public spaces.[197] Advocating access to libraries, lectures and art galleries in 1849, the English social reformer James Silk Buckingham campaigned for these institutions and their potential in preparing people for 'a higher state of existence instead of merely vegetating like millions in the present state of society, who are far less cared for, and far less happy, than the brutes that perish'.[198] The ideological agenda of Enlightenment which informed modernist notions of progress was also manifested in an appropriation of culture into governmental agenda. Earlier forms of collecting and display practices were transformed into the museum as a secular institution which operated as a vehicle for the exercise and display of new forms of power.

Theorising the museum as a cultural object and site for the construction of shifting

---

[197] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995)
[198] Buckingham, quoted in Bennett, p. 17.

forms of knowledge and power is now a central point of departure in contemporary research

practices, and is underpinned by seminal works from the 1980s and early 1990s which we

now recognise as constituting a 'new museology'. Peter Vergo articulated this shift from

'old museology' which focused on methods of museum practice in a more traditional sense,

centralising connoisseurial collecting practicing, towards a recognition of the political,

ideological and aesthetic dimensions of museum practices. These process of recognition

then make visible the tensions around public access and the value judgements embedded in

practices of collecting and displaying cultural objects.[199] Vikki McCall and Clive Gray have

provided a more recent summary of new museology and located it as a consequence of

critiques of traditional ideas around museum practice as collection-focused, building-based

activities with the museum positioned as the central authority.[200] This resulted in a

privileging of a collection-based function which served to sustain a social function of

reinforcing the (class specific) cultural tastes of social groups. McCall and Gray summarised

the theoretical shifts embedded in new museology as representative of changes in 'value,

meaning, control, interpretation, authority and authenticity', under taken with respect to a

redistribution of power and new models and communication aimed at increasing access and

participation in museum institutions.[201] This intentionally simplified summary is included

here in order to address the theoretical context for museum-based research, which takes as

its site the epistemological practices underpinning the internal logics and political rationality

of the museum in its modern form. It is acknowledged that this necessarily brief account

glosses over the numerous critiques and tensions present in new museology and the

interdisciplinary nature of research within the field, and the effects of its application to

museum praxis. The purpose of this framing is to position the museum as an object for study

within a broader discursive shift and bring to the centre of analysis the constitutive and

contingent relationships between the museum and broader discourses and concrete

---

[199] Peter Vergo, *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1989), p. 2.
[200] Vikki McCall and Clive Gray, 'Museums and the 'new museology': theory, practice and organisation change', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 29 (2013), 1-17 (p. 2).
[201] McCall and Gray, p. 2.

processes of culture, knowledge production and governmental activity.

This line of enquiry emerged more broadly with respect to a critique of the ideological role played by museums and galleries as public institutions in processes of nation-state building. Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach's seminal text *The Universal Survey Museum*, first published in 1980, explores the Louvre as an archetypal institution of public art whose narrative of display and sequential architectural spaces construct a ceremonial experience situating the visitor in relation to a teleological march of progress, positioning the newly formed nation-state following the French Revolution as the pinnacle of human achievement and triumph over nature.[202] Writing on the knowledge formations underpinning display practices, classifications and historical narratives, Tony Bennett has employed a Foucauldian approach to articulate the discursive space of the museum as a technology of governmentality, historicising the development of specific power-knowledge relations within the project of modernity.[203] Characterised by notions of progress and reformation relating to both the individual and industrial developments, Bennett located the modern museum as an element emerging from the social formations of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that manifested organisational structures which assigned to culture the role of civilising the wider population.[204]

Eileen Hooper-Greenhill has considered knowledge as a commodity of museums, and has traced the nature of knowing and changing forms of knowledge throughout the history of the museum and its various manifestations, situating narrative constructions within broader socio-historical frameworks.[205] While Duncan and Wallach explore one particular example of what became a narrative trope, Hooper-Greenhill expands her scope of analysis further by addressing the epistemic shifts in display practices as private collections became the foundations of public institutions. Using Foucault's notion of

---

[202] Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History,* 3 (1980), 448-469.
[203] Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *New Formations*, 4 (1988), 730-102.
[204] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 19.
[205] Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museum and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992)

relative truth and reason within shifting 'epistemes', defined as a 'set of relations within which knowledge is produced and rationality defined', Hooper-Greenhill has explored the varying configurations of knowledge that have manifested in classificatory and taxonomic arrangements through which the power relations involved in decision-making processes become evident in the history of the museum and its ordering of the world.[206] The museum which we are now familiar with is one of social relationships, a space for multiple voices and new digital and interactive technologies. The world is no longer understood through systems of classification but through shifting perspectives and subjective experiences. These shifts in museum praxis necessitate more appropriate constructions and processes of knowledge which take into account a continually shifting understanding of the world and our experiences of it.

While considering the issues surrounding museums and the necessity of maintaining public relevance, Graham Black has drawn attention to market-driven focus of visitor studies when conducted 'in house' by the museums themselves.[207] An emphasis on socio-demographics prevalent in this form of research, resulting from a focus on specific market segments, neglects an exploration of the motivations and attitudes of visitors in relation to their experience of the site, collection and exhibition displays. While this form of research is valuable for museums, galleries and heritage sites in relation to audience development, it goes little way to aiding an in-depth understanding the experiences of visitors and how and why they 'engage' in a meaningful way. This positioning of 'engagement' as a central issue has become increasingly evident in visitor research emerging during the past twenty years, and the need for a reliable analytical framework has been recognised in the context of the museum as a medium for communication.[208] For Hooper-Greenhill, a shift in museum practices to 'looking outwards towards the audience with the newer ideology of collaboration' required a body of quantifiable knowledge in order to develop a reliable

---

[206] Hooper-Greenhill, p. 12.

[207] Black, Graham, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012)

[208] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and their Visitors* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

framework within which visitor experience can be explored, taking into account this shifting discursive context.[209]

The task of developing a suitable framework, prior to quantifying engagement through the concept of 'value', has been undertaken by numerous research projects that have demonstrated varying approaches to the nature of visitor experience. Developed in the early 1990s, John H Falk and Lynn D. Dierking offered an Interactive Experience Model that employed the contexts of *personal*, *social* and *physical* experience to frame the activity of museum, gallery and heritage site visiting.[210] According to this experiential model, visitor experience is best understood by looking at a series of critical intersections of the three analytic contexts over a period of time.[211] Without naming it as such, the concept of 'entrance narratives' is introduced with the conclusion that visitor expectations are shaped by their previous experiences, both within and outside of the museum, and thus the personal context of the visitor is the most influential to their experience within a particular institution or heritage site. Falk and Dierking remained critical of the contemporary learning theories that do not account for the personal contexts of individuals and the notion of learning as a social behaviour; the justification for a model focusing on experience is the related claim that there is actually very little evidence of learning in museums in terms of recalling facts and concepts.[212] This sentiment was evident in a comment made by Colin during an accompanied visitor as part of my own study. We were discussing the role of museums and the types of experiences people might have in them, particularly in relation to leisure and tourism and museums as a 'destination' with lots of different forms of interaction. Colin described these types of visit as 'not being on a school trip and being told "look at this" because in 6 months' time it will be on an exam. It took me the whole time probably of being in education to understand that I am learning something, but actually more thinking

---

[209] Hooper-Greenhill, p. 1.

[210] John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *The Museum Experience* (Washington: Whalesback Books, 1992)

[211] Falk and Dierking, p. 6.

[212] Falk and Dierking, p. 109.

about "what was it like to be inside that tank" [referring to a tank on display in front of us] or "what was actually going on" rather than just thinking I need to remember this for my exam'.[213] In response to this comment I asked whether Colin felt that learning and thinking might be slightly different things, and he agreed. An ontological approach is evident in Falk and Dierking's experiential model in that it takes into account the visitor's physical experience of the museum environment and addresses more than a purely intellectual encounter with narrative and ideology. A problematic conclusion of this particular study is that the 'manipulation of the visitors' agenda is fundamental to the museum's ability to create a successful museum experience'.[214] While the management of visitor expectations can be understood as an essential element of interpretive techniques, in the contemporary context of collaboration and recognition of plurality an attempt to 'manipulate' the visitor's agenda in any respect seems to be counterproductive, if not an echo of the didactic rhetoric of national museum and the formative nature of their ideological frameworks.

In order to move beyond this specific didactic mode of addressing visitors evident in 'traditional' museum interpretation and display practices, George Hein proposed the concept of the 'Constructive Museum' which aimed to accommodate diverse museum audiences and facilitate multiple learning strategies.[215] Hein proposed that knowledge is continually constructed through processes of learning, in direct contrast to the Platonic epistemology that concedes an ontological status of knowledge outside the mind of the knower.[216] This constructivist approach, when employed in museum displays, encourages multiple possible paths through an exhibition space and narrative, which utilize a range of interpretation and display modal through which information can be acquired. The IWM North exemplifies this constructivist methodology through the use of a chronological timeline along with thematic silos, object handling sessions, talks and tours, the Big Picture Show and new apps and social media technologies. As described by Hein's constructivist

---

[213] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[214] Falk and Dierking, p. 38.
[215] George Hein, 'The Constructivist Museum' in *The Educational Role of the Museum*, ed. by Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (Oxon: Routledge, 1994), pp. 73-78, (p. 73).
[216] Hein, p. 73.

theories, IWM North encourages visitors to make their own connections with both familiar and new personal stories, broader histories and physical objects. While the constructivist approach can be seen to be successful, it has, however, been criticised by John Heron and Peter Reason in its failure to account for experiential knowing.[217] Developed in response to the rejection of modernist epistemologies and positivist approaches, Heron and Reason proposed an extended epistemology positioned within a participatory paradigm. According to this paradigm 'knowing is fundamentally an experiential encounter with the world', and so a typically postmodern approach which prioritises processes of discourse analysis is rejected by Heron and Reason.[218] Evoking the phenomenologist philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Heron and Reason understod experience to be central to processes of knowing. According to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, experience of 'the "lived-through world" is misrepresented by limiting canons of objective thought'.[219] Four ways of knowing are proposed by the authors' extended epistemology and can be understood by cycling through each in order to 'enrich their congruence', but it is the primacy of experiential knowing which crucially defines the participatory paradigm as an ontology.[220]

Differing from the various frameworks proposed by recent museum visitor studies research, the participatory paradigm positions experience not as a phenomena to be defined or described, but as a form of knowledge to be discovered, explored and developed through processes of participatory research. A joint research agenda instead proposes the construction of knowledge based on lived experience which demonstrates a shift from a subject/object relationship to a subject/subject relationship in which both the participants and the researchers play an active role in defining research questions and the form that 'knowledge' will take throughout the research process.[221] As demonstrated by participatory

---

[217] John Heron and Peter Reason, 'A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm', *Qualitative Inquiry* (1997), 274-94.
[218] Heron and Reason, p. 275.
[219] Heron and Reason, p. 276.
[220] Heron and Reason, p. 283.
[221] Diane Conrad and Gail Campbell, 'Participatory Research: An Empowering Methodology with Marginalised Populations', in *Knowing Differently: Arts-Based and Collaborative Research Methods*, ed. by Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2008), pp. 247-63.

research undertaken by Diane Conrad and Gail Campbell working with institutionalised young offenders, research can have a significant social impact when the thematic analysis of the material is based on reflective, interpretive, relational and affective knowledge; themes are drawn out from the collected material that have meaning for the participants instead of those that are formed in relation to *a priori* research objectives.[222]

A shift towards visitor collaboration is evident in visitor studies research focusing specifically on experience, and has resulted in valuable contributions to the task of understanding the museum visit from a subjective point of view. Working in the Smithsonian Institute in the United States, Zahavia D. Doering articulated a body of research relating to museums visitors undertaken at the Institute over a 12 year period exploring three constructions of the museum visitor and they are perceived from the perspective of the institution: as stranger, guest and client.[223] For Doering, while the history of the museum can suggest a sequential development from stranger to guest to client, the simultaneous presence of these approaches can be seen in many museums.

Doering considered the role of the museum with respect to the tourism industry, and the positioning of museum institutions as a resource for personal development is acknowledged and explored. In an exploration of 'entrance narratives', Doering discusses the relevance of visitor's own personal histories and expectations in relation to their visiting experience. Drawing on previous studies, it was found that visitors tended to frequent museums and exhibitions they expect to be congruent with their own attitudes, and so they respond best to exhibitions which are understood to be more personally relevant. As a result of these visits being a reinforcement of the visitor's own values and idea, little factual knowledge is actually acquired, and so museums and exhibitions can be used as tools for confirming, reinforcing and extending existing beliefs.[224] Here the notion of knowledge is situated within an ideological framework in which the primary construction of knowledge is

---

[222] Conrad and Campbell, p. 253.
[223] Zahavia D. Doering, 'Strangers, Guests, or Clients? Visitor Experiences in Museum', *Curator*, 42 (1999), 74-87.
[224] Doering, p. 81.

located in the beliefs of visitors as opposed to their direct, or even indirect, experiences in the museum space, affirming Falk and Dierking's finding that traditional, didactic-style learning does not necessarily take place in the museum. Throughout this research, Doering also raises some essential questions which are developed further in later research: what might all this mean for museums?; what could it mean for their relationship with visitors?; what could it mean for 'performance measurement', or for assessing the effectiveness of exhibitions and museums more generally? Addressing the question of 'performance measurement' and assessing the effectiveness of museum, Doering, along with Andrew J. Pekarik and David A. Karns, has produced a framework which aims to understand 'satisfying experiences' from the point of view of the visitor.[225]

Pekarik *et al* developed an empirically-grounded framework which drew on previous visitor responses to research questions to determine four categories of experience: object, cognitive, introspective and social.[226] Newly gathered responses were reviewed within this analytic framework, in order to test its validity. It was concluded that these responses further determined that while cognitive experiences were not the most prominent in any of the museum sampled, object and cognitive experiences are the most satisfying visitor experiences across a range of museum types.[227] Given the complex relationship between the audience and museum, described by Pekarik et al as dynamic and mutually defining, it becomes difficult to distinguish the effects present in the form of the museum display from the specific interests and expectations of the individual visitor. This issue is embedded in the task

This framework, while developed from visitor's own responses, was rooted in textual analysis, with the researchers identifying key words to categorise each visitor's experience within pre-determined notions of cognitive, introspective, object and social 'engagement'. 'Lived-in experience' is being addressed here at an arms-length perspective,

---

[225]Andrew J. Pekarik, Zahava D. Doering, and David A. Karns, 'Exploring Satisfying Experiences in Museums, *Curator*, 42 (1999), 152-172.
[226] Pekarik et al, p. 153.
[227] Pekarik et al, p. 168.

with the participants' responses being analysed by 'objective' researchers outside of the immediate situation. As a result, experience risks being conflated with a discursive analysis of the museum visit as previously referred to in Eileen Hooper-Greenhill's criticisms of ideological discourse in the museum.

A study intended to evaluate a synthesis of theoretical frameworks with regards to the value and benefits of museum visits beyond learning was undertaken at the University of Queensland in 2008 by Jan Packer, Senior Researcher. The individual theoretical frameworks included in this synthesis where as follows: servicescape; satisfying experiences; restorative elements; psychological well-being; subjective well-being. Semi-structured interviews conducted with 60 visitors to the Queensland Museum provided the qualitative material with which to explore the evaluative framework using a deductive approach which divided responses into theoretical categories to be statistically analysed.[228] The study conclusions of this study supported the use of satisfying experiences as an effective framework for understanding visitor experiences, as these forms of experience were referred to in 93% of visitor responses. The responses also highlighted the importance of a restorative experience in the museum space, with 73% of those responses falling into this category. The limitations of this study was acknowledged by the authors, in that the research was carried out in one museum only and through the means of one interview immediately following the visit. The need for more longitudinal studies to evidence the long-term benefits of engaging with arts and culture is also expressed in contemporary Arts Council literature in order to support the case for publicly funded arts the rhetoric of cultural value.[229] A further study conducted in 2010 by Jan Packer and Nigel Bond further developed research relating to the tourism and leisure industry by investigating motivations for visiting in which visitors have expressed a desire for restorative experiences.[230] The

---

[228] Jan Packer, 'Beyond Learning: Exploring Visitors' Perceptions of the Value and Benefits of Museum Experiences', *Curator*, 51 (2008), 33-53.
[229] Alan Davey, quoted in Carnwaith, John D., and Alan S. Brown, *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: a literature review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014) p. 3.
[230] Jan Packer and Nigel Bond, 'Museums as Restorative Environments', *Curator*, 51 (2010), 421-436.

study conducted visitor research within the framework of Attention Restoration Theory (ATP) developed by Rachel Kaplin and Stephen Kaplin.[231] Art museum visits were initially studied in the context of restoration by Kaplin et al. after participants of research expressed feelings of calm when discussing museum visits and their 'engagement' in reflection in these places, which led to the development of ATP.[232] Packer and Bond's research explored visitor experiences in an art museum, a cultural history museum, an aquarium and a botanical garden. The findings of this particular study confirmed earlier research conclusions, demonstrating that natural environments are experienced by visitors as the most restorative. The results from this study also discovered that frequent visitors to a particular space are the most likely to perceive it as restorative, although it cannot be deduced whether this is the result of familiarity with the environment, or whether this in fact encourages frequent visits.[233] The Satisfying Experiences framework was also employed in order to understand the particular experiences visitors described in each space. In terms of museums, cognitive experiences emerged as the most satisfying, compared to the art gallery where object experiences were prioritised. It is also useful to note that in terms of having an introspective experience, the art gallery was the most prominent space for this to occur in visitors. The authors conclude that the facilitation of restorative experiences can add value to a visit and so increase the likelihood of a visitor returning.

While responding to a need for an analytical framework to understand and evaluate the success of museums and heritage institutions in relation to the wants and needs of their visitors, the frameworks summarised in this overview, employed a prescriptive construction of visitor experience. Experience is framed as object, cognitive, introspective, social, restorative etc. describing experience within pre-determined definitions and adhering to the traditional positioning of the visitor as a subject to be analysed with an a prior understanding

---

[231] Rachel Kaplin and Stephen Kaplin, *The Experience of Nature: A Physiological Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
[232] Packer and Bond (2010), p. 422.
[233] Packer and Bond (2010), pp. 426-427.

of 'experience'. The three questions posed by Doering some fifteen years ago are still pertinent to the issue of engagement and the shift in an understanding of the nature of knowledge necessary for exploration of this type of experience, and are central to framing the present research focus. Positioning these issues raised in relation to engagement and how we can know about it, the questions can be restructured to ask what might the focus on visitor engagement mean for museums, what could it mean for processes of exchange and dialogue with visitors, and what could it mean for 'performance measurement' in terms of the value of alternative forms of knowledge to those traditionally accepted as valuable? Drawn out from the exploration of engagement and meaning, these questions informed the development of a practical research methodology.

The impetus for 'robust, credible research' articulated by Arts Council England encourages a concern for issues of validity and robust methodology with respect to visitor studies in museum, galleries and heritage sites. In the context of Peter Bazalgette's comment of the sector's agenda of 'learning to ask to right questions', the processes and methods through which these questions are asked as quite often the focus of research. Proposed in the 1960s by sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss, grounded theory was developed in response to the perceived gap between theory and research in the field of sociology.[234] [The] Grounded Theory Method centres on the generation of theory through the constant comparative analysis of data which is collected and analysed by the researcher(s) simultaneously in an iterative process.[235] Understood as both a method and a methodology, the intention of what I will herein refer to as 'classical' grounded theory method was to develop theory as it emerges directly from research data through a purely inductive process, and not through the criticised logico-deductive process which based theoretical hypotheses predominantly on existing literature or conceptual knowledge already held by the researcher. Thus, the research area should be approached with no preconceived research question or hypothesis. According to Glaser, 'all is data', meaning that everything in the

---

[234] Barney, G. Glaser, and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).
[235] Glaser and Strauss, Strauss and Corbin, Charmaz, Charmaz and Mitchell

substantive area of study is data. This data can include observations, interviews and documents, and should be generated with no prior consultation of relevant literature or application of existing theories on concepts. A 'classical' grounded theory is defined as 'a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework used to explain and predict phenomenon'.[236] This notion resonates with the production of framework responsive to current challenges in arts and culture sector. Theory derived in accordance with this method can be either substantive or formal, but in order to be considered a 'grounded theory' it must be founded on conceptual categories which 'emerge' directly from the data.[237] Substantive theory is defined by Glaser and Strauss as being empirical and closely related to the data, with issues such as delinquency, race relations and social/patient care given as examples. Formal theory is a further abstraction from the data, most desirably generated from substantive theory and requiring a wider range of research and theoretical sampling, addressing issues such as social stigma, authority and power and social mobility.[238]

An emphasis on developing theory rather than engaging with the rhetoric of verification intends to focus the researcher on the process of 'knowledge' production in which theory is understand as a process continually open to change as new data is generated.[239] This claim, however, is somewhat misleading, as verification is supposedly built into the research through the process of comparative analysis. The intention of this approach thus first appears to respond to perceived inadequacy of current methods in having the potential to produce a framework which could produce explanations and predictions in the relation to the impact and benefits of engagement with arts and culture. The comparative process which analyses concepts generated directly from research initially presents itself as

---

[236] Anslem Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Second Edition (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 15.
[236] Glaser and Strauss, p. 32.
[237] Strauss and Corbin, p. 15.
[238] Glaser and Strauss, p. 32.
[239] Glaser and Strauss, p. 32.

robust and rigorous, and so the resulting 'grounded theory', whether substantive for formal would be credible.

Following the initial publications by Glaser and Strauss in the late sixties and seventies, grounded theory has since been subject to reinterpretation. As defined by Kathy Charmaz, 'classical' grounded theory methodology is structured on the philosophical groundings of a realist ontology and positivist epistemology.[240] As such, it assumes the existence of an ontologically independent reality separate from our own subjective consciousness, and understands knowledge to be constituted by observable 'facts' and supported by objective measurement and verification. These philosophical approaches position the researcher as independent of the object of study. Here, Antony Bryant has identified what he terms the 'epistemological fairy tale' at the heart of the classical Grounded Theory Method.[241] While a realist ontological perspective does not necessarily pose any issue, in that the existence of a 'real' world outside of our consciousness is entirely plausible, the possibility of the researcher being able to stand outside of a 'reality' and observe it objectively has long since been discredited. Here, 'classical' grounded theory is very much of its time, located in a research context in which the social sciences were striving to be akin to the natural sciences in the production of objective and measurable 'knowledge'. Glaser does make a claim to neutrality, in that the researcher can adopt varying epistemological perspectives depending on which is better suited to the substantive area and data being generated, which purports the emerging conceptual categories to be purely originating from the data, and identified through the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher and their ability to recognise significant incidents. For Glaser, the process of making constant comparisons between data can reduce and forestall researcher bias; a researcher who has the necessary skill is able to absorb the data as data, and then step back and abstractly conceptualise the

---

[240] Kathy Charmaz, 'Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods', in *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, Second Edition, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 249-291, (p. 255).

[241] Antony Bryant, 'Grounded theory and pragmatism: The curious case of Anselm Strauss', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10 (2009). <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1358> [accessed 16th October 2015].

data.[242] It is therefore the researcher who assigns meaning to the substantive data through the process of abstraction and not the participants themselves.[243]

In contrast to this objectivist position Strauss' later iteration (no longer publishing with Glaser), describes the Grounded Theory Method as being both inductive and deductive, and acknowledges that the researcher cannot completely extradite himself from his acquired knowledge of a particular academic field or substantive area of research.[244] While Bryant criticises Strauss, along with his co-author Juliet Corbin, for not explicitly engaging with their own epistemological perspective, the authors do acknowledge the selective nature of description in the production of data; as the basis for an abstract interpretation of data, description carries both moral and aesthetic judgement, and as such cannot be positioned as objective.[245] In an earlier article, Strauss and Corbin clarify their position on the relationship of theory to reality and truth in their affirmation that truth is enacted, and as such a theory is not an aspect of a reality which is 'out there', but is instead founded on interpretations from given perspectives.[246] Understanding truth, and by consequence theory, as enacted thus positions Strauss and Corbin's version of grounded theory as informed by pragmatism, in which truth and meaning refer to the consequences of purposeful action rather than corresponding to an objective and independent reality.[247] For Bryant this represents a shift away from grounded theory as purely inductive and re-frames theoretical sensitivity as an advanced form of pragmatist abduction.[248] In contrast to 'classical' grounded theory, this reinterpretation of the method engages with the hermeneutic tradition of research in which

---

[242] Barney G. Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory: Emergence vs Forcing* (California: Sociology Press, 1992), p. 11.
[243] Glaser, p. 27.
[244] Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Second Edition (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 43.
[245] Strauss and Corbin, p. 16.
[246] Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, 'Grounded Theory Methodology: An Overview', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 273-285, (p. 279).
[247] Thomas A. Schwant, 'Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 118-137, (p. 124).
[248] Bryant (2009).

knowledge in constructed through the interpretation of symbolic and tacit meanings. That being said, Strauss and Corbin do still adhere to the construction of conceptual analysis as being an 'interplay between the researchers and the data'.[249] While the authors do acknowledge the researcher's own subjectivity in decision making, they do not necessarily acknowledge their participation in an inter-subjective relationship with research participants. They also continue to adhere to the constant comparative method as a means to recognise and minimise researcher subjectivity, and so the researcher remains external to the research data.[250]

Kathy Charmaz makes a similar critical distinction between the real and the true, in that the researcher can understand what is 'true' in so far as they can understand the realities of research participants; Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory 'seeks to define conditional statements that interpret how subjects construct their realities' which constitute a set of hypotheses from which theory can be abstracted.[251] For Charmaz, grounded theory thus continues the realist tradition to some extent in assuming the existence of 'real worlds' which can be known through understanding the participants' definitions of their own realities.[252] Theory is thus interpretive and it defined by Charmaz as an 'imaginative understanding' in abstract terms, as opposed to the positivist explanatory framing proffered by both Glaser and Strauss.[253]

The constructivist paradigm recognises the pluralistic nature of reality, and that both truth and knowledge are constructs determined by our own subjective experience of the world.[254] It is phenomenological in its approach, in that it is engaged in understanding how the individual human subject engages with the world and makes sense of it, and so is based

---

[249] Strauss and Corbin (1998), p. 18.
[250] Strauss and Corbin (1998), p. 43.
[251] Kathy Charmez and Richard G. Mitchell, 'Grounded Theory in Ethnography', in *Handbook of Ethnography*, ed. by Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (London: Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 160-174 (p. 273).
[252] Charmaz (2003), p. 272.
[253] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (Sage Publications Ltd, 2006), pp. 126-127.
[254] Schwant, p. 125.

on a relativist ontology. For Charmaz, the process of conducting grounded theory should be a reflexive one in which the researcher consciously undertakes interpretive activity, and as such explicitly engages with a pragmatist foundation which encourages the ongoing construction of an interpretive rendering of the world.[255] The constructivist reinterpretation therefore manifests a dramatic and conscious shift away from Glaser's 'classical' grounded theory in its subjectivist and relativist foundations.

While all iterations of grounded theory emphasise the focus on the abstraction of theory from data as the primary goal, they also acknowledge that there must be some credibility to the process in order for the theory to be accepted. Grounded theory cannot expect to produce universal propositions, nor does it require proof of causes. Instead, 'classical' grounded theory's credibility can be justified through strict adherence to the methodology laid out by the authors in their publication of 1968. Theory is understood as a process, and as such will undergo various on-going change, but it is through the researcher's own systematic knowledge of their data and their lived experience of the research through an 'informed detachment' that credibility can be demonstrated. A practical application of a credible theory then have the following interrelated theories: fit (appropriate 'fit' to the area being studied), be understandable to a layman, be sufficiently general, and the researcher will have 'partial control over the structure and process of situations as they change throughout time'.[256] Bryant's consideration of Strauss' grounded theory in the context of pragmatism again becomes relevant, in that here theory and concepts are considered in terms of their usefulness in relation to a particular situation or phenomenon.[257] The pragmatist tradition in its broadest sense evaluates knowledge in relation to its practical application: 'The characteristic idea of philosophical pragmatism is that efficiency in practical application – the issue of "which works out most effectively" – somehow provides a standard for the determination of truth in the case of statements, rightness in the case of

---

[255] Charmaz (2006), p. 184.
[256] Glaser and Strauss, p. 237.
[257] Bryant (2009).

actions, and value in the case of appraisals'.[258] This aspect of grounded theory which holds the most resonance for my research. The notion of knowledge being instrumental and understood as a process embedded in a specific context holds potential in exploring experience in a way that may then be applied to museum practice. According to Glaser's criteria, my own research cannot be considered to be grounded theory purely on the basis that I have entered a substantive area with a research problem already in mind. My focus on engagement with contemporary art could be understood as a conceptual category, and by entering research with a question around engagement I could be forcing data to fit the preconceived of 'engagement'. Strauss on the other hand recognises the necessity of some knowledge of the field of study, in that research questions may be instigated at least in part by existing literature, and also the requirement of some specified boundaries in order to obtain funding to conduct the research.[259] In his work with Corbin, Strauss referred to the use of literature as an analytic tool which could encourage conceptualisation when working with the ideas generated by research data.[260] Charmaz also considers prior knowledge of theories and concepts, and similar to Strauss defines the sensitizing concepts as a place to begin research, but warns the researcher to take care and not to force data to fit them.[261]

The central aim of grounded theory is the abstraction of theory which, in Glaser's terms, is a study of abstract problems and not their units. This is not necessarily a problem for grounded theory method in itself - as the 'classical' method does not make a claim to tell people's own stories and the constructivist approach is consciously engaged in producing a relative, interpretive theory of lived experience – this becomes an issues for my research when considered in relation to ACE's call for a framework of measurement of a subjective and embodied experience. The need for a framework shifts research aims towards the production of theory rather than engaging with people on a relational, participatory level. An argument could be made that a substantive grounded theory is necessary, which is closer

---

[258] Nicholas Rescher (1995) quoted in Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: meaning and perspective in the research process* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2003), pp. 72-73.
[259] Strauss and Corbin, pp. 36-37.
[260] Strauss and Corbin, p. 53.
[261] Charmaz, p. 17.

to the empirical data collected, but this would still represent an abstraction of experience, taking it outside of the physical and ideological space of the museum, as well as the individuals lived experience. Kathleen Stewart's notion of affect may have more resonance with museum practitioners, and provoke a new approach to the structure of research. This somewhat echoes the pragmatist position on knowledge being truthful in so far as it is purposive: 'Affects are not so much forms of signification, or units of knowledge, as they are expressions of ideas or problems performed as a kind of involuntary and powerful learning and participation'.[262]

Scaling Knowledge

While Grounded Theory Method did not provide a good 'fit' for the intentions of my research, the issue of a need for a framework within which the value of arts and culture can be demonstrated, as articulated by Arts Council England, was still a core concern. The issue of scaling knowledge is central to the production of such a framework and manifests in the incentive to produce research findings that are generalizable, so as to contribute to the production of an overall framework or metric The impetus for this has been demonstrated through a consideration of Arts Council England literature and recently proposed metrics and frameworks of measurement.[263] Given that I opted to take case study approach as a way to analyse the complexity of contemporary interventions in order to interrogate the concept of engagement', the tension between 'the singular, the particular and the unique'[264] aspects of the case study and the need to provide a more overarching 'framework and language through which to express these benefits [of engagement with arts and culture]'[265] must be addressed.

Scale manifests in two related issues relating to arts evaluation; first, in the methodological challenges of scaling accounts of subjective, lived and embodied

---

[262] Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 40.
[263] On-going research undertaken to develop the 'Manchester Metrics' is a recent example. John Knell, *Manchester Metrics Pilot: Final Report of Stage One* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014)
[264] Helen Simons, 'Interpret in context: Generalizing from the single case in evaluation', *Evaluation*, 2 (2015), 173-188, (p. 175).
[265] Peter Bazalgette, in ACE (2014), p. 8.

engagement with the art objects to a level which produces a more general theory or way of articulating the benefits of said engagement, and secondly in the articulation of these benefits instrumentalised within broader cultural and economic policies, expressed on individual, local and national levels. At the level of policy, this process of scaling the benefits of art and culture interventions is evident in Ed Vaizey's comments in the recent *Culture White Paper*. Describing culture as 'rejuvenating our society and our national and local economies'[266], Vaizey connects cultural interventions with education and improved health and wellbeing at an individual level[267] and with the 'soft 'power' of the UK at a national and global level.[268] This scaling was also evident in the cultural rhetoric of New Labour through a focus on well-being in the *Taking Part* surveys, which were conducted on a continual basis to produce evidence for the DCMS. Quoted in an article by Carol A. Scott which accounts for shifting trends in accounting for cultural value at a policy level, a table produced by the DCMS in 2010 defined the benefits of engagement in culture and sports with respect to categories of 'individual' (which included self-identity, income, expression, and achievement), 'community' (which included employment, reduced crime, community identity and existence value) and 'national' (which included broader conceptual notions of citizenship, international reputation and national pride).[269] Scott drew attention here to the continuation of this national model for measuring value from the New Labour approach which focused on subject well-being to an economic focus throughout the Conservative-led coalition, quoting Jeremy Hunt, the then Conservative Secretary of State for the DCMS as saying: 'For me culture is not just about the economic value of our creative industries – it is what defines us as a civilisation'.[270] This leap from the micro level of the individual and subjective well-being to the macro level of complex human organisation and social development is a conceptually significant one, and one which is echoed in the approach of

---

[266] Ed Vaizey, *The Culture White Paper* (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2015), p. 5.
[267] Vaizey, p. 9.
[268] Vaizey, p. 6.
[269] Carol A. Scott, 'Museum Measurement: Questions of Value' in *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies: Museum Practice*, ed. by Sharon MacDonald and Helen Res Leahy (West Sussex: Joh Wiley & Sons Ltd) pp. 97-122, (p. 112).
[270] Jeremy Hunt, quoted in Scott, p. 111.

the IWM North which seeks to makes a similar leap in its approach to affective

interpretation:

> IWM North prioritises sensory experience and emotion. The intention here is to create the potential for a museum experience and a form of sensory knowledge which generates in visitors what is sometimes referred to as a 'critical historical consciousness' – an ability to reflect on the past, draw parallels to the present, and consider other peoples' stories in relation to one's own.[271]

The expectation that visitors will make the leap from considering their own experiences

with respect to those others across a wide temporal, geographical and socio-political range,

manifests an expectation of scaling with respect to visitors' critical and conceptual

processes of meaning-making.

In terms of theorising scale within my study, it is useful here to return to Manuel

DeLanda's reading of assemblage theory. Considering the relations between entities not as

entirely constitutive, but instead focusing on the nature of their configuration, DeLanda has

expressed a concern with the discovery of the actual mechanisms operating at different

spatial scales in order to connect the micro with the macro scales of social reality.[272] This is

useful for my case study at the IWM North in considering the relations between individual

experience and the notion of a 'critical historical consciousness' that perceives experiences

beyond that of the individual, shifting to towards a 'co-extensive historical horizon', and the

scaling of critical research knowledge from that of an inter-personal encounter (between

myself as a researcher and the Museum's visitors) with a material art object, to level which

might speak to an understanding of 'engagement' at policy level.[273] These scales can be

understood with respect to Manuel DeLanda's notion of individual singularities, in that they

are connected to each other through 'relations of exteriority'.[274] They are not sub-servient

parts of a whole which cannot exist independently, but rather their relationship is contingent

upon processes of instrumental policy and the culturally defined modes of knowledge

production embedded in contemporary evaluation practices and processes of evidence

---

[271] MacLeod et. al., *Developing IWM North*, p. 8.
[272] DeLanda, p. 29.
[273] Gadamer, pp, 8-9.
[274] DeLanda, p. 10.

production. Thus, the challenge implicated by my case study approach was how to conduct research within these contexts, or entities, and produce knowledge about 'engagement' that could travel between these scaling contexts.

The notion of 'mobilising specificities' proposed by Annemarie Mol and John Law in their writing on complexities was useful in thinking through this issue.[275] Drawing from the work of the late Zygmunt Bauman, Mol and Law have argued for new ways of relating to complexity rather than just denouncing simplification. The formal evolution of the ATM14 exhibition and its use of cultural indictors to comparatively 'measure' the success of the exhibition bypasses the complex issues which arise when interrogating the concept of engagement with respect to contemporary art. In order to addresses this deficit in my case study whilst retaining a line of dialogue with current policy issues, it was important to consider how the knowledge I produce might be 'transferrable and translatable', but not necessarily generalizable.[276] This notion of mobilising specificities is also evident in the writing of Clifford Geertz and his theorisation of 'thick description' as an interpretive mode of ethnography.[277] For Geertz the importance of circumstantiality was key to his approach in working through the complex specificness of ethnographic findings, and the notion of thinking *with* not just about broader concepts within these specificities.[278] This prompted me to consider how to think with and not just about 'engagement' as a concept, and to locate my own engagement with the issues concretely throughout my research. Marilyn Strathern spoke to this issue of complexity within ethnography with respect to the notion of 'space and depth'.[279] For Strathern, interpretation implies specifying the singular qualities of something – in this case the qualities of 'engagement' as a process of meaning-making with respect to contemporary art in a heritage site are my central concern. As such, the entity in

---

[275] Annemarie Mol and John Law, 'Complexities: An Introduction', in *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, ed. by Annemarie Mol and John Law (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 1-22.
[276] Mol and Law, p. 15.
[277] Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 1-30.
[278] Geertz, p. 23.
[279] Marilyn Strathern, 'On Space and Depth', in *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, ed. by Annemarie Mol and John Law (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 88-115.

question is 'being made apparent both in its particulars and as inevitably summoning a context of a kind, a whole field of possible (further) particulars and understandings'. [280] In exploring 'engagement' through shared encounters with visitors and the ATM14 artworks, my own interpretative processes at once implicate multiple other viewpoints, whilst also speaking to a broader concept of 'engagement' through producing critical knowledge of the specific context of contemporary art as a form of affective interpretation within the IWM North.

The AHRC's Cultural Value Project final report offered a broad review of current research and evaluation methodologies and a focus on issues of scalability and generalizable methods was evident, thus demonstrating the centrality of scaling up knowledge within evaluation and research practices.[281] While noting that some research approaches are more scalable than others (although not without their own problematics, such as the simplification often required in quantitative studies to achieve a comparable standardisation) the report notes that 'greater understanding often emerges from close case studies' and that processes of 'extrapolation from case studies might be the first step towards creating both scalable and sensitive evaluation methods, enabling us better to understand the underlying process and those aspects which matter and are shared across different contexts.'[282] Being grounded in specific contexts and particularities, case studies offer an opportunity for in-depth understandings of policies and the impacts they have on these in different circumstances.[283] Simons argues for the transformative potential of knowledge developed from case studies and the use of stories in order to 'identify the key issues to evaluate and reveal the conditions in which policies are enacted to argue more strongly for policy development that would make a difference'.[284] In doing so, Simons offers several levels of contexts that have

---

[280] Strathern, p. 89.

[281] Geoffrey Crossick & Patrycja Kaszynska, *Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project* (Wiltshire: Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2016), pp. 120-150.

[282] Crossick and Kaszynska, pp. 149-150.

[283] Simons, p. 174.

[284] Simons, p. 174.

been useful to the framing of my research and the contexts through which the concept of 'engagement' travels. The first is a cultural context 'infused with different norms as assumptions', which my research takes to be the norms and assumptions through which art and culture are understand as having transformative and civilizing effects.[285] The next, is a context of key people and roles, which I have begun to identify through my interviews with particular stakeholders with the sector who work with art, heritage and arts evaluation in one form or another.[286] The context of 'subject, its history and focus' is identified as 'engagement' with contemporary artworks that have been employed with an instrumental intent.[287] Lastly, a policy context to explore the particular emergence of a policy or programme, which I have identified as a context of instrumental cultural policy, operating through various forms of cultural and artistic intervention.[288] Simons frames case studies as an alternative approach to the 'gold standard'[289] of traditional, scientific approaches to research, which depend on contextual interpretation and thus 'tacit and situated understanding', and as such 'generalizations [drawn from case studies] then are not abstractions, independent of place and context, but depend for their meaning on maintaining a connectedness with the particulars of the concrete case in context.[290] An emphasis on this 'gold standard' form of research is evident in the Arts Council's approach to demonstrating the value and impacts of arts and culture through research, most explicitly in the 2014 report *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: a literature review*, wherein only ninety research studies met this gold standard criterion set as a benchmark for 'robust, credible research'.[291] For Simons, lived experience can provide a recognisable 'authentic context and illustration' which can be evaluated through the coherence of the narrative the

---

[285] Simons, p. 176.
[286] Simons, p. 176.
[287] Simons, p. 176.
[288] Simons, p. 176.
[289] The 'gold standard' being data that can be both (empirically) proven and replicated. Yvonna S. Lincoln, Susan A. Lynham, and Egon G. Guba, 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited', in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th Edition, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2011), pp. 97-125, (p. 114).
[290] Simons, p. 178.
[291] Arts Council (March 2014), (p. 47).

study provides, thus suggesting an alternative to traditional scientific modes of validity.[292] It is important to note here that the case study is not in itself a methodological choice, but rather the subject matter of an enquiry.[293]

Robert E. Stake has addressed the nature of the case study through asking the epistemological question: what can be learned from a single case?[294] Two possibilities proposed by Stake are relevant to the current issue of evaluation methodologies, in that a case study can be intrinsic or instrumental. An intrinsic case study is undertaken not necessarily to address a particular problem but because the case itself is of interest, whereas an instrumental study is undertaken to provide insight into a broader issue or to redraw a generalisation.[295] I propose that while Arts Council-driven research resembles the latter in order to speak to policy priorities, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and nor do they reflect the work undertaken by arts professionals working in sector. For example, I spoke to members of staff at Belton House, a National Trust property, following the end of their first contemporary art project, 'Rehearsing Memory', and the nature of the evaluation they undertook. No formal evaluation of visitor experience was conducted, but they did hold discussion meetings at the end of the project with staff, the artists involved and a consultant curator working with Trust New Art, in which they worked through their own learning processes and how visitors responded to the artworks.[296] In this instance, evaluation dialogues were very much focused on the lived experiences of the project for staff, as demonstrated in a comment made by David Fitzer, working with the visitor engagement team when I enquired as to whether they would undertake future contemporary art projects. Fitzer responded, 'it's like anything – there is a massive learning curve. We were talking earlier on about it being just another project, but actually from our perspective we deal with

---

[292] Simons, p. 184.
[293] Robert E. Stake, 'Case Studies', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2000), pp. 435-454, (p. 435).
[294] Stake, p. 436.
[295] Stake, p. 437.
[296] Belton House is not a property involved in the larger Trust New Art programming, but opted to undertake a contemporary art project due to the history of the estate and its history of commissioning arts and crafts.

projects all of the time, but this seemed very, very different to us, and the way we approached it was different. So I think we're probably more confident, next time, to treat it as a project in the way we would treat any other project.'[297] Fitzer talked about how staff reflected on their working approach to the project, and how their thinking 'perhaps needs more flow to it' if they undertake another contemporary arts project.[298] This mode of thinking about evaluation as embedded in the specific practices of a certain place or team of people is also evident in comment made by Natalie Walton, a Freelance Arts Project Manager, and her use of evaluation as a 'personal reflective tool'.[299] This form of internal, or personal, evaluation is also encouraged by Arts Council England through twice yearly meetings, for example, where organisations are invited to share their learning experiences through lightening talk presentations in a less formal setting.[300] Arts Council England also require that evidence of learning is built into strategic business plans, in order for organisations to demonstrate future planning and building resilience.[301] So, while there is ample evidence of lived experiences being critically engaged with across the sector in forms of evaluation, these qualitative, embedded forms of knowing are not accounted for in 'gold standard' research methods understood in the traditional sense, and therefore 'scaling' this form of contextual knowledge to sit within the a desired framework of 'demonstrating and measuring engagement' becomes very problematic. In the context of my own visitor study, this brought to the fore issues of validity and 'robust, rigorous credibility' that have been repeated throughout Arts Council literature, and required an engagement with broader concepts of appropriate research paradigms which might provide methodological tools with which to respond.

Questions of Paradigm

In an effort to understand and explore human experience on a more intimate level, a re-evaluation of the construction and form of knowledge has emerged in both academic

---

[297] David Fitzer, Conversation with Katie Stoddart, Lucy Chard and David Fitzer, April 14th 2016.
[298] David Fitzer, Conversation with Katie Stoddart, Lucy Chard and David Fitzer, April 14th 2016.
[299] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.
[300] Conversation with Gillian Greaves, 5 July 2016.
[301] Conversation with Gillian Greaves, 5 July 2016.

research and professional practices in a broad range of fields, such as psychology, social sciences and the arts and humanities. A positivist approach which asserts scientific proofs drawn from empirical methodologies as valid in the production of knowledge, has been criticised as manifesting Enlightenment notions which do not permit multiplicity of experience and truth. While being relevant in scientific research settings, the empirical, rational views of knowledge and processes of knowing manifest in some existing visitor experience frameworks, do not produce methods of research which adequately address the question of 'engagement'. As noted by John Creswell in a recent review of qualitative frameworks which demonstrate a re-evaluation of knowledge processes, when developing a methodology it is essential to work with a conscious awareness of the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of data collection processes and interpretive frameworks.[302] Various participatory approaches have been developed from this position of reflexivity, including action research and collaborative methodologies. While Guba and Lincoln have been criticised for neglecting to account for the participatory nature of particular research methods in their recent interrogation of inquiry paradigms, they do provide a poignant working definition of the 'paradigm' which highlights an epistemic approach to the development of an appropriate research methodology: 'Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways.'[303] In their work on these paradigms, a paradigm essentially being the frameworks within which the research conducted and analysed, Guba and Lincoln have investigated positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism in relation to their respective ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies; by explicitly engaging with inquiry paradigms in this way, it becomes possible to unpack the layers of knowledge and processes of knowing which they manifest.

---

[302] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2013).

[303] Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 105-107, (p. 105).

While this thesis argues for the need to approach the notion of engagement as a relational

ontology, it must be acknowledged that approach is also related to an epistemology, but one

that centres relation of being as a primary source of knowing. Developed as a direct

response to the perceived alienation which characterises the modern experience, the

participatory paradigm proposed by Heron and Reason emphasises the importance of

experiential knowledge and the integrity of persons in a search for an alternative way of

understanding the world and our place in it as humans.[304] Reason identifies the

epistemological root of the problem of alienation and asserts that 'we can only do research

with persons if we engage with them *as* persons, as co-subjects and thus as co-researchers'

[original emphasis].[305] Reason situates the need for this shift towards a participatory mode

of inquiry in the context of Western dualistic notions of consciousness which asserts an

autonomous self and prioritises an objectivity which results in fragmented self, viewed as

separate from the body, others and the cosmos. This fragmentation, for Reason, has resulted

in an emphasis on intellect as the primary means of knowledge and from this the power of

conceptual language developed; the participatory paradigm and extended epistemology

proposed by Heron and Reason thus posits an antidote to this perceived separation.[306] The

extended epistemology encompasses the following four ways of knowing, which move

beyond the traditional form of intellectual knowledge: experiential, presentational,

propositional and practical.[307] Presentational knowledge, grounded in the experiential, is

evident in symbolic representations of our understanding of the world through graphic,

plastic, verbal and musical forms. These abstract and metaphoric forms are conceptualised

in to theories by propositional knowledge, which are thus embodied in presentation forms

which are in turn grounded in experiential knowledge. Practical knowing is the

---

[304] Peter Reason, *Participation in Human Inquiry* (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 1994), pp. 9-10.
[305] Reason, p. 10.
[306] Reason asserts that the perceived separation of consciousness from the cosmos is in fact just that; perceived. So, whilst we continue to assert consciousness as some higher form of being or knowing, we as humans are simply in a state of denial, and our participation in the cosmos continues regardless.
[307] Heron and Reason (1997), p. 281.

demonstration of the grasping of propositional knowledge, and brings into fruition the three prior forms of knowing in an act of intention.[308]

A familiar criticism of postmodern discourse is also offered by Reason in that deconstructive analysis denies the possibility of 'truth'; in a retort to modernist grand narratives of poststructuralism, postmodernism denies the possibility of any overarching universal truth. While this emancipation from the epistemological approach to uncovering 'knowledge' by empirical, scientific methods is liberating for the researcher, any claim to truth then becomes problematic. In the context of Reason's participation, the possibility of truth is manifest in individual experience, and it is through this conscious experience of participation that knowledge can be produced.[309] Developed from this participatory and experiential concept of knowledge, action research methods prioritise the researchers and participants being together in the research process in a way that participants are not positioned as subjects to be studied by objective researchers, and are instead co-researchers and thus co-producers of knowledge. The agency of each person is taken to be a central notion of this research method, which is emancipatory in nature, and from this agency new forms of knowledge production can be explored.

A critical inter-subjectivity, articulated within Heron and Reason's participatory world view, is determined by the ontological grounding of a subjective being-in-the-world. The participatory nature of a phenomenological approach is evident in the very particular ontological stance taken, in that 'what can known about the given cosmos is that it is always known as a subjectively articulated world, whose objectivity is relative to how it is shaped by the knower'.[310] Within these conditions, the processes of knowing presuppose participation. Critical subjectivity, according to Heron and Reason, emerges from a conscious awareness of the four ways of knowing detailed in the extended epistemology and of the grounding and consummating relationships between them.[311] A subjective experience

---

[308] Heron and Reason, p. 281.
[309] Reason, p. 14.
[310] John Heron and Peter Reason, 'A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, (1997), 274-294, (p. 280).
[311] Heron and Reason, p. 282.

of being in the world therefore becomes a primary way of knowing from which other forms of knowing emerge, and our self-awareness is articulated as a critical consciousness. Critical inter-subjectivity is grounded in this participatory relationship, located in the context of a shared language and culture within which shared experience takes place through process of dialogue, feedback and exchange.[312] My research is not using a participatory or action research method given than I am approaching a situation with a predetermined idea of what knowledge I would like to develop through my research, however, the notion of critical inter-subjectivity as grounded in processes of dialogue may provide a useful way of thinking about methodology in a concrete way.

Here it will be beneficial to elucidate the philosophical notion of phenomenology briefly invoked by Heron and Reason's participatory paradigm. Phenomenology is underpinned by the need for a theory of knowledge which encompasses not only the intellect, but also *experiences* of thinking and knowing.[313] Traditional epistemologies assert a subject-object dichotomy that is rejected by phenomenology in order to establish a holistic approach through which *embodied* processes of knowledge are prioritised, processes which are also prioritised by the Museum in their 'affect' approach.[314] Initially conceived as a theory of science, the philosophy of Edmund Husserl asserts consciousness as the condition of all experience, and therefore consciousness constitutes the world.[315] This endeavour to overcome an epistemic deficit apparent in theories of knowledge was furthered by the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in an account of being-in-the-world proposed in the *Phenomenology of Perception*.[316] The Cartesian dualism, manifested in the Enlightenment notion of the autonomous individual, is entirely rejected by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology through its emphasis on the indivisible nature of the self and the world. Phenomenological ontology positions being-in-the-world as a participatory action; if the

---

[312] Heron and Reason, p. 283.
[313] Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 1.
[314] Moran, p. 14.
[315] Moran, pp. 60-61.
[316] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Paul Kegan (London: Routledge, 2002).

human consciousness and the world are not be thought of as mutually independent, but instead as dependent parts of unified whole, then human experience must therefore be participatory in nature. Komarine Romdenh-Romluc has deconstructed Merleau-Ponty's view of objective thought in order to more thoroughly understand the philosopher's world-view and the perceived need for a new ontology. For Merleau-Ponty, objective thought generates two conflicting positions: realism, which posits consciousness as one of the things in the world, and at the same time existing independently from it, and idealism, in which consciousness constitutes the world and thus lies wholly outside of it.[317] According to Romdenh-Romluc's reading, both positions are unacceptable to Merleau-Ponty, who instead understands the world to be a *gestalt*; an irreducible, unified whole, the nature of which cannot be derived simply from the sum of its parts, one of which being human consciousness. If we are to understand the world as such, then the participatory nature of human experience becomes discernible and the phenomenological grounding for Heron and Reason's participatory paradigms becomes apparent. Romdenh-Romluc also identifies the notion of dialogue as being constitutive in relation one's thoughts when in dialogue with another individual.[318] According to Merleau-Ponty:

> In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thoughts and his are interwoven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion, and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator… Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world.[319]

If we are thus to understand dialogue as being a constitutive element to our own subjectivity, then it may also prove to be a useful tool in the task of investigating how the lived world is experienced. The nature of dialogue in itself contains an assumption of participation – be it face-to-face dialogue, a sign detailing directions or instructions, a novel, or indeed a museum object label, there is the intrinsic assumption of speaking *to* someone.

---

[317] Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty', in *The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology*, ed. by Sebastian Luft and Soren Overgaard (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 103-112, (p. 104).
[318] Romdenh-Romluc, p. 110.
[319] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Paul Kegan (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 413.

Through employing dialogic processes as a participatory research method we may then come closer to appreciating the mechanisms of 'engagement' throughout an encounter with contemporary art in a heritage space.

As touched upon in relation to a participatory understanding of our experience with the world, dialogue provides a site for this participation to take place. Peter Park has addressed participatory research as a social practice with emancipatory potential. Park positions knowledge and its construction as an end in itself, as opposed to there being a necessity to utilise it some way.[320] Dialogue is positioned by Park as central to the task of inquiry due to its existential significance within the human condition. For Park, dialogue is essential for understanding to be reached between human agents, and for them to mobilise into action in order achieve an emancipatory goal. While it is not fundamentally necessary that an exploration of engagement be emancipatory for the participants (i.e. museum visitors), it will be to some extent for the researcher, in working to develop an ontological approach which values alternative, experiential concepts of knowledge. It is still, however, important for participants to operate as freely and independently as possible throughout social and dialogic research processes which 'uphold the dignity of human beings as free and autonomous agents who can act effectively and responsibly on their own behalf in the contact of their interdependent relationship', the relationship here being that with the researcher.[321] Invoking Merleau-Ponty's notion of dialogue as being mutually constitutive, William R. Torbert has offered an analogy of dialogue as a game of pallette: 'The objective is for the two (or more) players to enter a mutual rhythm, so attuned to one another's skills as never to overtax them, so spontaneous and ever-changing as always to heighten one another's awareness, and so challenging as to strengthen one another's capacities'.[322] Critical reflexivity is ever-present in an activity such as this, being constantly aware and working within your own and your interlocutor's limitations, while gently pushing and

---

[320] Peter Park, 'Knowledge and Participatory Research', in *Handbook of Action Research* ed. by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2006), pp. 83-93, (p. 88).
[321] Park, p. 89.
[322] William R. Torbet, 'The Practice of Action Inquiry', in *Handbook of Action Research* ed. by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2006), pp. 207-217, (p. 212).

pulling the boundaries in order to make expand the space of capability for both parties involved.

The critical potential of dialogue has a long standing presence in academic literature. In Ove Karlsson's notion of evaluation as a democratic dialogue, the concept of dialogue becomes problematized. Karlsson defines dialogue in this context as a process of seeking knowledge about another party, where the evaluator is a broker of information between two parties.[323] While this definition is identified as suitable for particular situations, it is much less suited to more complex issues, such as the examples given of abortion and euthanasia. A more flexible definition of dialogue is referred to, offered by Martin Buber, as 'an exchange of ideas and meanings that develops our thoughts and promotes awareness of our thoughts and values… everybody wins if nobody wins'.[324] This raises the issue of consensus. How important is consensus in relation to the issue of engagement, and is it possible for a consensus to be reached? Through the questioning processes of Socratic dialogue which focused on the uncovering of both practical and theoretical knowledge, an awareness of one's own perspectives can be achieved, as well as an awareness of the limitations of knowledge; some things cannot be entirely known, or even agreed upon.[325] This is not necessarily negative, for as we have already considered, knowledge can be valued in its own right, and so whether we come to 'know' entirely should not distract too much from the potential of what has been uncovered. Socratic dialogue can be put into practice when discussing a set of critical incidents which explore the central issues at hand, and so bringing visitors together in a dialogue around issues of engagement, and interrogating which they feel to be most relevant may be a productive exercise, whether it be with the researcher in the presence of a contemporary art work, or in a group with other participants (or both).

Thomas A. Schwandt, in a response to Karlsson's writing, raised some pertinent

---

[323] Ove Karlsson, 'Critical Dialogue: It's Value and Meaning', Evaluation, 7 (2001), 211-227, (p. 211).
[324] Martin Buber, quoted in Karlsson, p. 212-213.
[325] Karlsson, p. 214.

remarks regarding the nature of knowledge, in that when it is bound up with praxis it is also bound to the researcher and the notion of becoming; the emergent nature of knowledge is evident in the researcher's development of their own moral and practical knowledge in relation to their role.[326] Knowing is positioned as an emergent and continual process: 'dialogue is not simply a special kind of space or place (platform or plaza) in which views are exchanged and new information is obtained, but an event in which one experiences growth in self-understanding'.[327] The critical potential of dialogue is problematized by Schwandt in reference to the possibilities and limitations to the kind of understanding that occur in dialogue. The question is posed in relation to Karlsson's account of dialogue, and asks whether it is possible to achieve a level of critique from within a lived reality, or whether in fact this can only be achieved by stepping outside of the lived reality, presumably into the realm of theory and concept.[328]

Approaching dialogue from a psychological point of study, Paul Sullivan and John McCarthy have contrasted dialogical approaches to experiential inquiry in order to uncovering the underpinnings of various approaches and asses their suitability.[329] The authors interpret dialogue on a continuum between the centripetal (order) and the centrifugal (disorder), and the nature of Socratic dialogue is examined within this continuum. Experience and content are understood to be united in Socratic dialogue, with content tending towards to centripetal (order) and experience tending towards the centrifugal (disorder).[330] Mikhail Bakhin argued that the content of Socratic dialogue often took a monologic form, and so the content actually worked to destroy to experiential form of dialogue; here we can see evident is issue relating to knowledge, in that it is the knowledge as content which is prioritised over the processes of knowledge, i.e. the experiential aspects

---

[326] Thomas A. Schwandt, 'Understanding Dialogue as Practice', *Evaluation*, 7 (2001), 228-237, (p. 229).
[327] Schwandt, p. 236.
[328] Schwandt, p. 236.
[329] Paul Sullivan and John McCarthy, 'A Dialogical Approach to Experience-based Inquiry', *Evaluation*, 15 (2005), 621-638.
[330] Sullivan and McCarthy, p. 630.

of knowledge. This conflict is one which will be central to the research process of this project, in that methodologies must be critically reflexive to ensure, as much as is possible, that the experiential aspects of dialogue are the primary focus. The notion of oscillating between order and disorder provides a useful analogy to think through forms that the research processes and material may take.[331]

The issue of axiology, the study of value, was raised by Heron and Reason in their discussion of Guba and Lincoln's inquiry paradigms.[332] In addition to criticising the lack of a participatory element, Heron and Reason also raise the issue of the truth and its value.[333] The issue of value has significant relevance in this contemporary research context of engagement with the arts, and initiates pertinent questions: what is intrinsically valuable in human life, and thus what sort of knowledge is intrinsically valuable (and if there is such a thing as intrinsic value to knowledge?).[334] While elements of ontology, epistemology and methodology address the nature of truth, it is also essential consider the nature of truthful knowledge.

As defined by Heron and Reason the participatory paradigm 'values human flourishing as an end in itself', as values experiential knowledge not only as a grounding for the traditionally higher valued propositional knowledge, but also as a form of knowledge in itself.[335] Experiential moments and processes, while providing the basis for practical knowledge from which abstract theories and concepts can emerge, are also a site of value in

---

[331] Sullivan and McCarthy propose an alternative approach to Socratic dialogue which they propose has more critical potential: a Menippean dialogue. For the authors, a Menippean dialogue provides a 'correction' to Socratic dialogue through an examination of truths in unusual situations which allows for the dialogue to be removed from the historicity of the Socratic approach. In relation to the issue of engagement, a Menippean dialogue would represent a reversion back to the notion of meta-narratives and autonomous truths from which this research is endeavouring to break away. The nature of engagement, of understanding an in-the-moment experience, in intrinsically bound to a particular time, place and set of circumstances, and so a Socratic approach of interrogation would be much more appropriate.

[332] Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences', *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2000) in pp. 163-188, (pp167-168).

[333] John Heron and Peter Reason, 'A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3 (1997), 274-294, (p. 277).

[334] Heron and Reason, p. 287

[335] Heron and Reason, p. 287.

relation to a shifting concept of knowledge production. This shift from the intellect being the primary source and pinnacle of knowledge towards an experiential mode of knowing is representative of the wider shift away from traditional theory and practice.[336] For instance, traditional academic and institutional knowledge founded on Aristotelian concept of intellectual excellence position intellect as an attainment outside and above experience. Here, the intellect is entirely separated from any lived experience of the world.[337] This mode of understanding knowledge and what is valuable in terms of constructing knowledge is evident in the meta-narratives of the modernist archetype which structure knowledge in the form of universal truths. A positivist approach to research emerged from this Enlightened mode of thought, in which empirical studies produced 'truths' which could then be extrapolated from a specific circumstance and applied universally to instances of this particular circumstance. In the study of museums and galleries for instance, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill's dissatisfaction with ideological critique in relation to contemporary issues of visitor experience comes to mind: while the acknowledgement that the ideological rhetoric present in the architecture and displayed narratives of museum and gallery institutions is certainly useful when deconstructing these spaces, we also now acknowledge that the 'entrance narratives' brought to the space can have much more effect on the nature of the visit than an embedded ideological code. From this, it may be relatively safe to suppose that a truthful knowledge of visitor experiences in these spaces must emerge from the experiences themselves, as opposed to an external theorising of these moments and their impact. So, with Foucault's notion of a historically located, relative truths in mind, the question is now posed: how can we develop a research methodology to practically address these issues of knowledge, and understanding engagement in relation to visitor experiences of contemporary art in heritage sites?

In response to these methodological issues, critical approaches have been employed in order to rely less on rigid procedures and instead emphasise the philosophical and

---

[336] Heron and Reason, p. 280-282.
[337] Heron and Reason, p. 287.

epistemological underpinnings which inform the chosen processes and modes of analyses.[338]

Remaining critically reflexive and interrogating research paradigms can be challenging to

the researcher when developing research strategy. As touched upon already in relation to

Jan Fook's approach to museums in the context of social work, a reflexive approach can

often be conflated with the reflective. Whereas a reflective approach tends to manifest in

educational discourse and the actions of a professional practiioner through which they reflect

on their practice from an outside and seemingly objective stance, reflexivity instead refers to

a 'stance of being able to locate oneself in the picture, to appreciate how one's own self

influences the research act'.[339] Herein lies the emancipatory potential of a reflexive

approach; the researcher must also be aware of and critically engage with their own position

as a subject in the research in order to both acknowledge and challenge any a priori

assumptions of knowledge.

The self-consciousness to which Heron and Reason refer is also invoked here in the

role of the researcher. In order to be present in-the-moment with participants, and to develop

an understanding grounded in experience, the researcher must take time to respond, to be

flexible and appreciate that this participatory and reflexive approach can produce

unanticipated material.[340] While the researcher cannot entirely step outside of their own

academic, cultural and personal background, they must remain conscious of their reactions

and decision-making processes as participants within the research scenarios. In adopting this

approach to research, ambiguity and uncertainty are introduced, as the content and form of

the material cannot always be foreseen, nor can the processes which generate the material

always be predicted with any certainty; a reflexive stance will support a navigation of

participatory practices and negotiation of the relationships involved, in order to respond to

more effectively as significant themes, processes and experiences emerge.

---

[338] Christine Morely, 'Critical Reflection as a Research Methodology', in *Knowing Differently: Arts-Bases Collaborative Research Methods*, ed. by Pranee Laimputtong and Jean Rumbold (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2008) pp. 265-280, (p. 268).

[339] Jan Fook, *Social Work: Critical Theory and Practice* (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2006) p. 43.

[340] Heron and Reason, p. 284.

Ethnography

Described by Karen O'Reilly as a methodology, ethnography is rooted in British social

anthropology which traditionally conducted research through methods of participant

observation.[341] Practices have since shifted away from positivist and empiricist

epistemological groundings through post-colonial critiques of subject-object power relations

which positioned the (most often) white male anthropologist as the objective, scientific

observer against the 'Other' of the particular subject to be observed, objectively understood

and theorised. Through an explicit engagement with relational ontologies, issues of trust,

rapport and discursive space are embedded within ethical considerations as both the

processes and outcomes of research. Defined by O'Reilly as iterative-inductive, research

processes have become centralised (as opposed to defined outcomes being the primary

focus), meaning that a simultaneous data collection and analysis is undertaken.[342] Research

methods can thus shift and respond to material as is it collected, undertaken through an

inductive approach which does not begin with a hypothesis to be tested, but instead

addresses and explores issues as they become present throughout the research process. This

reflexive approach requires an engagement with complex and often ambiguous

circumstances, and a conscious and continual consideration of the extent of participation of

both the researcher and the participants; the relational aspects of research thus become

central. This approach stems from the Chicago School (of sociology) which understood

ethnographic research to be interpretative by nature and therefore positioned participation as

central to the comprehension of meaning in social situations; the social world is

conceptualised as an outcome of the interaction between actors.[343]

   In this regard, ethnography draws on phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions,

as highlighted by O'Reilly in her evocation of Paul Feyeraband's theory of tacit knowledge.

For Polanyi, tacit knowledge is the integration of subsidiary and focal awareness, the former

---

[341] Karen O'Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2009)
[342] O'Reilly, p. 3.
[343] O'Reilly, p. 150.

being that which we perceive without intention or conscious control, and the latter being an intended and focused awareness.[344] As process which occurs with a 'conscious directedness' and intentionality, tacit knowing draws on gestalt psychology in that a transformation occurs in both the parts and the whole; the parts become understood in their relation to the whole and take on a functional appearance they lack in isolation.[345] This process of transformation, according to Polanyi, contains actual knowledge (however indeterminate) that cannot be explicitly stated. Polanyi relates his theory to that of phenomenology with regards to the body being the root of all knowledge and thought, thus positioning the body as central to the construction of knowledge and meaning. The body, in the instance of tacit knowledge, is the point from which something is attended in order to distil the meaning of that thing. To make this clearer: Polanyi proposed a 'from-to' relationship that constitutes the construction of meaning through looking from something (the body) rather than attending to it.[346] So, in attending to something, we can understand it as an autonomous part, but in attending to it that thing alienated from meaning – here Polanyi invokes the concept of Cartesian dualism, in that attending to something when the body does not participate in perception demonstrates a separation of what would otherwise be a whole self. This bodily participation in the construction of meaning is also extended by Polanyi to knowledge of other living human beings, in that the particulars of the living beings are known as such by attending from them to the meaning which it the life of the organism. Embodied participation is thus central to this theoretical articulation of tacit knowledge:

> All tacit knowing requires the continued participation of the knower and a measure of personal participation is intrinsic therefore to all knowledge, but the continued participation of the knower becomes altogether predominant in a knowledge acquired and upheld by such deep indwelling.[347]

Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner articulated the complex nature of ethnography as an interdisciplinary practice which consciously engages with writing in relation to processes of

---

[344] Michael Polanyi, 'The Logic of Tacit Inference', *Philosophy*, 41 (155), (1966), 1-18, (p. 3).
[345] Polanyi, p. 3.
[346] Polanyi, p. 8.
[347] Polanyi, p. 14.

knowledge production.[348] Taking a post-structuralist view of language, Ellis and Bochner

discuss the inseparability of knowledge of the world from the language used to understand

and describe it. A post-structuralist approach takes not only the text as its object of study,

but also the systems of knowledge (and therefore relations of power) within which it was

produced. The impossibility of language to be objective therefore results in a theorisation of

ethnography as a process of communication rather than representation, as had previously

been thought, and thus 'processes of production make transparent representations

impossible'.[349] While acknowledging a pragmatic shift in ethnographic practices which

reconstitutes the question of 'how is it true?' as 'how is it useful?', Ellis and Bochner also

inquire as to the consequences incited by the act of writing; the literary nature of

ethnography is brought to the fore and the role of aesthetic standards is raised in relation to

broadening the horizons of ethnographic works and constructing cross-disciplinary

connections.[350] Robert M. Emerson et al have also considered this issue of writing as

interpretation and have described writing as a transformative act; the act of transforming

phenomena into words on paper involves processes of selection and framing, and as such

inscriptions of social life and discourse can be reductive.[351] The practical and necessary

process of transcribing, for instance, transforms the 'multi-channelled' into linear text

through the negotiation of punctuation and grammar, silences and overlaps of speech. The

interpretive choices made during transcribing are demonstrative of doing and writing being

dialectically related and interdependent.

However, this is by no means a new critical stance; Ellis and Bochner and Emerson

et al are invoking a wealth of theoretical interrogation that has centralised processes of

writing in the fields of ethnography and anthropology since the 1970s. Writing in 1986,

[348] Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, 'Talking Over Ethnography', in *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing,* ed. by Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1996)
[349] Ellis and Bochner, p. 19.
[350] Ellis and Bochnier, p. 20.
[351] Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

James Clifford argued for writing to be considered as a primary concern for ethnographic practices, as opposed to being reduced to method – field notes, maps and 'writing up'.[352] Instead, given the context in which culture was understood to be contested codes and representations and science as constructed within and not above historical and linguistic processes, Clifford proposed that the poetic and the political were inseparable, and so asserted the necessity of focussing on text making and rhetoric to highlight the constructed nature of accounts.[353] This shift towards the text as a construction thus implicated its maker. Until this point, Enlightenment thought had separated the subjectivity of the author from the objective referent of the text under the positivist, empiricist epidemiologies of previous research. Clifford identified a shift in the 1960s in which the subjectivity of the author was acknowledged and identified as present in research, and this self-reflexive field work accounts emerged.[354] Dialogical modes of research then conceptualised fields of research as pertaining to reciprocal contexts; this move towards a relational ontology necessitated a rendering of 'negotiated realities as multi-subjective, power-laden and incongruent'.[355]

Clifford Geertz has extensively theorised the nature of writing in relation to anthropology and ethnography. For Geertz, before one can grasp that anthropological analysis amounts to as a form of knowledge, one must first comprehend what it is to 'do ethnography'. [356] The answer Geertz provides to this is a theory of 'thick description' as an interpretive theory of culture. Geertz proposed a reconsideration of the central methodological issues of anthropology – the mechanics of knowledge relating to the legitimacy of empathy and insight, the verifiability of internal accounts of thoughts and feelings and the ontological status of culture – as problematics of discourse rather than tracing them as difficulties of fieldwork.[357] Also proposing the recovery of the author as a

---

[352] James Clifford, 'Partial Truths', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (London: University of California Press Ltd, 1986), pp. 1-26.

[353] Clifford, p. 2.

[354] Clifford, p. 14.

[355] Clifford, p. 15.

[356] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 5.

[357] Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), p. 9.

critical response to these problematics, Geertz refers here to the distinction drawn by Roland Barthes between the author as the producer of a work, and the writer as the producer of a text; the author 'absorbs the world's whys in a how to write'.[358] This echoes Clifford's theory of the inseparability of the poetic and the political, and we can thus understand the inclusion of subjectivity not only as an epistemological issue, but also as a narratological issue as framed by Geertz. The role of thick description is central to this theorisation of the interpretative and formative nature of knowledge.

In his theory of thick description Geertz articulates culture as context: '… culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is, thickly, described'.[359] Culture must, therefore, be rendered in terms of 'the interpretations to which persons subject their experience'.[360] With respect to this analysis, Geertz constitutes anthropological writings as interpretations or, more specifically, as 'fictions'. Here a fiction does not refer to that which is imagined or invented, but instead invoked the Latin *fictiō*, meaning that which is fashioned or formed; anthropological interpretations are thus conceptualised as accounts that are 'made' rather than false. This distinction is significant is that it engages with the notion that the mode of representation (of an account) and its substantive content are not distinct. While this analysis underpins Geertz's (now widely supported) assertion of ethnography as a kind of writing, it also supports the proposition that ethnographic description facilitates thinking creatively with, not just about, mega-concepts.[361] Highlighting the importance of circumstantiality and the 'complex specificness of findings', thinking with concepts creates space for theory to be written into a specific account, rather than an abstracted theory being stated independently to its means of construction.

---

[358] Geertz, (1998), pp. 18-19.
[359] Geertz, (1973), p. 14.
[360] Geertz, (1973), p. 15.
[361] Geertz (1973), p. 23.

Conclusions

Working through Ann Gray's approach to experience, this chapter has explored the potential of dialogue as a 'way of being' with visitors in order to produce knowledge about how they 'engage' with contemporary art interventions.[362] Experience has been a central focus for researchers and professionals working with the arts and culture sector, as is evident in the theoretical frameworks produced which have attempted to conceptualise the value of museum and art gallery visitors and to produce knowledge around visiting experiences. However, these existing frameworks manifest an ontological separation between experience and how can it be 'known'; frequently framed as a defined state or outcome, 'engagement' or experience within these frameworks is often understood an object of study that can be clearly defined and demonstrated.

Through exploring the potential of a case study approach this chapter has addressed the problematic issue of scaling, a central concern of Arts Council England's agenda of producing a framework within which the value of 'engagement' with arts and culture can be demonstrated. As a way of thinking with the concept of 'engagement', the potential of the case study lies in the possibility of 'mobilising specificities'[363] and interrogating the context which are 'summoned'[364]; in the current study those are the contexts of cultural policy, visitor experience and art historical discourses. It is proposed that in order to explore engagement with contemporary art interventions at the sites of interconnection between these contexts, an ethnographic approach which engages with dialogue and narrative allows for the inclusion of lived experience, both of museum visitors and arts professionals, in order to rendering visible how 'institutional language [of knowledge and engagement]

---

[362] Ann Gray, *Research Practices for Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2002), p. 25.
[363] Annemarie Mol and John Law, 'Complexities: An Introduction', in *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, ed. by Annemarie Mol and John Law (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 1-22.
[364] Strathern, p. 89.

organises ways of knowing in the world in institutionally accountable ways'.[365]

---

[365] Liz McCoy, 'Keeping the Institution in View: Working with Interview Accounts of Everyday Experiences', in *Institutional Ethnography. ed. by Dorothy Smith* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), pp. 109-125, (p. 122).

Chapter Three: 'Engagement' in context: UK cultural policy

Essential to this project of mapping the field of the issues and relationships surrounding knowledge production in relation to contemporary intervention programmes is the acknowledgement that processes of knowledge production are historically contingent. As such, integral to developing an understanding of contemporary intervention programmes is accounting for their institutional and organisation context: framing the museum as a public institution lends itself to theorising the museum as point of intersection of broader discourses of knowledge production, power relations and constructions of truth.[366] Therefore, it is crucial to address the concept of engagement and the development of knowledge about engagement with arts and culture in relation to cultural policy. This chapter analyses approaches to cultural policy as a means by which social and political arrangements produce particular forms of knowledge about contemporary interventions, while concurrently constraining the visibility of others. Cultural policy as an object of study is problematised with respect to its limits and processes in order to map the shifting ideological, political and socio-economic agendas that have produced contemporary forms of evaluation and methodologies employed to 'demonstrate engagement'.

Prior to examining public policy and the instrumental policies connected with cultural indicators, it is useful to take a moment to consider the potential of a critical analysis of contingent forms of knowledge. Ben Golder, in discussions relating to Foucault and human rights, proposed the notion of 'false contingency'. As articulated by Susan Marks, 'false contingency' provides a useful concept through which to approach cultural indicators and the challenges posed by contemporary forms of cultural policy.[367] Defined as 'a failure to identify the structural blockages which, whilst not historically necessary, are

---

[366] IWM group is sponsored by DCMS from which is receives just under half of its annual operating budget, The IWM group report to the DCMS regularly on how agreed targets have been met as per the funding agreement, and as such is embedded in processes of policy at a Governmental level <https//:www.iwm.org.uk/corporate> [Accessed 2 April 2018]

[367] Susan Marks, 'False Contingency', *Current Legal Problems*, 62 (2009), 1-21.

nevertheless neither arbitrary nor easy to disrupt', Golder framed this as a practical problem concerning the limits of rethinking social and political arrangements, in which those limits are 'embedded and iteratively reproduced within those very arrangements themselves'. [368]

This chapter considers the arrangements of contemporary cultural policy and seek to acknowledge the current restrictive formations of knowledge production and their rationalities, before exploring how contemporary artworks intervening in the museum institution might also provide a site of intervention into policy-informed evaluation processes through accounting for more relational forms of experience with those contemporary artworks.

Defining 'Cultural Policy'

The Oxford English Dictionary definition of policy is 'a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or individual'.[369] While the central issue of this definition is action and, therefore, fundamentally instrumental in nature, it is the very nature of this instrumentality that requires critical examination.[370] The instrumental nature of cultural policy in its contemporary form is rooted in a complex history of political and ideological discourses relating to both the concept of culture and to public policy processes, as well as the convergence of the two concepts in various manifestations. In order to account for the problematic of policy with regards to contemporary intervention programmes, it is first necessary to define cultural policy as an object of study. This task in itself is fraught with philosophical and practical tensions.

Definitions of cultural policy have been offered by numerous theorists drawing on a wide range of disciplines and theoretical approaches which at first glance appear uncomplicated. One such definition refers to cultural policy as 'the branch of public policy concerned with the administration of culture'.[371] Proposed by David Bell and Kate Oakley,

---

[368] Ben Golder, 'Foucault's Critical (Yet Ambivalent) Affirmation: Three Figures of Rights', *Social & Legal Studies* 20 (3) (2011), 283-312, (p. 306).

[369] Oxford Dictionary <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/policy> [Accessed 29 May 2017]

[370] Clive Gray, 'Instrumental policies: causes, consequences, museums and galleries', *Cultural Trends*, 17 (4) (2008), 209-222, p. 211

[371] David Bell and Kate Oakley, *Cultural Policy* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 45.

this definition is employed to draw attention to complexity of defining policy in that it is intrinsically connected to questions of who makes policy, at what geographical scales, for what purposes and what effects, thus articulating issues of power and spatial relations within which power is enacted.[372] Bell and Oakley also draw on work by Kevin Mulcahy on definitions and theoretical approaches to cultural policy, who cites Thomas Dye's broadest definition as 'public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do', and Guy Peters' summary as 'stated most simply, public policy is the sum of government activities, whether pursued directly or through agents, as those activities have influence on the lives of citizens'.[373] From these definitions, Mulcahy suggests two notions of public policy that are pertinent to contemporary interventions in museums and heritage: that governmental actions constitute value choices and that that these decisions are 'implemented by the production of goods and services that produce *discernible societal outcomes*' [own emphasis].[374] Mulcahy also notes the conception of cultural policy viewed through the work of Michel Foucault on 'governmentality' as a process by which the state manages individuals. Policies framed within this cultural approach are thus understood as a form of hegemony.[375] Mulcahy's exploration of the ecological complexity of public policy is useful to Bell and Oakley in locating cultural policy in relation to other public domains, such as economic policy, welfare, social policy, foreign policy etc. Drawing attention to these relations reminds us that, regardless of which definition is taken to be the most useful, cultural policy does not exist in isolation from other government activity but is constructed through relational processes.[376]

These proposed definitions of policy are concerned with processes and outcomes, brought into concrete existence through acts of choice and value judgements. Existing as imagined or abstract principles or intentions, it is essential here to note that a policy only

---

[372] David Bell and Kate Oakley, p. 45.
[373] Kevin V. Mulcahy, 'Cultural Policy: Definitions and Theoretical Approaches, *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, 35 (4) (2006), 319-330, (p. 320).
[374] Mulcahy, p. 320.
[375] Mulcahy, p. 320.
[376] Bell and Oakley, p. 46.

becomes concrete through courses and agents of action, and as such can be identified as contingent to relationships and responses between agents within a broader assemblage. For example, looking back to the first definition offered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1969, 'cultural policy is taken to mean a body of operational principles, administrative and budgetary practices and procedures which provide a basis for cultural action by the State'[377]. Taking this statement one element at a time, we can begin to unravel the complex networks across which cultural policy operates. As 'a body of operational principles', policy acts as a tool intended for use. In this respect policy is fully realised only with respect to a process or function, and as such comes into existence through action. Following this is the term 'administrative', which we broadly understand as relating to the running of businesses and organisations. Again we see here a particular action with an organisational intent. The term 'budgetary' connects a financial element to administrative activity, so here we can see the role cultural policy is designed to play in relation to economic practices, and when this is scaled to the level of State policy it can be related to particular forms of fiscal decision making. The next elements in the UNESCO definition are also related to forms of action; practices relating to the actual uses and applications of ideas or methods throughout which a theory or principle might be enacted, and standardised procedures to the particular and performative acts considered in relation to those methods. Thus, according to this 1969 definition, the connected concerns of financial administration and performative actions 'provide a basis for cultural action by the State'. Cultural policy is thus articulated as a directional, hierarchical process, or set of processes, which come to be realised only through being enacted. So, while we can identify the operation principles of what is proposed as 'policy', it also becomes apparent that a serious consideration of what is proposed to be 'cultural action', as a specific set of processes, is lacking in this particular definition.

The scope of this 1969 definition is also very broad, in that it does not specify exactly what type of actions are most appropriate. In a more recent body of research on

---

[377] UNESCO, *Cultural policy: a preliminary study* (Paris: UNESCO, 1969), p. 7.

cultural policies more globally, UNESCO proposed that while they intend to support

countries in prompting cultural diversity through their policy making, this should not imply

that a one global policy should be replicated.[378] Rather, it is important that policies are

introduced 'that reflect the commitment to protect and promote the diversity of culture

expressions within their territories'.[379] It is also evident that while UNESCO promotes wider

access to 'culture' as a primary driver, it is acknowledged this there is no single universally

adequate model to manage this goal through policy. This may be indicative of the unstable

nature of policy and how it is defined and implemented across countries. For example,

Canada's current definition of cultural policy is 'the expression of a government's

willingness to adopt and implement a set of coherent principles, objectives and means to

protect and foster its country's cultural expression. The arts are the very foundation of this

expression'.[380] The language here leans less on principles and modes of action and more

towards statements of intent. The 'expression of a willingness' is not anchored in any

particular form of action, as can be see with UNESCO's initial definition being rooted in

administrative and financial modes of action, though it does retain the operational

sentiments in that this expression of willingness cannot be fully realised without definite

action. Here, however, the arts are explicitly invoked as the foundation of cultural

expression, although the definition of 'cultural expression' itself remains elusive.

The challenge of specifying the boundaries of cultural policy is grounded in the

complexity of culture as a concept. The task is motivated by the need to justify funding

decisions through assessing the effectiveness of particular policies with respect to the

obligations of the publicly subsidised sector.[381] The justifications for funding arts and

culture with public money in the UK context were articulated by Chris Smith, speaking in

---

[378] UNESCO, *Reshaping Cultural Policies: A Decade Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions for Development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2015) p. 19.
[379] UNESCO, p. 19.
[380] Parliament of Canada, Joseph Jackson, René Lemieux, Political and Social Affairs Division, *The Arts and Canada's Cultural Policy* (Parliament of Canada: Ottawa, 1999) <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/933-e.htm#ISSUE-t> [Accessed 3 February 2017]
[381] Clive Gray (2008), p. 211.

his role as Secretary of State for the DCMS in 1999:

> There are, I believe, five principles for state subsidy of the arts in the modern
> world: to ensure excellence; to protect innovations; to assist access for as many
> people as possible both to create and appreciate; to help provide the seedbed
> for the creative economy; and to assist in the regeneration of areas of
> deprivation.[382]

It is clear from these principles that the potential or imagines reach of subsidised activity

stretches far beyond the activities and institutions traditionally associated with the arts, most

noticeably connected to economic activity and positive social transformation. While this

shift from culture defined by the 'high arts' represents a more inclusive and expansive view

of what culture may mean, this is problematic in terms of accountability in relation to the

investment of public money: 'this subsidy is not "something for nothing". We want to see

measurable outcomes for the *investment* which is being made. From now on, there will be

real partnership with obligations and responsibilities' [own emphasis].[383] Through an

interrogation of the UK subsidised sector in the five years prior to these statements made by

the DCMS, Sara Selwood concluded that the 'degree to which the relationship between

policy, funding and the achievement of policy or strategy objectives is discernible is, as yet,

unclear'.[384] Selwood acknowledged that, until 1998/99, museums, galleries and the arts

funding systems had avoided performance management, and their activities had developed

largely in response to issues in the absence of a coherent and overarching policy agenda.

The establishment of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 1997 introduced a shift

towards a new culture of management characterised by reviews, policy and strategy

documents, as well as new terms and conditions in the relationship between DCMS and

sponsored bodies which centred on the 'delivery of appropriate outputs and benefits to the

public' in line with the procedural approach of New Public Management.[385]

My focus here draws on Clive Gray's analysis which articulates the problem in

---

[382] Smith (1998), quoted in Sara Selwood, *The UK Cultural Sector Profile and Policy Issue* (London:
Policy Studies Institution, 2001), p. xlvi.
[383] Smith (1998), quoted in Selwood (2001), p. xlvii.
[384] Selwood, p. xlix.
[385] Selwood, pp. 1-2.

relation to the debate around instrumentality. Gray contextualises the difficulties in clarifying the core features of a policy sector with respect to defining what is internal and external to an institution. For Gray, however, the dispute does not lie in debate between the intrinsic and instrumental characteristic of museums and galleries, but instead 'how instrumentality and intrinsic-ness are made use of by political actors for their own reasons'.[386] In defining the boundaries of cultural policy there are two inter-related problems which arise: firstly, grappling with the complexity of culture as a concept, and secondly the managerial structures and organisational technologies that construct specific forms of evaluation in response to the requirement of 'measurable outcomes'.

Culture, how it is defined, understood, performed and articulated, is geographically and historically contingent. In the context of UK cultural policy the problem is often framed by a distinction between culture as artistic products and practices, and an anthropological concept of culture as a signifying system.[387] O'Brien and Oakley historicise a shift in perspective from culture as referring to 'high' artistic practices towards an anthropological understanding of culture, in the post-War, post-colonial (post-colonial in relation to academic theory) of the late 1940s.[388] In cultural policy this manifests in a debate regarding the degree to which policy should encourage citizens to participate in particular activities, or the extent to which policy takes into account the activities that people currently do in their spare time which fall outside of what is being measured or evaluated. Here, the authors refer to activities such as going clubbing, watching TV or eating out at a restaurant. That is not to say that these options are incompatible, that the choice is either or, but it must be acknowledged that the choices made with regards to funding decision implicitly carry value choices. While the boundaries between high and mass culture are becoming increasingly challenged through strategies aimed at inclusion and diversity, it is the traditional or 'high' cultural forms that continue to receive the largest proportion of funding. While the internal

---

[386] Clive Gray, 'Instrumental policies: causes, consequences, museums and galleries', *Cultural Trends* (17) 4, (2008), 209-222, p. 211.
[387] O'Brien and Oakley, pp. 16-17.
[388] O'Brien and Oakley, pp. 16-17.

logics of each may differ – the arts and higher forms of learning linked to higher social standing and cultural capital, and an encompassing view of culture inclusive of a wider variety of activity and symbolic meaning beyond specific class indicators – a concept of culture as an object of anthropological discourse actually tends to 'subsume and transform' the arts, and so the two, sometimes competing, constructions of culture are inextricably linked.[389] For Jim McGuigan this poses a further challenge, in that an encompassing view of culture 'obscures important and useful distinctions between that which is principally cultural and that which is not first and foremost about meaning and signification'.[390] This definition of culture is also subscribed to by O'Brien and Oakley who describe it as 'the texts and practices whose principle function is to signify, to produce or to be the occasion for the production of meaning'.[391]

Cultural Studies Policy Debate

A study of cultural policy must also attempt to comprehend the nature of 'culture' and how it is being conceptualised with respect to public policy and technologies of governance. UNESCO offers a definition of culture separate to that of cultural policy; '[Culture] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society'.[392] The *Oxford Dictionary* definition of 'culture' stems from the etymology of the word meaning the cultivation of land, or 'tillage', and biological cultures and microorganisms, and as such focuses on culture as an organic process. The dictionary extends this definition to the cultivation of the mind, relating to improvement by education and training, prioritising the process. Specifically in relation to the arts, culture is defined as 'refinement of mind, taste, and manners; artistic and intellectual development. Hence: the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively'; this definition is one which is most familiar when considering the arts and cultural sector, and one which pivots away from

---

[389] Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 6.
[390] McGuigan, p. 6.
[391] Storey (2006), quoted in O'Brien and Oakley, p. 17.
[392] UNESCO, Cultural Diversity <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/cultural-diversity/> [Accessed 4 February 2017]

culture as a process to culture as a *definable and identifiable* body of achievements.

An anthropological notion of culture proposed by Clifford Geertz conceptualised culture as 'not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be indelibly – that is, thickly – described', thus defining culture as inextricably connected to descriptions of it.[393] Concepts of culture proposed by cultural theorist Raymond Williams have often been referred to by contemporary research, and these definitions do still resonate with tensions present within current discussions. Williams proposed three categories which frame understandings of culture: the 'ideal', within which states and processes of human perception are perceived in terms of absolute and universal values; the 'documentary', which addresses the body of intellectual and imaginative work representative of human thought and experience as it has been recorded, often in the processes of criticism and the 'social', with entails a description of particular ways of life which express certain meanings and values.[394] Williams, rather than prescribing to one mode of understanding, instead asserts that it is the relations between all three definitions that should claim attention: 'if we study real relations, in any actual analysis, we reach the point where we see that we are studying a general organisation in a particular example, and in this general organisation there is no element that can abstract and separate from the rest'.[395] He proposes here that, while each concept of culture may have value, none exist autonomously and that it is in the complexity of their interrelations where we can locate the object of analysis, that is, the theory of culture.

Williams draws upon the temporal and spatial nature of our understanding of culture through conceptualising three levels: that of the lived culture of a particular time and place accessible only to those living in it; the recorded culture of a period; and the selective tradition which connects the lived culture and the period culture.[396] It is the first and third of

---

[393] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 14.
[394] Raymond Williams, 'The Analysis of Culture', in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (Second Edition), ed. by John Story (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. 48.
[395] Williams, p. 50.
[396] Williams, p. 54.

these definitions which are useful to my thinking, in that a discursive reading of culture must account for the particular forms through which it is lived and recognised contemporaneously, and in addition take into account the processes of selection and construction through which a cultural tradition is defined. While it would be antithetical to propose that we are able to step entirely outside of our current position in order to fully illuminate these processes, in approaching the three elements of culture (the ideal, documentary and social) through a conscious engagement with our own historic position, it is possible to make visible the ideological groundings upon which contemporary cultural policy has been founded.

When addressing the issue of locating a space for policy within the remit of cultural studies it is useful to refer to the work of two scholars whose theoretical approaches have framed recent debates: Tony Bennett and Jim McGuigan. Bennett has approached the problem through the articulation of a need for both theorisation and practical engagement with relations of power and culture in order to create a context wherein which 'the locus of productively critical work will shift to the interface between pragmatically orientated theoretical tendencies and actually existing policy agendas'.[397] Explicitly working from a Foucauldian perspective, Bennett frames his arguments within discourses of governmentality and the 'veridical twist' referred to by Thomas Osbourne as being Foucault's contribution to the concept of culture: that the culture of self is also a culture of truth.[398] As such, culture is framed within 'a set of resources involved in the governance of populations, [and] operates through the distinctive regimes of truth and forms of expertise that it instantiates'.[399] Osbourne offers this in an analysis of Foucault's position with respect to culture, which invokes culture in relation to 'ethics and techniques directed at subjectivity and the self'.[400] Osbourne connects this subjectivity of the self to Foucault's

---

[397] Tony Bennett, *Culture: A Reformer's Science* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1998), p.191.
[398] Thomas Osbourne, *The Structure of Modern Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 70.
[399] Tony Bennett, *Making Culture, Changing Society* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), p. 9.
[400] Osbourne, p. 69.

work on knowledge: 'we might say that he is interested in the constitution of subjectivity […] from the point of view of the constitution of the subject specifically as a subject of reason or knowledge'.[401] This is utilised in Bennett's work on the concept of culture in relation to Foucault and its role in distributing capacity for certain forms of self-governance, and can be seen in his earlier work on 'The Exhibitionary Complex'.[402]

It is in his seminal work, published in 1988 in *New Formations*, that Bennett first interpreted museums and galleries through the lens of governmentality. Framed as practices of exhibition as opposed to confinement the exhibitionary complex is theorised through the movement of objects from private to public spaces, thus increasing their visibility and becoming vehicles for inscribing specific messages of power through new forms of spectacle.[403] Bennett defines this complex as a voluntary, self-regulating citizenry promoted through the provision of object lessons in power. Within this framing, to know through these objects is to know the self as subjects rather than objects of power, and therefore interiorising this principle and its gaze as a principle of self-surveillance. As such, this display constructs the viewers as part of the citizenry on the side of power as both its complicit subject and beneficiary; complicit through the ability to organise and co-ordinate order to produce a place for people in relation to that power which marks out a subject/object distinction between the self as subject and the other as a 'non-civilised' object of power – wherein progress is constructed as a collective nation achievement with capital as is co-ordinator.[404]

For Bennett, this interpretation of Foucault's works translates into a method of historicising the objects of analysis commonly taken to be universal, understanding the nature of policy driven culture and its relationship to individuals within the broader framing of governmentality as his object of study. As such, Bennett suggests that 'culture is best interpreted as a historically bounded set of truth principles that are implicated in regulating

---

[401] Osbourne, p. 69.
[402] Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *New Formations,* 4, (1988), 73-102
[403] Tony Bennett (1988), 73-102.
[404] Bennett (1988), p. 76-80.

the 'conduct of conduct' in specific ways through their operations as parts of assemblages

that are differentiated from, and ordered in specific relations to, the social and the

economy'.[405] Located in relation to a 'historically specific 'transactional reality' that has its

locus in specific governmental practices and technologies', Bennett therefore constructs a

theoretical approach which frames the concept of culture as one emerging at the same time

as concepts of the state, subjectivities and civil society as well as universalised concepts of

nature, the economy and society. The concept of culture as we recognise it today is thus the

product of the logic of modernity.[406]

For McGuigan, the broader framing of the argument for including policy within the

remit of cultural studies is that cultural policy is connected to a politics of culture in its most

general sense: 'it is about the clash of ideas, institutional struggles and power relations in

the production and circulation of symbolic meanings'.[407] Whilst this position does not

present as altogether dissimilar from Bennett, McGuigan approaches the issue of culture

from the point of view of a critical and communicative rationality, inspired by Jürgen

Habermas, as an alternative to the practical matters of instrumental reason proposed by

Bennett. Bennett invokes Habermas' theory of the formation of the public sphere in relation

to the reorganisation of public space taking place at the time of the emergence of the

modern museum.[408] For Bennett, it is this logic of the late eighteenth century bourgeois

public sphere which underpins the rationale of the modern museum through the discursive

formations of both art and literary critique, as well as the processes of rendering the

formative bourgeois visually present to itself through object narratives of objects display.[409]

McGuigan takes the position that cultural policy must be understood in relation to a crisis of

modernity and rise of 'postmodernity', located in a shift from 'Fordist regime of

accumulation towards an increased flexibility and an attempt to dismantle a welfare state

---

[405] Bennett (2013), p. 9.
[406] Bennett (2013), p. 12.
[407] Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 1.
[408] Bennett, (1995), p. 25.
[409] Bennett (1995), p. 25.

and dispense with nation-state regulation hastened by a globalisation of market forces, connected with rise of managerialism and market reasoning in the public sector'.[410] This evocation of market reason is the basis on which McGuigan addresses what he views to be a conflation of the nation-state and capital in Bennett's approach, and through which he criticises Bennett's use of Foucault's concept of governmentality as obscuring historical distinctions between the state and market, and therefore the distinction between politics and economics. According to McGuigan's critique, governmental activity and capitalism are treated as undifferentiated elements of discursive power and thus Bennett constructs a reductive framing within which to conceptualise cultural policy within the remit of a cultural studies approach.

For McGuigan, this crisis of modernity has resulted in a fragmented public sphere with multiple and diverse manifestations, and therefore no space in which all can participate equally. He contrasts his approach to that of Bennett, who he criticises for limiting his discussion to technical and pragmatic issues of policy and neglecting to account for issues of 'useful' and 'critical' knowledge.[411] Here, a central critique of Bennett's employment of Foucauldian theory is that a pragmatic approach – describing Foucault's 'regimes of truth' as frames defining the truths which agents are prepared to believe in – has consequences for the production of critical knowledge.[412] For McGuigan critical truth thus may as well be untrue for practical purposes when it is disbelieved by the agents with the discursive power to use it.[413] This results in knowledge being politically acceptable in contingent and, therefore, changeable circumstances which, for McGuigan, is a questionable criterion of truthful knowledge.[414] Lisanne Gibson has since raised the critical point in relation to McGuigan's interpretation that 'the questions of cultural policy are too important to be left solely to cultural technicians'. Gibson proposes that his criticism does not take into account

---

[410] McGuigan, p. 2.
[411] McGuigan, p. 14.
[412] McGuigan, p. 18.
[413] McGuigan, p. 18.
[414] McGuigan, p. 18.

the training now received by museum practitioners which combines technical knowledge with historical and theoretical knowledge, which enables than to become professionals aware of the critical contexts within which their working practices are situated.[415] Second to this lack of adequate criticality, McGuigan also criticises Bennett's employment of Foucault's framework of governmentality as an apparatus of modernity as opening up a much larger space than that of the role of culture in contemporary policy.[416] Connected here to McGuigan's definition of culture as pertaining to practices that are first and foremost about signification. He asserts that in order to study cultural policy in cultural studies it is essential to acknowledge the narrow group of practices to which contemporary policy pertains: those of communication, meaningful exchange and pleasure.[417] However, when considering the current context of policy attachment and the shift towards specific forms of instrumentality, the scope of study must necessarily include broader economic and socio-political issues.

Bennett and McGuigan's approaches to cultural policy from the discipline of cultural studies, while diverging on some points, both provide useful insights on how to approach cultural policy as an object of study contingent on specific social and political circumstances. McGuigan's focus on the communicative rationality of culture is particularly relevant when approaching contemporary artworks with respect to their dialogic potential, and when unpacking the 'institutional struggles and power relations in the production and circulation of symbolic meanings' through the relations between cultural policies and the forms of knowledge production they engender.[418] While the political ideological landscape may have somewhat shifted in the twenty years since Bennett's initial articulation of these concepts – where we now see a conflation of aesthetic forms of arts and culture rhetoric being conflated with bureaucratic issues of standardised measurements and forms of accountability – his method of both problematising and historicising is relevant to

---

[415] Lisanne Gibson, 'In Defence of Instrumentality', *Cultural Trends*, 17 (2008), 247-257 p. 253.
[416] Jim McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy* (Open University Press: Berkshire, 2004), p. 15
[417] McGuigan (2004), p. 15
[418] McGuigan (1996), p. 1.

contemporary cultural policy and the need to unpack the technologies of government in relation to culture so as to create spaces for change.

Through analysing Adorno's writings on culture and administration, Bennett draws attention to Adorno's refusal to dissolve the contradictory tensions between the two and highlights the historical limitations of sustaining this polarity. Bennett relates contemporary debates around culture and policy to exchanges between Adorno (Frankfurt School) and Paul Lazarfeld (American tradition of applied social science) wherein Adorno refutes a call to engage with empirical standards of research, stating that 'culture might be precisely that condition that excludes a mentality capable of measuring it'.[419] It is this tension between the nature of an aesthetic approach to arts and culture and the bureaucratic demands of demonstrable and measureable outcomes that is evident in contemporary cultural policy. Bennett summarises Adorno's stance, in that 'culture and administration, however much they might be opposites, are also systematically tangled up with one another in historically specific patterns from which there can be no escape'.[420] It is Adorno's nihilistic conclusion from which Bennett takes his critical point of departure, proposing that policy research can occupy a space within the domain of cultural studies.

Adorno's account of the relations in which culture is at the same time both critical of and dependent upon administrative and bureaucratic rationality results in a vision of cultural policy that would entirely untenable in the current context of democratic access and cultural entitlement.[421] Bennett articulates this cultural policy as being 'based on a self-conscious recognition of the contradictions inherent in applying planning to a field of practices which stand opposed to planning in their innermost substance, and it must develop this awareness into a critical acknowledgement of its own limits'. [422] As such, this policy must therefore rely on the judgement of experts, thus upholding a further contradiction by ignoring the community from which public institutions receives their mandate. However, Bennett

---

[419] Adorno (1973) quoted in Bennett, p. 196.
[420] Bennett, p. 196.
[421] Bennett, pp. 198-199.
[422] Bennett, p. 198.

proposes an alternative perspective whereby culture can be treated as an industry, thus making it possible for questions to be posed of policy which allow for 'competing patterns of expenditure, forms of administrations and support to be debated and assessed in terms of their consequences for different publics and their relations to competing political values'.[423] While Adorno equates this position with a loss of culture's autonomy and therefore grounds for critique, Bennett proposes that instead, it has opened the possibility of taking to task particular policy and administrative arrangements if they fail to meet specified cultural or political objectives. Here, Bennett applauds the necessity of critique which forgoes a higher ground of transcendence from which prior critique has originated, thus constructing a practical and pragmatic role for critical and intellectual activity. Returning here to Golder's concept of a 'false contingency', Bennett's engagement with Adorno's concerns for culture in the context of bureaucratic rationality highlight the historically contingent relations within which culture is entangled. By engaging both critically and pragmatically with those 'distinctive regimes of truth and forms of expertise' through which culture operates, Bennett proposes that proposes that productive interventions can be made.[424]

UK Policy Context

In the UK it is a White Paper that sets out the Government's approach to publicly funded cultural activity. White Papers are defined as 'policy documents produced by the Government that set out their proposals for future legislation… This provides a basis for further consultation and discussion with interested or affected groups and allows final changes to be made before a Bill is formally presented to Parliament.'[425] By this definition, White Paper policy documents are not legislative documents in and of themselves, but are a basis for the proposals upon which action will be based. The first culture related White Paper, *A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps*, was prepared in 1965 by the Arts Minister

---

[423] Bennett, pp. 199-200.
[424] Bennett (2013), p. 9.
[425] Cited on the Parliament website glossary pages <http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/white-paper/> [Accessed 4 February 2017]

Jennie Lee, and the second, *The Culture White Paper*, was presented to Parliament in March 2016 by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Ed Vaizey. Three elements of the 1965 document are still very much central to contemporary UK policy in relation to arts and culture. The first issue, as asserted by Lee, is a need to strengthen the provision for the arts and artistic excellence, particularly outside of London, and that the government had an obligation to support the arts through education, preservation and patronage.[426] It is understood from this claim that in supporting the arts through these processes the government has a financial responsibility with regards to the arts. The paper secondly asserts the role of the arts as central to 'civilized community' that should not be remote from everyday life. This makes concrete the integral position of the arts in relation to society. Thirdly, the role of government as caretaker is evident in this early outline where it is stated that 'in an age of increasing automation bringing more leisure to more people than ever before, both young and old will increasingly need the stimulus and refreshment that the arts can bring… An enlightened Government has a duty to respond to these needs'. This might also be interpreted as the beginnings of the 'deficit model' present in contemporary rhetoric, in that the role of the arts is to fill a void or a lacking that can only be remedied by the particular characteristics of the arts.

This 'deficit model' has been summarised in contemporary research by Dave O'Brien and Kate Oakley in a report on cultural vale and inequality compiled for the Arts and Humanities Research Council.[427] Theorised in relation to cultural consumption, the authors conceptualise the 'deficit model' in relation to omnivorous cultural consumption in that one underpins the other, 'whereby those who do not consume a breadth of cultural forms are positioned as lacking or having a deficit in their consumption'.[428] This relation is connected to social stratification, in that those from less affluent socio-economic groups are usually considered as having a deficit, compared to those who are more affluent who are not

---

[426] Jennie Lee, *A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps* (London: HM Secretary Office, 1965)

[427] Dave O'Brien and Kate Oakley, *Cultural Value and Inequality: A Critical Literature Review* (Swindon: Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2005)

[428] O'Brien and Oakley (2015), p. 9.

constructed as being in need of state intervention.[429] The issue of 'engagement' is also considered in relation to the forms of culture under scrutiny in terms of barrier to access and the focus on removing barriers to state funded cultural activity as the path to reducing this assumed deficit. Here, hierarchical models of culture and cultural engagement are perpetuated and, as suggested by O'Brien and Oakley, 'the idea that not engaging in state funded cultural activity (with that non-engagement revealed by state administered surveys) is a problem, relates to the change in British society that has seen cultural engagement become a marker of a particular kind of normality'.[430] This conclusion is drawn from dissatisfaction with the notion that non-participation contributes to the reproduction of social inequality. Drawing on recent research from cultural studies and sociology, it is suggested that, while British society cannot be solely characterised as such, a new form of cultural consumption, an omnivorous form, has emerged as a new position of 'normal', based on open and anti-hierarchical set of attitudes.[431] It is recognised that engagement with culture and cultural production is a highly contested space, and requires more thorough research addressing the intersections between class and social stratification, cultural capital, and the re-conceptualisation of cultural hierarchies in both public perception and activities of state intervention.

In March 2016, fifty years after Jennie Lee's initial proposal, the UK Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport Ed Vaizey presented a new White Paper to Parliament as 'a vision of culture in action – of culture that is rejuvenating our society and our national and local economies'.[432] The role of culture as a rejuvenating force is significant following the global financial crisis in 2007-08 which resulted in wide-spread cuts to publicly funded services in a period of austerity. In comparison to the 1965 proposal, the current document makes similar claims for the centrality of the arts and culture to society, and in addition makes specific claims in relation to processes of 'place-making' and contributing to 'soft power'.

---

[429] The authors refer here to research by Miles and Sullivan (2013); Chan and Goldthorpe (2007), p. 9.
[430] O'Brien and Oakley (2015), p. 10.
[431] O'Brien and Oakley (2015), p. 10.
[432] DCMS, *The Culture White Paper* (London: DCMS, 2016), p.6

While the intentions stated appear in places to be quite specific – such as introducing

measures to increase participation by those from disadvantaged backgrounds and increasing

diversity across the sector – there is very little detail as to what exactly is intended by

participation and the proposed means through which these goals are to be achieved.

Sweeping claims of culture making 'crucial contributions to the regeneration, health and

wellbeing of our regions, cities, towns and villages' are unsubstantiated, and evidence of

how government activity has enabled these transformations to take place is notably lacking.

While the 'value' of culture is described in relation to intrinsic, social and economic

elements, an economic emphasis is most evident throughout the report with the benefits of

culture often referred to in relation to growth and investments. There is already some

evidence to contradict these substantial claims in Warwick Commission Report published in

2015, which details an 11% fall in arts teachers in schools since 2010, and significant

declines in arts and design technology subjects (up to 23%) in state schools where subjects

have been dropped.[433] In June 2016, following the *Culture White Paper*, *Arts Professional*

published concerning figures showing 46,000 fewer entries for arts GSCE's subjects

compared to the previous year.[434] Both of these issue support the contrary view, that in fact

fewer young people have access to arts and culture as a part of their everyday lives.

There are many problematic elements to this contemporary *Culture White Paper*.

Firstly with the proposed definition of 'culture': 'culture no longer simply means being

familiar with a select list of works of art and architecture, but the accumulated influence of

creativity, the arts, museums, galleries, archives and heritage upon all our lives'.[435] This

definition, while expanding beyond an education in the traditional artistic cannon, remains

within the framework of traditionally recognised institutions of 'culture', and as such

reinforces the traditional view of arts and culture as something ontologically separate and

occupying designated spaces outside of our everyday. This issue becomes more problematic

---

[433] The Warwick Commission, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (Coventry: The University of Warwick: 2015) p. 47.
[434] Liz Hill, <http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/exclusive-arts-schools-plummets-new-figures-show> [Accessed 5 February 2017]
[435] DCMS, p. 13.

when considered in relation to Appendix 1 of *The Culture White Paper*, concerned with

'Measuring the impact' of the proposed policy approaches. The instrumental nature of

evaluation is central, made apparent by the claim that 'attributing the impact to cultural

policy relies on demonstrating the specific impact that culture is making on each area'.[436]

The proposed measures to account for the intended impact are detailed throughout the

Appendices with reference to existing statistics such as the Taking Part survey,

Understanding Society and the Labour Force Survey, using HMRC information on the

increase in exports, existing DCMS indicators and Arts Council data.

Throughout this exploration of definitions of cultural policy, it is apparent that

policy exists within relations of actions and value judgements; the concept of 'engagement'

as emerged in connection to the transformative agency ascribed to arts and cultural within a

broader framing of instrumentality.

Public Value and Instrumental Cultural Policy: contingent relations of 'value'

The public value argument was posed as an alternative to the New Public Management style

of Conservative policies of the 1980s-1990s and managerialism of Labour's 1997-2010

term, the driving critique being the notion that outputs that could be measured (and therefore

prioritised) were not necessarily the outputs that were desired by policy makers.[437] This

criticism is echoed in critiques of instrumental cultural policy and the challenges of

measurement given primacy over critical research into mechanisms of engagement.[438]

---

[436] DCMS, p. 58.

[437] Geoffrey Crossick & Patrycja Kaszynska*, Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project* (Wiltshire: Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2016), pp. 15-18; O'Brien, Dave, 'Cultural value, measurement and policy making', *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14 (1) (2015), 79-94; Janine O'Flynn, 'From New Public Management to Pubic Value: Paradigmatic Change and Managerial Implications', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 66 (2007), 353-366.

[438] John Alford and Janine O'Flynn, 'Making Sense of Public Value: Concepts, Critiques and Emergent Meanings', *International Journal of Public Administration*, 32 (2009), 171-191; Eleonora Belfiore, 'Auditing culture: the subsidised cultural sector in the New Public Management', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 10 (2004), 183- 202; Emma Blomkamp, 'A Critical History of Cultural Indicators', in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement*, ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 11-26; Clive Grey, 'Commodification and Instrumentality in Cultural Policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2 (2007), 203-215; Susan Galloway, 'Theory-based

Coined in the late 1980s by Christopher Hood, the term New Public Management (NPM)

refers to a paradigm shift in forms of public management which draws from practices in the

private sector. Embedded in the languages of economic realism, these practices focus

attention on forms of accountability which emphasise 'organisational designs'[439] , thus

shifting accountability away from being process based to being results-based.[440] For Hood,

writing about NPM in the 1980s, this shift represented a paradigm of accountability that was

the inverse of what came before it: where previous methods had demonstrated a high trust in

organisational models with internal accountability, through conventions of consultation and

word-of-mouth agreements for example, NPM reflected a shifting in trust onto market and

private business models and a low trust in public servants and professionals, wherein their

activities required closer monitoring, costing and evaluation by accounting techniques.[441]

One of the dimensions of change most evident in the cultural sector was a move towards

increasingly explicit and measurable standards of performance for subsidised activity – in

terms of the range, level and content of services to be provided – which manifested in 'pre-

set out-put measures' based on specified targets of performance.[442] Invoking the concept of

'public value', viewed as a means of 'navigating the dichotomies of cultural value by

insisting on both the intrinsic and the instrumental', research produced by academics, think

tanks and arts organisation contributed to an argument against the framing of arts and

culture within purely economic terms.[443] This shift in rhetoric will be explored through a

closer reading of the framing of arts and culture with respect to public value in four major

reports: *Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of government policy*,

(2004) produced by DEMOS; *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience:*

---

evaluation and the social impact of the arts', *Cultural Trends*, 18 (2009), 125-148; Andrew Newman,
'Imagining the social impact of museums and galleries: interrogating cultural policy through an
empirical study', *International Journal of Cultural Policy,* 19 (2013), 120-137.

[439] Peter Aucion (1990), quoted in Christopher Hood, 'The "new public management" in the 1980s:
Variations on a theme', *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 20 (1995), 93-109 (p. 95).

[440] Christopher Hood, 'the "new public management" in the 1980s: Variations on a theme',
Accounting, Organizations and Society, 20 (1995), 93-109.

[441] Hood, p. 95

[442] Hood, p. 97

[443] Crossick and Kaszynska, p. 18.

a literature review, (2014) commissioned by Arts Council England; *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth*, the (2015) Report by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value; *Understanding the value of arts & culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project* (2016). The intention here is to plot a trajectory conceptualising 'engagement' with arts and culture from voices speaking within the sector, as a means of both advocating for arts and culture to the Treasury, alongside recognising their own goals as institutions.[444]

***Capturing Cultural Value: how culture has become a tool of government policy* (2004)**

Complied by John Holden, working with the think tank DEMOS produced the *Capturing Cultural Value* report in 2004 in the context of the public debate around the extent to which instrumental arguments should be used by cultural organisations to justify pubic funding.[445] Responding directly to the questioned posed by Tessa Jowell of 'how, in going beyond targets, can we best capture the value of culture?' Holden proposed that we need a 'language capable of reflecting, recognising and capturing the full range of values expressed through culture', a sentiment echoed in Peter Bazalgette's concern for finding the framework and language with which express the benefits of engagement with the arts.[446] Referring to the setting of formal objectives by organisations such as Arts Council England, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, the report focused on value as an overarching principle for funding and role of evaluation in improving organisational performance rather than being primarily a tool for advocacy. Expressing a concern for prescriptive methodologies used to address the nature of cultural value, the report asserted the need for knowledge that can be acted on rather than the production of data in order to produce better evidence.[447] Speaking directly to the problematic issues of a NPM style of accountability, the report thus criticised a focus on instrumental 'impacts and

---

[444] Crossick and Kaszynska, p. 18.
[445] John Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: how culture has become a tool of government policy* (London: DEMOS, 2004)
[446] Holden, p. 9.
[447] Holden, p. 19.

outcomes', resulting in organisational and systematic distortions which 'subverted cultural aims and practices in the bureaucratisation of measurement'.[448]

Referring to Tessa Jowell's much criticised claim that '[…] in political and public discourse in this country we have avoided the more difficult approach of investigating, questioning and celebrating what culture actually does in and of itself', Holden outlined the challenges faced when attempting to connect what are diverse and often subjective and relative aspects of arts and culture to the broader frame of public service. These challenges included ideas about culture that are temporally and geographically specific, and the widely varying organisational aims across the sector when dealing with vesting different forms of artistic and cultural practices.[449] The solution proposed is thus the development of

> […] a conceptual framework that will both permit a dialogue about culture in convincing language, and also enable us to identify where and how organisations should change their behaviour. It must treat audiences and nonattendees as grown-up beneficiaries of culture, while acknowledging the central importance of cultural practitioners.[450]

Considering the form this might take, given the report' criticism of the methodologies approach, Holden asserted that in a successful framework, 'the measures would be organised and used differently so that systematic processes themselves create value, rather than seeing value as a product'.[451] While this demonstrated a critical stance towards the concept of 'engagement' as a fixed and distinct outcome, Holden did not provide any concrete definition of the meaning or understanding of 'engagement' and how the concept might be factored into a measure which focuses on organisational processes. References to engagement were, however, framed in relation to active choices and value judgements, such as referring to 'engagement with culture [as] a way of "voting with your feet"',[452] as well as avoiding a simplification of the concept

---

[448] Holden, pp. 19-20.
[449] Holden, p. 23.
[450] Holden, p. 26.
[451] Holden, p. 56.
[452] Holden, p. 18.

of cultural engagement in referring to it as 'part of a complex mix of factors affecting people's lives, so again, there is no straightforward cause and effect'.[453]

This report, while lacking in a significant exploration of what 'engagement' with arts and culture might mean, did begin to articulate the problematic nature of 'measuring' cultural value with respect to concepts of intrinsic and instrumental values that would occupy future research.

The Value of Arts and Culture to Society: an evidence review (2014)

In Peter Bazalgette's forward for *The Value of Arts and Culture to Society: an evidence review* he described the 'humanising influence of the arts' as being 'educationally critical and socially essential', and drew explicit attention to the necessity of quantifying the 'inherent value of arts and culture' in order to secure both public and private funding.[454] This approach acknowledges the need to demonstrate the assumed inherent and transformative value of arts and culture through their wider impacts due to the difficulty of measuring 'how arts and culture illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world'. [455] This framing of value as both intrinsic and instrumental is demonstrated throughout this report, where the intrinsic is articulated as intangible therefore unmeasurable, and so the instrumental benefits are used to frame the more tangible consequences or outcomes of intrinsic value. This is further elucidated by Bazalgette in the need to make the 'holistic case' for arts and culture through articulating the ways in which it impacts lives through other related benefits.[456]

This evidence review, based on a selected ninety research studies which meet the required 'gold standard', defines instrumental value in relation to four categories: the economy, health and well-being, society and education.[457] According to the report's

---

[453] Holden, p. 18.

[454] Bazalgette, p. 4, Andrew Mowlah, Vivien Niblett, Jonathon Blackburn and Marie Harris, *The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society: an evidence review*, (Manchester: Arts Council England, March 2014)

[455] Bazalgette, p. 4.

[456] Bazalgette, p. 5.

[457] The 'gold standard' being data that can be both (empirically) proven and replicated. Yvonna S. Lincoln, Susan A. Lynham, and Egon G. Guba, 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited', in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th Edition, ed.

summary, in relation to the economy, businesses in the arts and culture industry generated

and aggregate turnover of £12.4 billion in 2011 and accounted for 42% of all inbound

tourism-related expenditure;[458] in relation to health and well-being the report state that

individuals who had attended a cultural event during the previous 12 months per almost

60% more likely to report good health, and that a higher frequency of engagement with arts

and culture has been associated with higher levels of self-reported well-being.[459] It is also

stated that a number of studies have found that arts and cultural interventions have a positive

impact of dementia, depression and Parkinson's disease;[460] in relation to society, the value of

arts and culture is articulated in the higher rate of employability of those who have studied

arts subjects, and that those who study arts subjects in school are twice as likely to volunteer

than those who don't. The report also claimed that those who volunteer in sports and culture

are more likely to be involved and influential in their local communities;[461] evidence in

relation to education suggested that taking part structured arts activities, as well as drama

and library activities increases cognitive abilities, including improving attainment in maths,

early language acquisition and literacy.[462] The report concluded that the 'importance of

robust credible research which clearly demonstrates the impact arts and culture play on

society is critical in underpinning the holistic case' and that new methodologies must be

developed around capturing and measuring value'.[463]

  While this evidence report clearly articulated the Arts Council's approach in using

impact as a means by which value can be articulated in measurable way appropriate to

---

by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2011), pp. 97-125, (p. 114).

[458] Arts Council (March, 2014), p. 5.

[459] Arts Council (March 2014), p. 7.

[460] Arts Council (March, 2014), p. 5. This correlation is open to a range of interpretation. It may indeed be that engaging with the arts has a beneficial impact on health, or it may be that those who already report better health able more able to attend and participate in arts and cultural events.

[461] Arts Council (March, 2014), p. 6. The statistic here quoted relating to volunteering may be indicative of a wider issue, such as the amount of free time available to particular socio-economic groups and thus the resources and ability, rather than a desire, to contribute to local communities, for example.

[462] Arts Council (March, 2014), p. 6. While it may seem quite an obvious point to make that those with access to a wider range of resource benefit significantly in their learning, the recent narrowing of focus to STEM subjects in schools necessitates the case to make for arts activities to be included in the core of formal educational remits.

[463] Arts Council (March 2014), p. 47.

funding requirements, a critical interrogation of value is not present, nor is an adequate engagement with how individuals experience arts and culture beyond the concept of impact as a measurable outcome. Instead, this report laid out the priorities of the Arts Council as the development of appropriate in response to decreased funding opportunities and the need to advocate for sector through an instrumental language which speaks to current policy concerns.

Later in 2014 Wolf Brown compiled a report on behalf of the Arts Council responding to the issues of intrinsic and instrumental values articulated in the previous evidence review and the need for a more comprehensive account of current research; *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: a literature review* thus explored existing frameworks and methodologies for demonstrating and measuring value, and as such develops the instrumental agenda laid out in the initial evidence review. [464] The review has been described by Abigail Gilmore as '[straddling] the fence of intellectual and instrumental endeavour – as a response to an institutional request for further tools with which to makes claims about value, inform organisational practice and enhance the likelihood of value creation, and as an exercise which distils and synthesises (albeit selected and partial) knowledge from prior research'.[465] Gilmore draws attention here to the role of institutions to deliver 'impactful' exhibitions, events etc. and the difficulty in accounting for their activity; the literature review is intended to be a resource for organisations and a 'more sustained attempt to find clarity' rather than simply a form of research as advocacy.[466] Alan Davey's forward to this literature review also echoes the sentiment previously expressed by Peter Bazalgette regarding the problematic nature of engagement with arts and culture and how it can be articulated: 'It's extraordinarily hard to measure and quantify an idea like value in relation to culture, because the use of the term raises so many questions – not least, "who is asking about value?", and "what does value mean?". You can't simply tick a box

---

[464] John D. Carnwaith and Alan S. Brown, *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: a literature review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014)
[465] Abigail Gilmore, 'Understanding of the value and impacts of cultural experience – a literature review', *Cultural Trends*, 23 (2014), 312-316 (p. 313).
[466] Gilmore, p. 313.

marked profundity.' This extensive review does engage with the problematic nature of value as a concept of measurement and the difficulties encountered by – predominantly – academic researchers and policy makers. What is present, in contrast to many previous studies, is a glossary of terms within which the authors explore the challenges associated with loaded terms such as 'impact', 'benefit' and 'value', and a clear focus on individual impacts and the 'creative capacity' of organisations. The review proposes that a 'holistic' understanding of the three tiers of 'value' – value to individuals, the value represented in cultural organisations and the value to society – may serve as a framework for future research.[467] However, while the concept of 'engagement' is used to defined cultural activity across all three of these scaled tiers, the review lacks a critical interrogation of engagement and focuses on the production of various definitions of 'value' as a measurable outcome; engagement is thus frames implicitly as a 'means to an end', that end being a defined form of 'value' as the desired outcome.

***Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (2015)**

The Warwick Commission report, published in 2015 following a two-year research project undertaken by a research team working out of the University of Warwick, focused on providing advice for the government on how best to support the UK's Cultural and Creative Ecosystem through a series of recommendations for the country's policy-makers.[468] The 'culturally-led and academically-informed' research team undertook evidence production in the form of public debates, collating testimony from sector professionals and researchers and commissioner evidence days exploring particular themes relating to cultural value.[469] The opening quote, provided by Vikki Heywood, introduced the central themes of the final report:

> The key message from this report is that the government and the Cultural and Creative Industries need to take a united and coherent approach that guarantees equal access for everyone to a rich cultural education and the opportunity to live a creative life. There are barriers and inequalities in Britain today that

[467] Carnwaith and Brown, p. 25.
[468] Nigel Thrift, 'Foreword', p. 4 in The Warwick Commission, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (Coventry: The University of Warwick: 2015).
[469] Warwick Commission, p. 6.

prevent this from being a universal human right. This is bad for business and bad for society.[470]

Cultural value is framed here with respect to education, economics and social well-being., located with respect to access to culture as a 'universal right'. This notion of access to culture as a universal right is also evident in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed in Paris in 1948, which states that: 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits'.[471] This indicates that rights to 'access' culture are understood as a democratic right of the human condition, and as such frames the arts and culture beyond that of the economic instrumentality evident in much contemporary policy literature. The Commission's report does, however, perpetuate the language of economic of describing the 'precious returns' of public good and commercial returns with respect to increasing public investment in the 'Ecosystem of the Culture and Creative Industries' in order to contribute to well-being, economic success, national identity and global influence.[472]

With regards to the concept of 'engagement', the report highlights the disparities in cultural consumption across demographics, in that it is the wealthiest 8% who benefit the most from public money spent on the arts.[473] It was also asserted that 'low engagement is more the effect of a mismatch between the public's taste and the publicly funded cultural offer'.[474] In a discussion concerning the concept of 'participation' at the University of Leeds held on 24 February, 2016, Eleonora Belfiore, one of the Warwick Commission members, spoke to this disparity in engagement and the role of the final report as an advocacy tool for those working in the sector to challenge existing funding models which potentially limited access to arts and culture for certain communities and demographics.[475] The report, unlike

---

[470] Vikki Hayward, in The Warwick Commission, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (Coventry: The University of Warwick: 2015), p. 8.
[471] UNESCO, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) < http://www.unesco.org/education/information/50y/nfsunesco/doc/hum-rights.htm> [Accessed 27 October, 2017].
[472] Warwick Commission, p. 9.
[473] Warwick Commission, p. 31.
[474] Warwick Commission, p. 31.
[475] Eleonora Belfiore, 'Whose Participation?', talk given at the University of Leeds, 24 February, 2016.

others produced, sought to respond to the problematics of instrumentalisation by framing cultural value as a worthy investment, thus advocating for arts and culture from concerns embedded with the sector whilst also engaging with the rhetoric of cultural policy through framing recommendations with respect to well-being and economic growth. This adept form of policy attachment, while not necessarily providing any critical interrogation of value or engagement as complex concepts, undertook the task proposed by Bennett by identifying the social and political arrangements defining the field of cultural policy, and making a critically informed pragmatic intervention.

Understanding the value of arts & culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project **(2016)**

The objectives of this project on cultural value were to 'identify components that make up cultural value' and to 'consider and develop the methodologies and the evidence that might be used to evaluate these components of cultural value'.[476] The report addressed the extent to which the debate about inequalities of access are built upon 'a narrow definition of arts and culture, seeing it through hierarchies of taste or public funding and operating with what has been called a "deficit model"'.[477] This problematic notion of the 'deficit model' has informed the motivations of my research project to develop an understanding of the concept of 'engagement' as a process of meaning-making within a particular context, as opposed to engagement being a mechanism with desired transformative outcomes. While no critical exploration of the concept of engagement as a process of meaning-making is offered, the report communicated the wide range of experiences which should be considered as holding 'cultural value', and problematised the limited approach currently taken to defining culture, constrained by methodologies of defining and measuring it. The report underlined the centrality of research methodologies and processes of evidence production in contemporary research and policy, and as such 'questions the hierarchy of evidence that sees experimental methods and randomised controlled trials as the gold standard'.[478] Chapters Two and Three of this thesis will interrogate this hierarchy of evidence and the forms of knowledge it both

---

[476] Crossick and Kaszynska, p. 6.
[477] Crossick and Kaszynska, p. 9.
[478] Crossick and Kaszynska, p. 9.

enable and constrains, and explore the possibilities of rigour within a case study approach suggested by the report as a more appropriate method to engage with the specificities of cultural experience.

Conclusions

Taking Ben Golder's concept of 'false contingency' as a point of departure, this literature review has rendered visible the social and political arrangements which have produced a concept of 'engagement' in cultural policy associated with instrumentality and an economic language of 'return on investment'.[479] This construction of engagement has been historically located within shifting political landscape of the 60 year period between the publishing of the first and second UK *White Papers* on the matter of arts and culture. Through understanding policy as a set of imagined or abstract intentions, it becomes apparent that policy exists as contingent processes effected by historically and political determined value choices. As such, the processes of knowledge production which framed 'engagement' with respect to 'measureable outcomes' aligned to style of New Public Management are recognised as neither arbitrary or easy to disrupt.

While the rhetoric of political discourse has shifted from one of access and social inclusion to an economically driven focus on 'value' create as a result of 'engagement', the assumptions of transformative potential assigned to this form of engagement have endured. Thus, driven by contemporary forms of 'evidence-based' policy making, the impetus has shifted from generating critical knowledge about experience with the arts to a focus on research methodologies and the production and measurement of demonstrable outcomes. The ontological separation of 'arts and culture' effected by this policy model has created an epistemic deficit in critical knowledge about aesthetic experiences and so, while 'engagement' has been centralised as a priority for publicly subsidised activity, there is little critical knowledge around actual processes of meaning-making.

Approaching policy as a cultural object provides useful conceptualisations of

---

[479] Ben Golder, 'Foucault's Critical (Yet Ambivalent) Affirmation: Three Figures of Rights', *Social & Legal Studies* 20 (3) (2011), 283-312, (p. 306).

culture and its relation to processes of knowledge production. McGuigan's focus on the communicative rationality of culture is particularly useful in relation to the 'institutional struggles and power relations in the production and circulation of symbolic meanings'; when approaching the case study artworks in the IWM North, the 'communicative rationality' of employing them as interpretive interventions can be interrogated with respect to the institutional power relations they embody, and symbolic meanings they intend to circulate through processes of dialogue with museum visitors.[480] Through engaging both critically and pragmatically with the 'distinctive regimes of truth and forms of expertise' which construct these dialogues as proposed by Tony Bennett, it is possible to create a space within which alternative 'ways of knowing' can be proposed which challenges the current focus on frameworks and standardised forms of measurement.[481]

---

[480] McGuigan (1996), p. 1.
[481] Bennett (2013), p. 9.

Chapter Four: Ways of knowing 'engagement'

'Asia Triennial Manchester 14: Conflict and Compassion'

On display from September 27 to November 23, the 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14' (ATM14), curated by Alnoor Mitha, focused on the theme of 'Conflict and Compassion'. The festival was in its third iteration in 2014 and this was the first time that the IWM North had taken part as a hosting site. Both existing and newly commissioned works were displayed throughout the Museum as site-specific installations, responding to the IWM North's collection and architecture. The Triennial is an initiative of MIRIAD (Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design), funded by Arts Council England along with additional partners and supporters including Manchester Metropolitan University, the Imperial War Museum North and the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art.[482] Launched in 2008 as a long term arts programme of contemporary arts and crafts by artists from Asia, UK and the Asian diaspora, the ATM14 'aims to challenge perceptions about Asia' and exhibits work by artists who live in, work in or address issues surrounding Asia.[483] The 2014 festival included works by 54 different artists across 14 sites in Manchester, with the IWM North hosting an exhibition along with a range of related events. The works by nine artists were installed throughout the Museum in the air shard, the entrance foyer next to the shop, the WaterWay Gallery and throughout the Main Exhibition Space.

As a recipient of Arts Council funding the 'Asia Triennial Manchester' must respond to the Arts Council's strategy of 'great art and culture for everyone', and is required to evaluate its activity in relation to audience engagement.[484] The ATM14 festival, while speaking to the contemporary approach taken by the Northern branch of the Museum group, is quite distinct from the Museum's *Reactions* programme, in that the works were part of a

---

[482] Alnoor Mitha, Asia Triennial Manchester 14 < http://www.asiatriennialmanchester.com/> [Accessed 29 October 2017]
[483] Alnoor Mitha, *Asia Triennial Manchester 2014 Festival Guide*, p. 3.
[484] Conversation with Gillian Greaves, 5 July 2016.

larger project and not solely curated by the Museum, and under a specific theme of 'Conflict and Compassion' rather than the more broad theme of 'war shapes lives'. The stated intention of the ATM is to contribute to the city of Manchester's ambitions of being 'Culturally Distinctive' and 'Culturally Connected' with an international reputation for arts and culture, and more specifically to make the best of Asian contemporary visual culture available to the public.[485] While the theme of 'Conflict and Compassion' relates to 'war shapes lives', it must be acknowledged that the Museum worked in partnership with the festival on an exhibition that engaged with both the themes of the IWM North and additional concerns outside of the remit of war and conflict with respect to the festival's aim of raising the profile of Asian contemporary visual artists. As this was the first time that the Museum had participated in the festival, the exhibition provided the opportunity to experiment with the possibilities of artworks throughout different spaces:

> It provided a unique opportunity to test site wide interventions programming formula, pushing the concept of commissions to a new level for the organisation. It also offered an opportunity for us to test the Air Shard structure as a site to host commissions.[486]

In the festival introduction video, Professor David Crow, Dean of School of Art, at Manchester Metropolitan University, made the problematic claim that art has an ability to deal with challenging issues by 'translating emotionally charged things into a language that we can all engage with'.[487] Art as a facilitator is a common theme in instrumental cultural policy, but prove challenging for visitors to understand and engage with. Crow's introduction to the artworks raises a number of questions: why do these emotionally charged things be *translated*, what are they being translated into, and how is art able to facilitate this process? Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' is again relevant, in that the assumed ability of art to 'translate' is embedded in the notion that the ability to decipher it is rooted in social and economic contingencies, rather than art being a universal 'language' which every visitor

---

[485] Asia Triennial Manchester 14 Press Release <http://www.asiatriennialmanchester.com> [Accessed 29 Sept 2017]

[486] The Audience Agency, *Asia Triennial Manchester 2014: an evaluation of audience engagement & economic impact* (2015), p. 22.

[487] Asia Triennial Manchester 14 < https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM7sYLHmY1hmuRRa8d2IABg> [Accessed 2 July 2017].

has the skills to decode. Leaning on the persisting assumption that there is a universal element to art and that it has the potential to 'translate' becomes even more problematic here when considering artworks located in discourses of conflict and war: what would it mean to 'translate' experiences of violence and trauma intricately associated with conflict? This is particularly pertinent in the context of an exhibition that centralises discourses of Asian art and experience of conflict that are geographically and culturally specific to Asia. For example, Nalini Malani's work *In Search of Vanished Blood*, brings this issue to the fore in that she employs symbolism relating to both feminist issues and Hindu mythology, and yet, it is notable that neither of these subjects were referred to by any of the visitors who encountered this work in the research case study. Malani's installation was particularly challenging for visitors in my own case study, in comparison with the remarks made and interaction with other works that they encountered in the exhibition as a whole. This begs the question of accessibility, and whether works that are culturally specific to this extent can achieve the aims of both the festival, and the IWM North's aims of 'critical historical conscious' connecting to the more broadly constructed narrative of 'war shapes lives'. Comments from the participating artists did, however, echo this notion of art as a facilitator of engagement, particularly in relation to the potential of dialogue in the Museum. Bashir Makhoul's sculptural installation, *Enter Ghost Exit Ghost, The Genie*, located in the air shard was responsive to the physical architecture of the space. Created as a site specific iteration of a series of similar pieces addressing the temporality of refugee camps in the form of cardboard cities, this work commented on the status of refugees with respect to their constant movement and instability. The temporality of their experience was embedded in nature of material used. Makhoul understood the Museum as posing a challenge and questioned how his work can enter the debate of what the Museum as an institution might be representing.[488]

Aman Mojadidi described his site-specific artwork, *Commodified*, as a critique of

---

[488] Bashir Makhoul <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdsoGKDyGho> [Accessed 12 June 2017].

the processes of commodifying conflict and as an extension of his concerns as an artist.[489] For Mojadidi the work provided an alternative perspective about places and people rather than making a comment which takes a particular side in the debate.[490] He discussed the process of negotiation undertaken with the Museum about the work in order to ensure that it did not cause offence, and how he was impressed by the courage of the Museum to accept the critique posed by his artwork and for them to be self-reflexive and responsive to the aims of the exhibition.[491] Mojadidi thus understood the Museum to be a place which sparks dialogue rather than one which portrays a monologue of ideas. I will, however, question the extent to which a negotiated critique does actually have the capacity to be critical, with respect to the artist's role in relation to the art or museum institution, and to the temporality of the exhibition within the Museum. The dialogue constructed through the ATM14 was, by the nature of the exhibition, a temporary dialogue. The extent which this dialogue can represent a self-reflexive stance taken by the Museum will be thus be considered.

Notions of dialogue and debate are also evident in comments made by Nalini Malani about her work, *In Search of Vanished Blood*, located in Silo 3, which addressed smaller-scale conflicts and the ripple effects that they create.[492] For Malani it was important that the works in the exhibition be in the 'public domain'.[493] The artist highlighted the importance of the academic layering that the festival created by working in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University in order to work across two dimensions, that of the open public in the popular sphere and also the potential to study these works as cultural objects.[494] Alinah Azadeh echoed this notion of the act of bringing work into public spaces as process which invites dialogue. Azadeh's work, in contrast with the others in the exhibition, literally invited visitors to contribute and write their 'debt' in the *Book of Debts*

---

[489] Aman Mojadidi (2014) < https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM7sYLHmY1hmuRRa8d2IABg> [Accessed 12 June 2017].
[490] Aman Mojadidi (2014)
[491] Mojadidi (2014).
[492] Nalini Malani, (2014) < https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM7sYLHmY1hmuRRa8d2IABg> [Accessed 12 June 2017].
[493] Malani,(2014).
[494] Malani (2014).

which was then ceremoniously burned and the debts forgiven as a moment of imaginary resolution, representing a moment of forgetting and simultaneously remembering. [495] She hoped that the work was able to prompt people to ask questions and shift perceptions around the idea of debt and its relationship to conflict, and through this for a questioning to take place or an opening up of dialogue that would not have happened otherwise.[496]

My case study thus responds to the concept of 'audience engagement' and the potential of the artworks to facilitate critical dialogue, and consider how these dialogues correspond to both the intentions of the ATM14 artists and the intentions of the IWM North in hosting the 'Conflict and Compassion' exhibition. I propose that it is essential to engage in concrete dialogue in order understand the processes through which dialogue might occur, and how the dialogue is perceived by museum visitors. The study also explores what is made visible by the artworks in terms of their intervention or site-specificity in relation to the IWM North, and questions the institutional discourses they are both implicitly and explicitly responding to, thinking with Susan Crane's concept of *musealisierung* with respect to my own dialogues with visitors, and whether or not an awareness of the Museum's functions is internalised by visitors to make visible the role of the museum institution in constructing historical memory.[497]

Subsequent to this account of the IWM North's positioning of contemporary art within its strategic programming and the ATM14 exhibition as a recent example of this approach, this chapter will thus concentrate on what it might mean to produce knowledge about visitor engagement with this exhibition. Taking the formal ATM14 evaluation, produced by The Audience Agency, as its point of departure, this chapter interrogates the circumstances that have produced and legitimised the 'ways of knowing' embedded in this evaluation and situate this with respect to broader knowledge practices in cultural policy and sector organisations and institutions. It is argued that in order to develop knowledge around

---

[495] Alinah Azadeh (2014) < https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM7sYLHmY1hmuRRa8d2IABg> [Accessed 12 June 2017].
[496] Alinah Azadeh (2014),
[496] Malani, (2014).
[497] Susan Crane, pp. 303-314.

'engagement' it is necessary to critically interrogate how engagement has been
conceptualised, and to concurrently make visible the socio-political and cultural contexts
which both enable and constrain processes of knowledge production.

The Audience Agency, a charitable not-for-profit consultancy who produce research,
evaluations and resources working with museums, galleries, arts and heritage organisations
as well as the leisure and tourism sector, were commissioned to produce an evaluation of the
ATM14 focusing specifically on audience engagement and economic impact.[498] They self-
identify as a 'mission-led organisation, which exists to give people better access to culture,
for the public good and the vitality of the sector'.[499] The Agency works with organisations
across the arts and culture sector on evaluation and audience development through both
qualitative and quantitative research, as well as leading on the segmentation model
'Audience Spectrum' and the big-data-driven 'Audience Finder'. The development of both
of these tools have been undertaken in partnership with and funded by the Arts Council.[500]
The position of the organisation within the cultural sector is a complex one. As described by
Oliver Mantell, the Audience Agency's Area Director for the North region, the organisation
is 'a charity that operates like a private company that works almost exclusively with the
public sector. So we're all of those completely different cultures'.[501] This position of
hybridity creates the potential for theoretical vulnerability, wherein the Audience Agency is
'borrowing registers' from each organisational culture, and with limited control over their
objectives when operating as a consultancy.[502] As a charitable organisation they exist as not-
for-profit and are funded on a contract basis by clients such as Opera North, the Science
Museum group, the National Trust and English Heritage in a similar fashion to a private
consultancy, while operating within a publicly-funded sector.[503] Challenges in balancing

---

[498] The Audience Agency, *Asia Triennial Manchester 2014: An evaluation of audience engagement and economic impact*, March 2015
[499] The Audience Agency <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/about> [Accessed 15 May 2017]
[500] Funding from the National Lottery is allocated to this project by Arts Council England, as details on The Audience Agency website.
[501] Interview with Oliver Mantell, 2 June 2016.
[502] Interview with Oliver Mantell, 2 June 2016.
[503] The Audience Agency <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/about> [Accessed 4th August 2017]

these positions are made apparent in relation to the theoretical vulnerability of the Agency felt by Mantell, in that they are contracted to provide specified information (although there is a phase of consultation where appropriate methods are negotiated) in response to a determined brief. The organisation is clear, however, about the extent to which their research can provide particular answers. As affirmed by Mantell, the organisation is 'not assuming people don't go to bingo just because they're going to theatre', and that their information gathering is often targeted towards the activities that actively Arts Council England fund and therefore contain an obvious bias. That being said Mantell draws attention to the methodological challenges of visitor and audience research in that often, it can be challenging to establish a point that 'is actually quite obvious', but these obvious points are a landing point from which other research can begin.[504]

The formal evaluation report produced with respect to the ATM14 festival in its entirety focuses on the 'assessment of achievement of the ATM14 marketing and audience engagement objectives and economic impacts'.[505] The role of the report and the data presented is explicitly framed in relation to the festival's goals: engagement is measured in relation to assessing the festival's reach (in relation to both audiences' and participants' prior engagement levels); gaining an understanding of audience engagement framed as a desired outcome and reactions to the programme and its impact on the City-region's cultural standing; quality of audience and participant experiences and the impact on their likelihood to re-attend and/or recommend the festival to others; to assess the economic impact of the ATM14 and to assess the broader outcomes of the delivery model on partners and artists.[506] The breadth of the evaluation thus covers a wide range of issues, including audience and participant experience, professional practice and economic and marketing strategies, and, as such, presents a challenge in both accounting for and communicating these disparate elements.

---

[504] Conversation with Oliver Mantell, 2 June 2016.

[505] The Audience Agency, *Asia Triennial Manchester 2014: An evaluation of audience engagement & economic impact* (March 2014), p. 2.

[506] The Audience Agency, p. 2.

Evaluation material was primarily collected by The Audience Agency using surveys conducted online through the ATM14 and partner websites and social media, in addition to interviewer-led surveys conducted in person across the festival sites. The total audience sample was 378 from 350,000, and the total participant sample was 229 from 1,761.[507] Engagement is not explicitly defined in this report, but is implicitly prescribed through reference to engagement as attendance and participation in outreach activities. Here, the report leans on levels of engagement constructed by the Audience Spectrum segmentation model which categorises people in relation to their socio-demographic and economic status, as well as cultural interests and preferences and 'lifestyle'. Engagement levels are defined comparatively with respects to the types of cultural activities they are most likely to be involved with and the frequency of attendance.[508] The conclusions drawn from this data are underpinned by qualitative data in the form of supporting comments cited throughout from audience members, partner organisations, curators and artists.

The report focused audience reach and engagement along with economic impact, the latter being measured using the West Midlands Cultural Observatory economic impact toolkit.[509] The 'measurement' of reach and engagement was done comparatively against the data obtained from the previous 2008 and 2011 iterations of the festival. An increase in visitor numbers to the different venues across the city was thus equated throughout as a measure of the success of the festival in achieving its aims. However, the rigor of this method begins to unravel when the reach of the festivals' marketing is taken into account: those who were aware of the ATM14 festival prior to attending any of the venues only account for 23% of the total visits, which undermines the conclusion that the evaluation findings 'demonstrate the scale of audience and participant engagement and the festival's

---

[507] The Audience Agency, p. 1.
[508] The Audience Spectrum is described by the Audience Agency as 'the most accurate tool the sector has ever has to help target audiences, and include a wider public'. The underlying big data method is apparent in the methodology used to construct the model through profiling the population at household and postcode levels, and promoting its use for data-tagging, profiling and mapping in order to identify and gain knowledge of existing and potential audiences to target and increase engagement. <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-spectrum> [Accessed 22 May 2017]
[509] This toolkit measures economic impact based on direct expenditure within the economic area

continued success in engaging local communities and attracting visitors to the Manchester city-region'.[510]

The evaluation also drew conclusions through assumptions as to the nature of the value of aspects of the festival's programming, whilst offering no critical consideration of the forms and processes of audience engagement. For example, in relation to participants from 'deprived' communities, it was stated: 'For these people the programme theme, particularly in respect of "providing a voice for the unheard", is likely to be particularly relevant considering the coincidence between deprivation and lack of engagement in wider society'.[511] This statement very closely echoes a claim made by the Arts Council in a report published in 2007 with respect to the Council's research into the concept of public value. Launched in 2006 in response to dialogues around the public value debate more broadly, the Arts Council undertook an inquiry into the public value of arts with respect to the creation of value by arts organisations and individuals on behalf of communities and stakeholders. One of the findings relating to value as perceived by the public in this study was conceptualised as part of a fundamental 'capacity for life' in which arts are a means to help people to 'understand, interpret and adapt to the world around them'.[512] While this conceptualised notion of 'capacity for life' focused primarily on means of communication – on both and interpersonal and broader social scales – it was also employed to articulate a means by which the arts can be agents of social change and:

> […] create a neutral space for political discourse where the voices of the excluded and disenfranchised can be heard. The arts are described by many as inspirational – they stimulate imaginations, encourage people to 'think the unthinkable' and can raise aspirations both for individuals and for humanity.[513]

While there may be some basis for this claim made in the ATM14 evaluation in the experience of participants, unlike the Arts Council report, no material accounting for this is provided aside from this assumption of it being 'likely' of relevance. Therefore, the processes of knowledge production must here be questioned, along with the motives for

---

[510] The Audience Agency, p. 26.
[511] The Audience Agency, p. 9.
[512] Catherine Bunting, *Public Value and the Arts in England* (Arts Council England, 2007), p. 14.
[513] Bunting, p. 14.

producing these claims and conclusions.

A consequence of this focus on specific forms of impact relating to social interventions is a deficit of understanding in relation to the processes of engagement which might contribute to the construction of a 'critical historical consciousness' that aligns with the institutional aims of the IWM North, or indeed the processes or mechanisms relating to any form of meaning-making. Some comments are included in the report which suggest that at least some visitors were making connections between the works on display and broader narrative of war and conflict, such as:

> I thought the artworks were very creative, and thought provoking, linking issues together and providing alternative perspectives.[514]

> They were all stunning. I'm surprised I've never heard of this before. The ingenuity of each piece was quite breath-taking regardless of the format...There ought to be more voices critiquing "empire" & "imperialism"; art can do this, even if it's obliquely.[515]

> I very much enjoyed the exhibition... Confrontational art is sometimes the only way to successfully represent trauma, especially when it is so personal.[516]

While concern for audience experience is clearly evident in the ATM14 evaluation report, it is positioned as instrumental to both its transformative aims and the possibility of increasing attendance to cultural venues in the Greater Manchester area. The necessity to advocate for the arts and culture sector in terms of making positive social and economic interventions is thus prioritised over generating critical knowledge relating to the experiences being facilitated by the artworks on display. This issue is endemic in the sector, perpetuated by the drive to secure future funding and strengthen organisational sustainability and resilience, and as such frames the language used and the possibility of speaking back to those authorities who frame public policy agendas. This is explicitly evident in the Arts Council role as an advocate for arts and culture, as articulated by Gillian Greaves, Arts Council Relationship Manager for Museums across the Yorkshire and Humberside region, who

---

[514] The Audience Agency, p. 18.
[515] The Audience Agency, p. 18.
[516] The Audience Agency, p. 19.

raises issues of future sustainability and resilience of museums and the importance of a

practical and pragmatic approach to proving value and impact.[517] Greaves does assert,

however, that 'it shouldn't just be numerical, it should be about quality as well, which is

why the Arts Council's mantra is 'great art and culture for everyone'.[518]

This issue is expressly evident in the evaluation's centralising of the role of the

festival in cultural place-making. This highlights the nature of evaluation and its role in

advocating for the arts, but does not indicate a critical interrogation of experience in itself at

this level of policy. In relation to audience engagement, the report concludes that the festival

engaged people of all ages from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, including those who

would not typically engage with contemporary visual arts; delivered positive outcomes for

those looking to experience something new and different; presented work of relevance to

audiences and had a positive impact on audiences' perceptions of the cultural offering of the

city-region of Manchester.[519] In addition, a concern for the city-region's cultural standing is

specifically relevant to the recently published *White Paper's* concern with place-making.

The Culture White Paper, (2015), refers to cultural place-making as shaping 'the fortunes of

our regions, cities, towns and villages', drawing on an economic language to frame the

potential development of localities in connection with national institutions, organisations

and agendas to contribute to the global development of the UK's soft power. Place-making

is utilised here as a mechanism bridging the local to the national and the global, indicating

that cultural policy concerns are embedded across multiple scales.[520]

This initial analysis of the formal evaluation produced with respect to the ATM14

indicates a focus on economic impacts more broadly, underpinned by a concern for local,

social interventions with respect to specific communities – those who are less inclined to be

'engaged' with arts and culture. When considering evaluation as a measure or process of

quantifying value, however, there is little demonstration of measurement or rigorous

---

[517] Gill Greaves, Relationship Manager, Arts Council England, 5 July 2016.
[518] Gill Greaves, Relationship Manager, Arts Council England, 5 July 2016.
[519] The Audience Agency, Executive Summary
[520] DCMS, *The Culture White Paper* (London: DCMS, 2016), p. 30.

articulation of this 'value' and how it might be created through experiencing the artworks within the festival, aside from a comparison of the number of attendees to the previous two festivals and their socio-economic background. At no point in the report is there any indication of what artworks visitors to the festival might have encountered. There is a demonstrable lack of critical concern with regards to 'engagement' as both a critical concept and a concrete experience with respect to the artworks and to the broader theme of 'conflict and compassion', with attention focused on comparably measurable outcomes such as attendance numbers and polls relating to scales of perceived 'quality' and opinions of the region. The concluding remarks in the evaluation assert the following with regards to visitor experience:

> It is clear from audiences' feedback that many were inspired and absorbed by the work presented. There is evidence also that the programme has both challenged and enlightened audiences and improved perceptions of the city region. Average audience satisfaction ratings have been consistently high; and, there is strong evidence that there has been audience crossover between partner venues and a continued demand for future editions of ATM.[521]

While these supposed outcomes would be undoubtedly positive in relation to advocating for the festival, there is no clear articulation of how the visitors' perceptions about Asia were challenged through the use of contemporary Asian visual art, or how their experiences with the works in the 'Conflict and Compassion' exhibition in the IWM North might have constructed any form of 'critical historical consciousness'. These issues are particularly pertinent when considering the scaling concept of place-making articulated in *The Culture White Paper*. When we consider the Museum's tag line of 'war shapes lives' and the global connections made by the ATM14 exhibition with respect to this scaling the synergies between the framework of the contemporary programming in the Museum and the concerns of cultural policy at a governmental level are made apparent. Therefore, the exclusion of a rigorous account of these issues in the formal evaluation requires further analysis.

Cultural Indicators as Proxy Measures of Engagement

> Governing a sphere requires that it can be represented, depicted in a way which both grasps its truths and re-presents it in a form in which it can enter the

---

[521] The Audience Agency, p. 26.

> sphere of conscious political calculation. The theories of the social science, of economics, of sociology, of psychology, thus provide a kind of intellectual machinery for government, in the form of procedures for rendering the world thinkable, taming its intractable reality by subjecting it to the disciplined analyses of thought.[522]

The employment by the formal ATM14 evaluation report of 'engagement' as a cultural indictor provides an opportunity to unpack the underpinning epistemologies of contemporary evaluation methodologies and the forms of knowledge it both enables and constrains. Emma Blomkamp, while accepting that cultural indicators are being measured in the context of contemporary policy agendas, offers an account of the development of these indicators that makes visible the issues of value and knowledge that underpin them.[523] For Blomkamp, cultural indicators work by transforming 'intangible phenomena and contested concepts into authoritative and seemingly objective knowledge'. Tracing the genealogy of contemporary cultural indicators as being rooted in the emergence of social statistics in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, Blomkamp emphasises the social and historical contexts that gave rise to cultural indicators as a phenomena which facilitated the activity of quantifying – with a view to monitoring and managing – populations.[524] Drawing on the work of John Frow on cultural studies and cultural values and the assertion that 'meaning, value and function are always the effect of specific (and changing, changeable) social relations and mechanisms of signification', Blomkamp reminds us that indicators are products of very particular values and ideologies, and therefore cannot be considered as neutral forms of knowledge.[525] While social indicators emerged earlier then their cultural counterparts they did not achieve the prominence of economic indicators, which were initially adopted in the form of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of societal growth in the mid twentieth century.[526]

---

[522] Rose and Miller (1992) quoted in Dave O'Brien, 'Cultural value, measurement and policy making', *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14 (2015), 79-94.

[523] Emma Blomkamp, 'A Critical History of Cultural Indicators', in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement*, ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 11-26.

[524] Blomkamp, p. 13.

[525] John Frow (1995) quoted in Blomkamp, p. 16.

[526] Blomkamp. p. 14.

Initially employed as a measure of media content in the, the term 'cultural indicator' as we now recognise it was adopted much later more specifically as a broader measure of the role of culture in human development. The characteristics of what is considered to be an indicator of culture have changed over time, and the varying definitions have made manifest shifting conceptualisations of 'culture'. Referring to Blomkamp's selected examples, talking in 1982 at an international symposium on cultural indicators, Percy Tannenbaum identified three main types as: measures of cultural production and consumption; measures from surveys and value assessments; and media content analysis.[527] Blomkamp also refers to Karl Rosengren's definition, also articulated in the early 1980s, as the following: 'cultural indicators are taken to tap the structure of ideas, beliefs, and values serving to maintain and reproduce society as a whole and its various substructures and subsystems, but also serving change and innovation in society'.[528] While Blomkamp describes Rosengren's definition of a cultural indicator which represents social and symbolic structures as expressions of culture as academically useful, she asserts that it is a set of numerical phenomena that measures economic, social and cultural aspects of arts and culture that provides the contemporary definition of the term 'cultural indicator'.[529] It is this numerical measurement that dominates current arts evaluation and the necessity (as most often determined by funders) to quantify projects, programmes, exhibitions and events.

Guy Redden has addressed this rise in quantifiable measurement in relation to governmentality and public discourse. Redden situates cultural indicators and the politics of their knowledge production in the context of a neoliberal logic wherein cultural activity is seen as an investment with a quantifiable yield, and as such sees indicators as typically evaluative rather than descriptive.[530] Redden relates this development of cultural indicators to the market driven logic of accumulation in which specific forms of economic value are

---

[527] Percy Tannenbaum (1982) quoted in Blomkamp, p. 14.
[528] Karl Rosengren (1984) quoted in Blomkamp, p. 15.
[529] Blomkamp, p. 15.
[530] Guy Redden, 'Culture, Value and Commensuration: The Knowledge Politics of Indicators', in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement*, ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 27-41, (p. 28).

achieved through maximised performance obtaining *demonstrable* yields. This focus on

demonstrable results is evident in Arts Council England's *The value of arts and culture to*

people and society: an evidence review, produced in 2014. In this they reiterated 'the

importance of robust credible research which clearly demonstrates the impact arts and

culture play on society' and how this is 'critical in underpinning the holistic case [for arts

and culture]'.[531] Throughout the review there is a repetition of the extent to which current

research can 'demonstrate' and highlight gaps in the evidence and a need for 'robust'

methodologies to produce the necessary evidence.[532] Redden argues that such indicators

facilitate governance through self-management as organisations work to targets and

frameworks developed in response to these desired and demonstrable yields.

These issues (as raised by Blomkamp and Redden of the cultural specificity of

indicators and their relationship to market driven logics) have been addressed by Dave

O'Brien in relation to the public value debate in policy and arts and humanities approaches

in higher education. Locating issues of measurement in the shifting contexts of government

agendas since the 1980s, O'Brien frames cultural indicators as technologies of governance

and connects these forms of measurement to market solutions, in terms of privatisations, to

social issues that bureaucracies of government could not solve.[533] Rooted in processes of

New Public Management (NPM), O'Brien traces the rhetoric of public value as a reaction to

the audit culture of NPM in which citizens are equated with consumers and forms of

measurement underpinned by economic outputs.

Eleonora Belfiore has written an extensive account of NPM within the arts and

culture sector in which she connects the instrumental emphasis in the sector with the rise of

NPM more broadly.[534] Belfiore argues that the instrumental rationale has been resilient in

---

[531] Arts Council England, The value of *arts and culture to people and society: an evidence review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014), p. 47.
[532] For instance, there is a focus on research that 'demonstrates the considerable physical and psychological benefits' of engaging forms of social care with the arts, on research that 'demonstrates' economic contributions made to tourism by the cultural sector.
[533] O'Brien, p. 84.
[534] Eleonora Belfiore, 'Auditing culture: the subsidised cultural sector in the New Public Management', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 10 (2004), 183- 202.

the cultural sector due to processes of policy attachment articulated by Gray (as referred to in the introductory section of this thesis), echoed in Geir Vesthiem's definition of 'instrumental cultural policy' as the tendency 'to use cultural ventures and cultural investments as a means or instrument to attain goals in other than cultural areas' wherein culture is a means rather than an end.[535] Belfiore locates the shift towards evidence-based policy in the 1980s and the roll-back of public spending that made these mechanisms of attachment and instrumentality all the more urgent for the arts, supporting this proposition with the conclusions of a report published in 2000 by Quality, Efficiency and Standards Team (QUEST) entitled *Modernising the Relationship: A New Approach to Funding Agreements*:

> The [cultural] sector cannot continue to compete with other increasing demands for expenditure on education, health, law, etc. without the essential ammunition that performance measurement offers. The greater the impact, the greater the chance that the role and fundamental potential of the sector will be fully recognised across government and by the public.[536]

Most useful to the argument presented here is the connection Belfiore makes between the notion of the universality and superiority of the market as the ultimate decision-making mechanism via claims to political neutrality, as articulated by John Clarke, and the Arts Council's focus on quality as a measure of organisational and sector performance.[537] The crux of the issue, as argued by Belfiore, is the undermining of the legitimacy of aesthetic traditions, defined by Craig Owens as 'a crisis of cultural authority, specifically of the authority vested in Western European culture and its institutions', by the cultural relativism of postmodern discourses.[538] As such, the emphasis became shifted towards a *quality of delivery* that could be measured in terms of quantifiable yields, demonstrated by qualitative data collection methods. The relationship between these two issues is integral to the central

---

[535] Geir Vesthiem (1994) quoted in Belfiore (2004), p. 184.
[536] QUEST (2000), quoted in Belfiore, (2004), p. 189.
[537] Belfiore, p. 192.
[538] Belfiore, p. 188. A more comprehensive review of aesthetic traditions which have informed the transformative rhetoric of contemporary public policy is provided in: Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, 'Rethinking the social impacts of the arts', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13 (2007), 135-151

focus of this thesis: that of making visible the relationships through which it is possible to articulate knowledge of visitor encounters with artworks. Belfiore's account of NPM goes some way to illustrating why particular forms of institutional knowledge production that might constrain knowledge of embodied forms of experience are privileged within given frameworks of accountability. Redden links these concepts to concrete policy processes laid out in the HM Treasury's Green Book which frames policy appraisals and evaluation with the questions: 'are there better ways to achieve this objective?'; 'are there better uses for these resources?'[539] As such, according to O'Brien, governmental activities are driven in terms of market logics and the encouragement of specific social goals associated with the distribution of economic resources; the common metric underpinning these processes being a monetary one through which social and economic impacts are measured to circumvent the problematic issue of capturing value.

As this chapter is concerned with mapping the ideological groundings of contemporary evaluation practices, it is important to identify the political context within which they are situated, and the two identifiable but not entirely distinct periods in recent political history that have resulted in knowledge formations currently under critique. The first of these was a period during the 1980s associated with 'Thatcherism', which saw processes of deregulation and the privatisation of the public sector under a conservative government. This period has been the subject of many studies in policy research due to the significant changes in governance that were brought about with the decentralisation of many public services under the leadership of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.[540] This period of deregulation and privatisation with respect to the arts has been addressed to greater extent by policy researcher Clive Gray. Drawing on Jim McGuigan's assertion that to an extent neo-liberalism can be understood as a critique of Keynesian economics (which centralised social welfare) Gray draws attention to the shift towards a free-market agenda, within which less state intervention and a reduction of the public sector is driven by a focus on the right of

---

[539] O'Brien, p. 87.
[540] Clive Gray, *The Politics of the Arts in Britain* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000), p. 11.

individuals to make their own choices as opposed to services being chosen and distributed by the state. Gray frames this shift as a move towards the commodification of the arts which involves the replacement of use-value with exchange-value.[541] In relation to the rhetoric of cultural policy manifest in the most recent *Culture White Paper*, this exchange value is visible in the market-driven language of growth and investments. In order to support his theory of commodification Gray makes reference to the then Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) expenditure between the fiscal year of 1979/80 and 1993/94.[542] The data shows a smaller growth rate in spending after 1968/87. Gray proposes that an emphasis on the arts economy that incorporated private interests, such as issues of employment and tax revenue, was prioritised from this period and that at the national level an argument for the economic significance for the arts was becoming evident. Reports such as the ACGB *A Great British Success Story* in 1985 shortly followed by *An Urban Renaissance* in 1988 begin to set the tone for future discussion about the role of arts and culture in the UK.[543]

Within this context Gray also draws attention to a perceived reaction to professional (artistic) dominance and the 'incorporation of arts into a new hegemonic programming supporting images of a national unity that would otherwise be threatened by the entrenchment of social divisions that are generated by the realities of economic change'. He frames this as a shift away from more traditional aesthetic arguments through the justification that they are beneficial to the economy, and therefore they became a tool of economic management for the government. In order for this theory to accept this implies, for Gray, an acceptance of a commodified view of the arts.[544] The economic changes and processes of commodification that Gray is setting up were further enabled by processes of managerialisation through which arts organisations were asked to operate more in accordance with business. In 1990 the then Arts Minister Richard Luce requested that the major funding organisations prepared national funding strategies.[545] The proposed reasoning

---

[541] Gray, pp. 11-34.
[542] Gray, p. 66.
[543] Gray, p. 121.
[544] Gray, p. 203.
[545] Gray, p. 123.

for this strategic approach was that it would lead to a less elite-dominated system that would encourage diversity and therefore improve access to the arts. With the establishment of the Department of National Heritage in 1992, and a short while later, in 1997, the establishment of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the management of the arts continued under an 'arms-length' principle. These departments represented the amalgamation of functions relating to the arts, broadcasting, film, sport, architecture, historic sites, royal parks and tourism.[546] According to Gray's analysis, this 'arms-length' principle came under strain and the autonomy of these organisations was constrained by pressure from central government through both financial and organisational change manifested in managerial practices and systems of accounting for organisational activity.[547]

A current example of the form of self-management referred to by Redden as an outcome of the processes of NPM, is provided by the Arts Council England sponsored and sector-led Quality Metrics project, which aims to address the problematic issue of assessing quality in the arts. Initially led by a group of individuals and organisations in Manchester, including the IWM North, this research project began in 2012 with a pilot to explore the possibilities of a metrics framework to 'capture the quality and reach of arts and cultural productions'.[548] The intentions were as follows; to work with the Manchester Metrics Group to determine what key outcomes best capture the quality and reach of cultural experience and cultural production; to define a clear 'outcome' set for these key dimensions of quality and reach, and to begin to develop, but not agree, metric statements that captured the essence of these outcomes; to talk with Arts Council England assessors about what they thought the key quality outcomes might be, and to assess the implications for the forward development of ACE's artistic assessment processes.[549] The findings of this initial project, which focused on the question of whether arts and cultural practitioners could reach an

---

[546] Department of Culture, Media and Sport <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-national-heritage> [Accessed 13 February 2017].
[547] Gray, p.125.
[548] John Knell, *Manchester Metrics: Final Report of Stage One* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014), p. 2.
[549] Knell, p. 3.

agreed consensus on key outcome measures for quality and reach, indicated that the

approach taken had the potential to build a credible and concise set of core metrics to

measure quality, produce generalizable data from standardised metric statements, offer new

opportunities for public feedback and response on their cultural experiences and reduce the

reporting burden on cultural organisations while enabling them to tell a richer value story

about the work they do.[550] These goals would be achieved through triangulating three modes

of feedback: self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and public responses. While this grounded

approach driven by sector stakeholders is centred on public responses and a desire to

produce richer knowledge about cultural experiences, the emphasis on 'generalizable data

from standardised metric statements' is inherently problematic in that it seeks to transform

embodied and subjective experiences into standardised and measureable entities, thus

transforming them from relational experience embedded in a cultural encounter, to an

abstracted form of knowledge grounded in a priori decisions on what is valuable to

'know'.[551] This approach, while focusing on the notion of quality specifically as opposed to

wider concerns around impact, nevertheless still demonstrates the embeddedness of the

critiques proposed by Belfiore and Bennett: that 'arts' and culture' constitute clearly

identifiable entities – and as such have identifiable elements that are intrinsic to them – and

that these entities have recognisable impacts that can (and should) be evaluated and

described.[552]

There may be an element here of recognising the landscape and responding to it in

the most productive way possible, in a way which accounts for the way organisations are

able to operate within funding and strategic frameworks and which accounts for the

experiences they are aiming to facilitate. This acknowledgement of a need for accountability

coupled with a frustration that the focus tends to be on the numbers rather than the

experience is evident in the dialogue I had with Natalie Walton, a Freelance Arts Project

---

[550] Knell, p. 31.
[551] Knell, p. 25.
[552] Belfiore and Bennett (2010), p. 124.

Manager working specifically with artists and communities. From her perspective as an arts

practitioner working closely with community groups, there is a desire for Arts Councils and

other funders to interrogate impact and accountability in 'a really clever, sensitive way'.[553]

Walton did, however, express more positive accounts of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation who

'want to know how you're changing people's lives, and […] they want to know how

organisation is changing because of their funding.[554] Walton also expressed a frustration that

the other forms of knowledge and material that might be produced as part of an exhibition

or arts project lie outside of the forms of knowledge specified by the Arts Council and so do

not become visible beyond the institution or arts professionals' own learning: 'when you're

looking at legacy, of projects, that's really difficult with the questionnaires that have been

produced by [Arts Council evaluator], because they just touch on it as stats, they don't touch

on it as how this has actually moved someone in their own art practice, or how they think

about the world. None of that is captured.' For Walton, the value and impact of her work is

embedded in those stories which get lost, and the challenge lies in coaxing evaluation

processes to include then as 'that's where the magic happens'.[555] Therefore, there remains a

need to acknowledge what forms of knowledge are constrained or rendered invisible by

cultural indictors when the specified knowledges produced by evaluation are scaled to

policy level.

Arts Council England: 'Evidence' of *Great art and culture for everyone*

When considering cultural indicators as comprising of a set of contingent and constitutive

processes, it is essential to locate these processes in relation to the agents through which

they are enacted and thus take concrete form. In the UK context the majority of this work is

undertaken through the Arts Council bodies. Following the devolution of the Arts Council

of Great Britain in 1994, Arts Council England became responsible for investing grant-in-

aid from central government and Lottery funding across the region, and as such they

allocate funding and develop strategic programming and promote diversity and

---

[553] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.
[554] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.
[555] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.

sustainability across the sector.

Established in 1946 by Royal Charter, the then Arts Council of Great Britain replaced the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) which had previously fallen under the remit of the Ministry of Education. Initially privately sponsored, CEMA was established in 1940, also by Royal Charter and became state sponsored during the period of the Second World War.[556] The purpose of CEMA would now be described as arts outreach, taking works of art out to war-time hostels, mining villages and factories, and maintaining the opportunities of artistic performances. The announcement made by Lord Keynes of the continuation of CEMA as the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1945 defined the position of the organisation as an autonomous body in receipt of grant-in-aid directly from the Treasury, continuing the policy aims of CEMA 'to encourage the best British national arts, everywhere, and to do it as far as possible by supporting others rather than by setting up state-run enterprises'.[557] For Lord Keynes, the autonomy of the Arts Council was a central concern. He stated that 'the arts owe no vow of obedience' and that the organisation was to continue as a 'permanent body, independent in constitution, free from red tape, but financed by the Treasury and ultimately responsible to Parliament, which will have to be satisfied with what we are doing when from time to time it votes us money'.[558] This distinction from central government was also evident in the concern to decentralise and disperse cultural resources across a greater geographical area, supported by a drive to rebuild communities and infrastructure with the inclusion of resources to house arts and culture. So, while the impetus for Arts Council activity was instrumental in nature, it was not integrated into any concrete policy agendas derived at governmental level in the form that is evident in contemporary public policy. This concept has run throughout the history of the Council, as exemplified by the following comment made by the Department of Culture,

---

[556] The Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Arts Council of Great Britain 1st Annual Report 1945* (The Arts Council of Great Britain: London, 1945), p. 3.
[557] Lord Keynes, *The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes 'The Listener'*, July 12, 1945 (Appendix A, 1945 ACE report), pp. 20-23.
[558] Keynes, (p. 20).

Media and Sport (DCMS) in 1999:

> Following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, DCMS will be reaching new funding agreements governing its grants to its sponsored bodies. These will set out clearly what outcomes we expect public investment to deliver and some of these outcomes will relate to social inclusion.[559]

While the primary intention of the Arts Council of Great Britain was the enjoyment of the public, the rhetoric of 'aesthetic reform' was present in the state patronage that was undertaken with the intent of encouraging the 'civilising arts of life', whilst simultaneously having no intention to 'socialise this side of social endeavour'.[560] The apparent contradiction of being a civilising endeavour and not socialising what is fundamentally a social activity is one which can be connected to the autonomous role of art and the artist. While being state sponsored, the role for the arts, as perceived by Lord Keynes, was not one dictated by the state, only that the state should fund activity with the recognition that the nature of the work of the artist is 'individual and free, undisciplined, unregimented, uncontrolled'.[561] The birth of Arts Council England was, therefore, rooted in an arms-length principle with much more autonomy than the organisational form manifests today which, while continuing to be 'an organisation [that] isn't afraid of that kind of risk and innovation and creativity and encourages it', does so with a keen eye on government policy agenda as evidenced in their research and evaluation focus, and more concretely seen in the funding agreements drawn up by the DCMS.[562] The spending review drawn up in 2010 by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, Jeremy Hunt, details a funding cut for the period 2011-2012 to 2014-2015, amounting to a budget cut for grant-in-aid of 29.6%.[563] This climate of fiscal cuts resulted in a reduction of resources available, with the Secretary of State focusing on the role of the Arts Council in increasing the financial resilience of the sector through cultivating private sector and donor investment, whilst also restructuring to

---

[559] Christ Smith (1999), quoted in Belfiore (2004), p. 184.
[560] Keynes, (p. 21).
[561] Keynes, (p. 21).
[562] Conversation with Gillian Greaves, 5 July 2016.
[563] Arts Council England Funding Settlement Letter, DCMS (2010)

ensure a 50% cut in administration spending. In conjunction with this reduction in available

funds, the review also required the production of 'a wider range of evidence of engagement

in the arts and longitudinal measurement to provide missing evidence on benefits of

engagement in the arts', thus centralising the role of evaluation and the framing of

engagement in relation to the pre-supposed benefits it produces.[564] The pressure to produce

specifically framed evaluation material in the context of cuts to funding has become a

challenge to navigate for both the Arts Council and the sector organisations. Natalie Walton,

at the time of our dialogue working on the British Art Show 8, detailed some of the

challenges involved when producing evaluation work within the types of partnership

projects encouraged by the Arts Council and DCMS.[565] She described a layered process of

evaluation beginning with Arts Council returns at, required because the Hayward Gallery

organising the touring exhibition is an NPO (a National Portfolio Organisation), in addition

to the Hayward Gallery's own figures that they collect.[566] As this exhibition toured multiple

venues, there was also a requirement at a local level to collect evaluation material for each

individual venue and the returns to their own city councils.[567] In addition, there was also an

overarching personal evaluation conducted as an individual arts practitioner.[568] For Walton,

the problematic nature of this structured evaluation is that while the statistics produced

about the programme do 'make a case' for the arts, what they fail to do is 'to tell a story'.[569]

For example, a figure of 93% confirming their enjoyment of an experience does have 'an

element of showing impact […] but what it doesn't tell you *is the experience*'.[570] While the

type of material required in sector evaluation across different organisational structures

contributes towards advocating for the value of a project, in this case a touring exhibition

with an accompanying community participation programme, the work involved to produce

that material can be complex and time consuming. As Walton's comment demonstrates, the

---

[564] DCMS (2010), p. 2.
[565] A touring exhibition of contemporary art organisation by Hayward Touring (a part of Hayward Gallery and the Southbank Centre) and sponsored by Arts Council England
[566] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.
[567] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.
[568] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.
[569] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.
[570] Conversation with Natalie Walton, 29 March 2016.

work required to produce 'returns' in response to the priorities of government can often

constrain the knowledge produced to figures and statistics neglect to interrogate the nature

of experience.

The 2010 spending review produced by the DCMS which laid out the terms of

subsidy made available for Arts Council England also clarified the role that the arts was

expected to play within broader international relationships, identifying that the Arts Council

should support international cultural exchange:

> The Foreign Secretary and I are keen to ensure that the UK reinforces its international reputation for artistic excellence, and hope the Arts Council will support international cultural exchange through its funded organisations and other activities. The Government's priorities will be the emerging powers of China, India, Brazil, the Gulf States, Russia and Japan, and we would particularly welcome your support for artistic engagement in those countries, working in partnership with Government, the British Council and UKTI. We hope there will be opportunities to unlock additional funding from the private sector to support those activities.[571]

This sentiment is evident as a core principle in the 2015 *Culture White Paper* in

which cultural activity is concretely linked to global politics and economic strategy:

> The UK is a leader in soft power. We are respected for our strong and stable democracy, our belief in individual liberty, our diversity and our freedom of expression. Our culture celebrates these values […] We will promote a global cultural export programme with UK Trade & Investment to open up new markets, and ensure that the cultural sectors are able to participate in UKTI's High Value Opportunity programme.[572]

The friction that this creates with the arms-length principles underpinning the Arts

Council as it was initially imagined is clearly apparent. It must be acknowledged that

Lord Keynes' conceptualisation of a state-sponsored arts sector was somewhat

utopian in its outlook, assuming that funding would result in democratic access; 'new

work will spring up more abundantly in unexpected quarters and in unforeseen shapes

when there is a universal opportunity for contact with traditional and contemporary

arts in their noblest forms'.[573] The civilising sentiments of the nineteenth century are

---

[571] DCMS (2010), p. 3.
[572] DCMS, *The Culture White Paper* (2015), p. 10.
[573] Keynes, p. 21.

also evident in Lord Keynes' intentions for the organisation in that the purpose of the Arts Council of Great Britain was to 'create an environment to breed a spirit, to cultivate an opinion, to offer a stimulus to such purpose that the artist and the public can each sustain and live on the other in that union which has occasionally existed in the past at the great ages of a communal civilised life'. This notion of the artist and public as sustaining each other, brings into contact spheres of existence that contemporary policy treats as distinct. Instead of framing arts and culture as making social and/or economic interventions into the sphere of public life in a way that presupposes an ontological separation – taking the meaning of an intervention as being 'to come in as something extraneous, in the course of some action, state of things' – an articulation of the relationship as mutually constitutive and reinforcing reframes the concerns as within the ontological relationality expressed by Rodney Harrison as 'collaborative, dialogical and interactive'.[574]

The role of the Arts Council today is that of an arms-length organisation responsible to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and as such it is cited in *The Culture White Paper* as one of the partners central to the task of developing and promoting the contribution of the UK's cultural sectors to the health and well-being of the public.[575] The remit of the Arts Council broadly covers the sector, with its responsibilities being the management and promotion of strategic initiatives across museums, galleries, heritage, libraries, archives and other arts focused organisations. These responsibilities include: funding for Major Partner Museums, National Portfolio Organisations, the allocation of National Lottery funding and Grants for the arts (funding between £1,000 and £100,000 for individuals and organisations); strategic programming such as the Cultural Commissioning Programme, Cultural Education Challenge, Museums and Schools Programme and Strategic Touring fund; producing research and data for the purpose of advocating for arts and culture, and supporting organisations to produce evidence and supporting organisational learning and

---

[574] Harrison (2015), p. 27.
[575] DCMS, *The Culture White Paper*, (2015), p. 9.

practice.[576]

The primary drivers of Arts Council activity were disseminated in the 2013

publication *Great Art and Culture for Everyone: 10-year strategic framework 2010-2020,*

following the Arts Council assuming responsibility for museums, libraries and archives in

2011. Prior to October 2011 the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) was the

governing agency responsible for supporting museums' strategic activity and managing

funding relationships. The MLA's vision and strategic action plan published in 2009 put at

centre-stage learning and public engagement, along with excellence, through the production

of cultural experience.[577] As stated in the first action point in this plan, supporting

excellence had 'shifted the focus of funders away from numerical targets towards

assessment of the quality of experience and towards and appreciation of the cultural and

social benefits of experience'.[578] This statement presents a false dichotomy in some sense, as

while a clear acknowledgement was evident that visitor numbers alone were inadequate, the

emphasis on quantifying still remained. So, while the target of evaluation shifted, an

epistemological approach that prioritised positivist constructions of knowledge and evidence

persisted. In 2011, the MLA's stated vision, published in their *Formal Plan,* prioritised high

quality experiences produced through the promotion of best practices along with innovative,

integrated and sustainable services.[579] These services were explicitly linked to learning and

contributing to local economies and communities: 'Museums, libraries and archives play a

key role in delivering positive outcomes within a locality. They improve the economy,

increase social mobility, make better places through improved quality of life, support

learning, and connect communities together'.[580] The drive for excellence draws on Jennie

Lee's 1965 *White Paper* and the need to strengthen provisions and artistic excellence, and

---

[576] Arts Council England < http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/how-and-where-we-invest-public-money> [Accessed 30 October, 2017].

[577] Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Leading Museums: a vision and strategic action plan for English museums* (Birmingham: Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2009).

[578] Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, p. 9.

[579] Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *MLA Forward Plan 2010/11* (Birmingham: Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2011), p. 4.

[580] Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2011), p. 4.

the development of links with formal learning are underpinned by Lee's agenda for the cultural policy to make concrete relationships between arts and education in order to support an agenda of sustainable arts.

The *Formal Plan* introduced evidencing 'impact and positive social outcomes to encourage significantly increased engagement with the public'. Evaluation was structured around key performance indicators defined against the organisation's priorities of improvement, learning and skills, supporting sustainable communities and economies and effective leadership; the MLA's organisational activity was the focus of evaluation rather than visitor experience. In order to develop these evaluation priorities the MLA also explicitly referred to their 2008-11 funding agreement, and so a measurement of success were directly responsive to government agenda. As previously discussed, it is clear that the concerns of the MLA were amalgamated into the Arts Councils' approach to measuring success, in addition to its relationship with the agenda of central government as is exemplified by a shift in focus aligning with the priorities of New Labour following the 1997 change in government.

The prioritisation of New Labour's rhetoric of social inclusion is apparent in the Arts Council literature dating from the early 2000s. In 1999 a literature review commissioned by PAT10 (one of a number of Policy Action Teams instigated by the government) in order to collate research that addressed the contribution of the arts to New Labour's agenda of social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal, it was concluded that 'it remains a fact that relative to the volume of arts activity taking place in the country's poorest neighbourhoods, the evidence of the contribution it makes to neighbourhood renewal is paltry'.[581] Contrary to this, PAT10 later in the same year asserted the benefits of engagement with the arts to people in disadvantage areas, with Chris Smith (then Secretary of State for Culture) using

---

[581] Quoted in Belfiore (2010), p. 127.

the later publication to make claims for the contribution of the arts to lowering long-term

employment, less crime, better health and better qualifications.[582] While the problematic

nature of this explicit contradiction has been discussed at length elsewhere, it is important

here to consider the role assigned to the Arts Council of focusing on combating social

exclusion and working to produce evidence of these confidently asserted, but unfounded,

benefits.[583]

A report by Helen Jermyn in 2001, *The Arts and Social Exclusion: a review*

prepared for the Arts Council of England, addressed the definition and measurement of

social exclusion as well as the issues and limitation of methods of evaluation.[584] Jermyn

identified methodological challenges inherent in the measurement of impacts which are still

relevant to contemporary research: a lack of clarity in relation to outcomes, conceptual

confusion, a lack of appropriate forms of measurement and an established methodology, the

temporal nature of impact, difficulties in establishing cause and effect, difficulty in

distinguishing the effects of multiple interventions, the sensitivity of evaluation in an ethical

sense and the challenge of determining and defining the benefits in relation to varying

projects and contexts. The report provides a review of what was then a limited range of

literature in relation to evidencing the social impact of the arts and highlights areas,

specifically in relation to measurement, that require further development.

A second 'impact review' followed in 2002. Compiled by Michelle Reeves,

Measuring the economic and social impact of the arts: a review was an accompanying

document that collated existing research focused on methodologies and measurements in

relation to the financial impact made by the arts and cultural industries to the UK.[585] As with

---

[582] Chris Smith, in *Policy Action Team 10: a report to the Social Exclusion Unit* (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2001) pp. 2-3.

[583] Eleonora Belfiore has discussed this particular contradiction in relation to 'bullshit' in cultural policy rhetoric. Belfiore considers a statement made by Chris Smith that he deliberately asserted benefits knowing that the available evidence did not actually support these benefits in a (successful) attempt to increase funding for the arts.

[584] Helen Jermyn, *The Arts and Social Exclusion: a review prepared for the Arts Council of England* (2001) < https://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/arts_social_exclusion_uk.pdf> [Accessed 24 Sept 2017].

[585] Michelle Reeves, *Measuring the economic and social impact of the arts: a review* (London: Arts Council England, 2002)

the previous review, this document also focused on the challenges of appropriate forms of measurement and the robust methodologies required to produce adequate evidence. Reeves situated the focus on economic outcomes in relation to the 1980s trend of urban generation and the emerging recognition of what was to be called Britain's 'cultural industries' in the 1990s. The report concluded that, as a result of economic shifts and regeneration strategies, the impact and value of arts and cultural activity had grown since the 1980s, and that while a wealth of anecdotal evidence was available, there was still a need for more systematic forms of evaluation conducted using robust and standardised methodologies.[586] The challenges raised in relation to these deficits very much concur with those presented by Jermyn in relation to research on social exclusion, and both reports concluded that future research must explicitly engage with these issues in order to build an evidence base that supports the notion of arts and culture as having value beyond its aesthetic intention that is beneficial to society as whole.

The outcome of the proposed research under this agenda was already determined; that arts and culture are beneficial to the society. This predetermined conclusion thus necessitated appropriate processes and method through which the intentions of the Arts Council to justify the public funding of arts and culture could be realised. Research undertaken in this context thus becomes instrumental in advocating for the relevance of the arts and helps justify further public spending while neglecting to address the deficit in knowledge of the processes through which engagement becomes meaningful. The cycle of obtaining funding in order to develop studies which demonstrate impact and value in order to obtain further funding can be understood as a mechanism of survival under the rhetoric of public accountability. The spending of tax payer's money must be seen to produce a return of investment for the public whose money is being spent.

Redden argues that, while metrics can provide useful knowledge, they do so as an element of broader, contestable socio-processes and as such promote specific interventions

---

[586] Reeves, pp. 101-105.

into social life.[587] Using an Actor-Network approach in which power is understood as being both relational and constitutive, Redden proposes an unpacking of the knowledge politics of cultural indicators that is informed by Sally Merry's outline of two significant effects of cultural indicators: that they shape how the world can be known, and the effect of governance through the forms of knowledge that both frame decision making and consolidate or displace power to act on and in the world.[588] Citing cultural economist David Throsby, Redden describes cultural value as having 'no common unit of account' due to culture being multidimensional and relative, and so the task of expressing it in the form of valid quantification becomes a problematic and contestable process.[589] Concepts such as health, education and culture constitute what Redden refers to as intangibles that cannot be observed directly and so must be accounted for using proxies but, as Redden points out, the choice of a proxy does not guarantee its relevance to that which is the core concern. These proxy indicators serve to quantify intangibles and, as proposed by Redden, can be understood as creating particular ordering effects which create certain ways of knowing, and so thus have the effect ordering social relations.[590] This process can be made visible through an analysis of the ATM14 evaluation report which employs attendance as a proxy for engagement.

'Measuring Engagement' in the Asia Triennial Manchester 14

The report produced by The Audience Agency utilised the Audience Spectrum in order to categorise the particular groups of people attending and participating in associated events, according to socio-economic status, age, location and interests – all of which have been used as indicators of characteristics which organisations can use to identify audiences to engage and how to do so and how to market to particular groups.[591] The engagement level of each group is ranked from 1-10, and is based on the frequency of arts visits combined with

---

[587] Redden, p. 28.
[588] Redden, p. 29.
[589] Redden, p. 32.
[590] Redden, p. 32.
[591] The West Midlands Cultural Observatory toolkit was used in order to evaluate the economic impact of the festival, but this measurement is beyond the scope of the current study which focuses explicitly on visitor experience.

museum and gallery visits, not including heritage (no definition of what falls within the remit of 'heritage' is provided). The report does not offer a definition of what is meant by 'engagement' as an experience beyond attendance, but employs it to describe both audiences and participants. Throughout the report 'audience' is used to describe all people who attended the festival in person, and 'participant' refers to people who were involved in workshops, talks, community and online events – including the Compassionate Communities project, ATM Curatorial Labs and ATM Symposium. While the report describes both as 'engaged', the designation of certain people as participants – distinct from audiences – indicates that there is, at least a perceived, difference in their activity. So, while the state of having an engaged experience is not explicitly defined it might also be assumed not to be a fixed state, but to hold different resonances in different situations.

In relation to both audience and participant 'reach', the report provided evidence, based on the Audience Spectrum categories, that the festival attracted people from 'deprived communities' (as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2010) who tend to have lower engagement with contemporary art. In terms of participation, 24% of participants were from the 10% of the most deprived people; from this data the report concluded that 'providing a voice for the unheard' was likely to be particularly relevant in attracting this group of people, and that they would be the people most likely to benefit from the opportunities to learn new skills and express themselves.[592] This conclusion echoes the transformative intentions of the public museums, galleries, parks and libraries of the nineteenth century. In addition to reaching out to those with the lowest levels of engagement with contemporary arts, the festival also attracted a high proportion of those who are categorised as 'highly engaged'; 40% of the audience were from the three most engaged groups of people, compared to the proportion of highly engaged people in the local area identified as 10%, thus indicating that the festival was attracting this particular category of people to the area.[593] Audience experience was gauged according to reactions to the festival

---

[592] The Audience Agency, p. 9.
[593] The Audience Agency, p. 10.

exhibitions, performances and events, and their levels of engagement. Comparing the number of people who intended to attend or had attended another festival event to the same question asked in previous years, it was concluded from the higher rate of positive responses that audience engagement had been preserved over time; 'engaging' in more than one type of event increased from 23% for ATM11 to 43% for ATM14.[594] The surveys also invited people to provide three words to describe their experiences in order to gain insight into perceptions about the festival. The most frequently used word was 'interesting' – shown much larger than others in the word cloud visualisation. From this the conclusion was drawn that the works are of continuing relevance to audiences.[595] While it is clearly apparent that relevance would be a critical point to make in relation to advocacy and drawing more concrete links between art and everyday life, it is interesting that the report does not necessarily equate this to relevance without additional supporting comments or research; the artworks on display might have been described as interesting because they were out of the ordinary and offered an alternative point of view, for example. Expressing an interest does imply some form of stimulation, engagement and/or time, but to conclude that artworks were interesting and therefore relevant is an unsupported leap. What is lacking in the report is an expanded, critical exploration of why it was interesting – was it the artworks themselves? The voice and presence of the artist? The venue offering an alternative to the usual programming? That it was specifically contemporary work by Asian artists? The juxtaposition of contemporary works with other art and historical collections? Given that the notion of dialogue is central to the artists' and curator's approach there is little presence of the interlocutors in the report, or the processes through which dialogue may have been facilitated by the artworks on display.

One of the evaluative measurements of engagement stated in the report was the impact of the festival on audience perceptions of the area and its cultural standing: in relation to a sense of the community of the Greater Manchester area, 34% reported as

---

[594] The Audience Agency, p. 16.
[595] The Audience Agency, p. 17.

feeling more positive; 59% felt more positive about the quality and range of arts and culture in Greater Manchester; in relation to the role of arts in highlighting contemporary issues, 46% responded as feeling more positive. Again, as with the respondents describing their experiences as 'interesting', these reports on perceptions provide very little detail on why and how this increase in positive perception has actually occurred. A more positive perception may be just that. A perception does not necessarily imply any tangible changes taking place, or any lasting effect.

The audiences' overall experience was measured by a rating scale of 1-10 (very poor to excellent) in relation to: exhibition/event information, online information, quality of artwork and overall enjoyment.[596] Both quality of artwork and overall enjoyment were given mean ratings of 7.7. The most popular rating for quality of artworks was a rating of 10, given by over a quarter of respondents, and the most common rating for overall enjoyment was 8. This conversion of a quality of experience into a quantities, and therefore a comparative, measure which does not necessarily capture the experience itself, but instead works to quantify an adjunct is indicative of the pervasiveness of cultural indicators. It illuminates both the centrality of empirical methods pertaining to specific forms of demonstrable, measureable evidence' and the ontological assumptions embedded in empirical approaches of identifiable and measureable outcomes. It has been demonstrated that existing critical literature addressing cultural indicators situates them in specific socio-economic and political contexts, highlighting a focus on what is measureable rather than the issues of culture that policy and funded activity are aiming to address. While public value represents an attempt to shift the dialogue this has not, as O'Brien notes, manifested as a concrete shift in actual policy making away from an economic rationality.[597]

---

[596] The Audience Agency, p. 19.

[597] O'Brien, Dave, 'Cultural value, measurement and policy making', *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14 (1) (2015), 79-94, (p. 80).

Conclusions

The exhibition of 'Conflict and Compassion' is framed by the curator, the participating artist and by the IWM North as site of dialogue within the Museum, curated with the intention of challenging existing views and narratives in relation to both Asian contemporary visual art and Asian experiences of war and conflict. The artworks are intended to intervene both in the Museum's physical architecture and display narratives, as well as intervening in broader discourses of identity, migration, social and political relationships, memory and trauma as framed through the personal experiences or perceptions of individual artists.

This chapter has demonstrated the relationship between the Arts Council England and the impetus for 'robust, credible knowledge' and the limitations of approaching this methodological problem through the use of cultural indicators. The formal evaluation report produced by The Audience Agency makes evident the lack of critical knowledge produced with respect to the exhibition around processes of 'engagement' and how visitors make meaning through their encounters with these material artworks. Instead, the evaluation focuses on cultural indictors measured against pre-determined outcomes relating to policy issues of economic returns on investment and cultural place-making. While the evaluation may provide a form of knowledge that advocates for the ATM14 festival and its success at policy level, it does not engage with the remit of the IWM North's remit of constructing 'critical historical consciousness' in visitors through affective encounters with contemporary artworks. It is apparent that this approach, which prioritises demonstrable, measureable outcomes, does not offer an adequate response to the Arts Council's agenda of 'learning to ask the right questions'.[598]

---

[598] Bazalgette, in Arts Council England, *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: an evidence review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014), p. 5.

Chapter Five: 'Knowing engagement': affective encounters with contemporary interventions

In order to respond to the problematic issue of 'knowing engagement', a necessary task of my case study was to address processes of articulating knowledge constructed through shared encounters of the Asia Triennial Manchester 14 artworks, experienced with Imperial War Museum North visitors. Taking into consideration Arts Council England's agenda of demonstrating the impacts of engagement with arts and culture, I explored the possibility of engaging with the 'complex specificity of findings'[599] through writing as a process of 'communication rather than representation' in order address both the encounters as objects of study and the broader system of knowledge within which my 'knowing engagement' was produced.[600]

Ann Gray's work on 'ways of knowing' in relation to 'ways of being' was particularly useful here in centralising lived experience as a 'site of articulation'.[601] I approached the task of 'knowing' visitor engagement through writing ethnographic accounts in order to develop interpretative articulations of shared dialogues between myself and museum visitors with respect to our experiences of the ATM14 artworks as a means of rendering visible the constitutive and contingent relations of knowledge production existing between these interconnected issues and spaces of activity. This process of developing fictions, or *fictiō*, as a means of communicating ways of 'knowing engagement' allowed me to include my own experiences and observations alongside accounts of visitor experiences and my own observations of their physical and emotional responses to the artworks.[602] Ethnographic writing as a form of interpretive communication – presented as a reconstitution of the question 'how is it true', replacing it with 'is it useful?' – provided the space within which to express a 'fictional' account of experiences with the artworks in ways

---

[599] Geertz (1973), p. 23.
[600] Ellis and Bochner, p. 19.
[601] Gray, p. 25. See Chapter One for an extended discussion of Gray's theorising of this issue.
[602] Geertz, (1973), p. 15.

that also produced knowledge useful to the museum.[603] It provided a tool to work through the problematics evident in using contemporary art in an affective approach to critical historical consciousness, and the space to generate critical knowledge in order to expand the field of knowledge in relation to the concept of 'engagement' in academic discourse.

The most significant challenges I encountered during this writing can be elucidated through the notion of engagement as a travelling concept.[604] In order to speak to the problematic issues of arts evaluation it was important to consider the agenda of Arts Council England and the role of evaluation in advocating for arts and culture in the arena of public policy. In order to provide knowledge for the IWM North, and respond to their own agenda of supporting visitors to engage with their interpretive approach of constructing affective experiences, it was necessary to take into account two elements: first, the IWM North's broader agenda of employing contemporary art as an element of affective interpretation to generate a 'critical historical consciousness' in visitors, and secondly address how the ATM14 specifically might have contributed to achieving the Museum's aims. While the IWM North's then Director confirmed that 'the theme of 'Conflict and Compassion' in the context of war and conflict certainly fits with the role and remit of [this] museum' it was important to acknowledge the aims of the ATM14 and the IWM North, while having points of intersection, were also quite distinct.[605] The core concern of my research project as a whole was to develop a richer understanding of engagement with respect to contemporary art and heritage, and explore how critical knowledge of these artworks might be developed in response to critiques of the methodology approach taken by policy related research.[606] These concurrent concerns were developed in response to the AHRC's framing of academic research as intended to improve understanding, and the purpose of evaluation as being the

---

[603] Ellis and Bochnier, p. 20.
[604] Mieke Bal, 'Working with Concepts', *European Journal of English Studies*, 13 (2009), 13-23.
[605] *Conflict and Compassion: A paradox of different in contemporary Asian art,* ed. by Bashir Makhoul and Alnoor Mitha (Manchester: HOME, 2016), p. 43.
[606] Galloway, p. 126.

assessment of outcomes against specific objectives.[607] Thus, I was acutely aware of the overlapping contexts I was speaking from, and speaking to.

Visitor Engagement with Contemporary Art at IWM North

In order to recruit participants for my study, I approached visitors at two points throughout the Museum: in the foyer close to the Quayside entrance/exit next to Aman Mojadidi's Commodified as they arrived, and at a seating area inside the entrance of the Main Exhibition space in between Gerry Judah's work *The Crusader* and Alinah Azadeh *The Book of Debts, VIII*. This on-the-spot recruitment method recruitment method was challenging, as many of those approached were not inclined to commit to a lengthy interview that had not been anticipated as being part of their visit. It was, however, necessary, as the period of time I was able to arrange access to the Museum was close to the exhibition closing date, and so longer strategies of recruitment were not possible. The intentionally challenging and disorientating nature of the physical space of the Museum also had an impact on recruitment for this study. There are very few areas in the foyer or Museum space where visitors could easily be approached and engaged in conversation as little 'casual' seating is provided: in the foyer area, seating is provided for the computer archive area and the café. There is some seating inside of the Main Exhibition Space, although this seating tended to be used primarily to view the Big Picture Show. The foyer is also a multi-purpose space in which the shop is located, lockers for visitors to use, bathroom facilities and it acts as a thoroughfare between the air shard, two entrances and two stairways leading to the main café, Main Exhibition space and Special Exhibition space. The labyrinthine design of the building creates fragmented interior spaces with lots of sharp corners, and as such there are very few areas in which to naturally approach visitors without abruptly interrupting or intruding in their personal space. Those who did participant, however, demonstrated an investment in the conversation in that seven hours of material was recorded in total from five participants. The average conversation length was

---

[607] AHRC (2016), p. 149.

approximately 1 hour and 26 minutes, during which I walked around the Museum exhibits with participants – sometimes guiding them to artworks if they asked where they were, but often trying to follow their lead around the spaces and move towards the display which interested them. The reason given for visitors declining to take part tending to be the purpose of their visit: very few lone visitors were present, and most often the visit was described as a social one between a couple or small group of people. The first participant who agreed to take part was Thomas, who was visiting the Museum alone. Following Thomas, a couple visiting together, Colin aged 30-40 and Louise aged 20-30, agreed to participate. Curtis was the fourth participant, and following him Rachel, both of whom were visiting the Museum alone. Due to issues of consent and child protection only visitors over the age of 18 were invited to take part. A £5 voucher valid in the Museum cafe was given at the end of the interview to thank the participant for their time. The conversations were recorded using a pocket voice recorder with a small microphone clipped onto the researcher's shirt. Following the visits the conversations were transcribed, and the transcriptions were then sent to the participants. This gave the participants the opportunity to reaffirm consent as well as share any additional thoughts on their visit which may be emerged afterwards.

While I tried to engage in 'natural' conversation some specific questions were used in order to prompt the articulation of experiences specifically related to the exhibition rhetoric in order to retain the research aims. These questions were: What are your initial thoughts/reactions to the work? Does the work help you to think about war and conflict? What aspects of the visit stood out to the most? Encouraging a more relaxed conversation with the participants rather than a structured interview provided the opportunity to ask further questions to clarify and confirm my own understanding of their thoughts and feelings in relation to each work. This questioning not only validated the later analysis of the responses given, but also allowed for themes and ideas around the works to be teased out throughout the conversation. The conversations were digitally recorded and transcribed in order to ensure that comments made by participants were used accurately. This provided the

opportunity to closely examine the language used by visitors in relation to the art works, and to refer back to alongside my own field notes from each conversation to provide a broader context to particular points and comment and act as a reference for my own memory. The transcripts were emailed to the participants upon completion to ensure that they were happy for all of their comments to be included, and if not either withdraw certain comments or withdraw from the study entirely. None of the participants opted to alter the transcripts and none chose to withdraw. Alongside these transcripts I used by own field notes, which I had completed immediately after each conversation whilst still in the Museum. I recorded any moments which I held felt to be significant, for instance, any notable silences, the topics of conversation introduced by the participants, whether or not they chose to read the labelling accompanying the artworks, how I perceived any of their emotional responses to the artworks. I also included my own thoughts and responses, and any feeling or reactions that had been provoked in the own experience of the encounter with the artworks. It has been argued that these field notes provide the 'foundational moments' of ethnographic representation, and as such I used both my own notes supported by the transcripts and recording, which I listened back over, to generate more extensive writings.[608] While I used these recordings and transcripts to develop field notes, and then extended writings, which were as richly descriptive as possible, it is essential to acknowledge that they inevitably selective in what they describe, and therefore in the possible representations they can develop.[609]

The criticism could also be raised here that the presence of any researcher will affect the responses given by a visitor, in that they may censor their opinions, respond to mirror opinions given by the researcher, or attempt to given what they perceive to be the 'desired' response. This will also effect the possible representations of experiences that can be produced. The knowledge that their responses would be relayed to the Museum in some

---

[608] Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, 'Participant Observation Fieldnotes', in *Handbook of Ethnography*, ed. by Paul Atkinson et. al. (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2007), pp. 352-368 (p.352).
[609] Emerson et. al. p. 353.

form could also have the same effect. This does not appear to have had an influence on any of the responses given by the research participants in this instance: all participants did ask about my role in the Museum, or how long I had worked there, and seemed to be put at ease when I explained my role as PhD student rather than a Museum employee. All participants expressed views which were sometimes negative, such as not liking or understanding particular works or seeing their relevance, which indicates that they did not feel a pressure to respond in a particular way. These opinions were expressed quite freely, and were sometimes conflicting with my own views. This may be have been encouraged by my own open and honest views throughout the conversations. I felt that, in order to develop a trust and rapport with each participant so that they felt comfortable discussing their reactions, it was also important for me to be present in the experience as a genuine and open participant. This issue was also raised by Oliver Mantell in relation to surveys conducted by organisations and fed back to the Audience Agency, wherein respondents are 'preposterously and outlandishly positive' thus making them 'useless when you're actually trying to interpret something'.[610] Mantell related these responses not necessarily to a desired response in the immediate context of the survey, but to respondents thinking that the results may go back to funders and so advocate for a project that they might not feel as strongly about, but also would not want it to be taken away by having funding withdrawn do to negative feedback; visitors advocating for a project, whilst initially seeming like a positive action and an indication that they value it, can thus hinder the collection of information which may be useful for the organisation in learning what about them makes them valuable and how improvements can be made to ensure that future projects are successful. While this may have been an issue in my visitor study, I hoped that my explanation of my research questions around 'engagement' to mitigate its effects.

In order for me to undertake this study at the Museum, I agreed to communicate my

---

[610] Conversation with Oliver Mantell, 2 June 2016.

'findings' to the IWM North by producing a report. I tried to be pragmatic in my approach to this report, and structured the knowledge I had gained in relation to the questions which were present in the 2014 report produced in partnership with the RCMG and University of Leicester, *Developing the IWM North*, from which I had initially developed my focus on engagement as an interpretive strategy in the Museum. Those questions were: how effectively did the artworks promote visitor engagement with the Museum's tag line of 'war shapes lives', and how effectively did the artworks generate a 'critical historical consciousness' in visitors? This report summarised key points which I felt emerged from my dialogues and which would be the most useful to the IWM North. First, that visitors understand contemporary artworks by engaging with them as a representation of an individual own artist's experience, demonstrated in comments made by visitors and my observations of them seeking the label texts in order to understand the artists' intent when finding a work challenging to respond to. This initial engagement with the artist through the form of the artwork then provoked some dialogues and comments on broader issues, but the experiences associated with the artworks were most often understood as being the artists' own subjective experience or viewpoint, located within a specific context. Secondly, visitors begin to make meaning in relation to contemporary artworks by looking for familiar visual associations, both in relation to images of war and conflict, and associations from their own personal life experience. Familiarity with some aspect of the artworks seemed to be a point of access, so to speak, and a starting point from which further dialogue could develop. Artworks which utilized culturally specific symbolic representations and referred to more conceptual aspects of experience were much more challenging for visitors and connections with war and conflict more broadly could not be easily made. Thirdly, semi-structured interviews which take place in the Museum space can provide a new depth of information about visitor experience and engagement with the narratives and objects on display to support the more qualitative evaluation material produced by The Audience Agency's formal report. These provided an opportunity for visitors to ask their own questions and introduce themes and opinions which would not have been covered by a fixed interview

format, and a method through which the artworks could become visible in processes of knowing about the exhibition through an observation on physical and emotional responses to artworks as a prompt to further discussion. Lastly, the study demonstrated that focused dialogue in the Museum with another person could provoke an articulation of visitors' thoughts and feelings which may not have otherwise developed. These findings were supported by quotes from each of the research dialogues in order to both support my conclusions, and to introduce visitors' own voices into the evaluation.

From these findings, I suggested that in order to use questions to enable dialogue and exchange to take place in the Museum, there needs to be a more concrete cycle of feedback; the dialogues which took place in this study opened up a space not only for questions to be asked of visitors, but also for the visitor to respond. Active dialogues, distinct from questions written in didactic text panels, can thus become a context for building relationships with visitors, and encourage can an open and honest space for exchange.
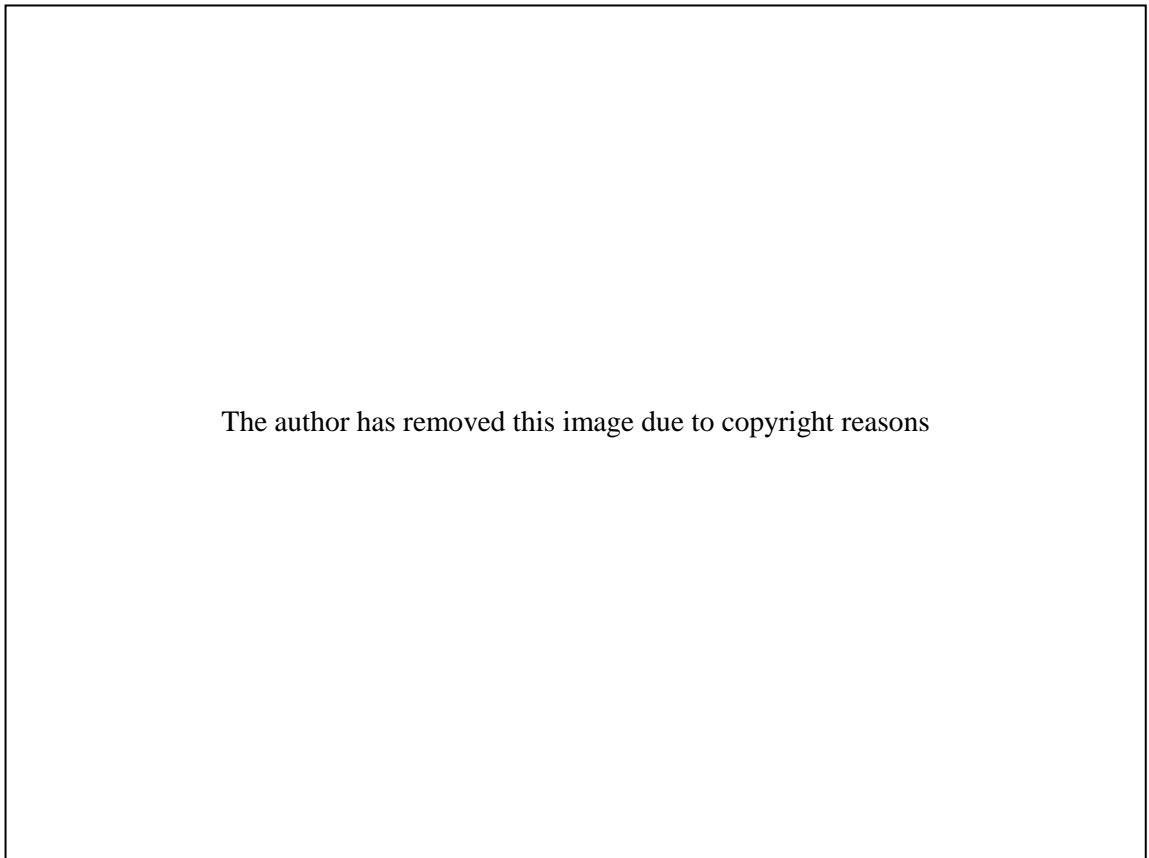
Visitor Responses

Shamsia Hassani, *Selected Works*

The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 2: Shamsia Hassani, *Selected Works*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14', IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

There were varied reactions to this work displayed in the air shard section of the museum, on a wall slightly out of view in a space that was largely dominated by the installation created by Bashir Makhoul. Given its location, with all visitors I spoke to it was necessary to draw their attention to the collage pasted on the wall. Initially, the intention was for Shamsia Hassani to create a new artwork on the wall of the Museum intended to 'transform the exterior of the IWM North', but the artist was denied a visa to leave Afghanistan in order to participate.[611] As a consequence, images of her previous works were presented as a

---

[611] I was informed of this by the exhibition co-ordinator who gave me a brief tour of the exhibition. While the final form of the work was not addressed in the guide or the festival publication, published

collage on a wall set back away from the pathway through the shard from the exterior

leading through to the inside of the main building, opening out into the Museum's shop.

Given its placement, this work was very easily missed, and visitors exiting from the shop

were likely to bypass it completely. Alnoor Mitha, curator of the ATM14 exhibition of

'Conflict and Compassion', comments on Hassani's artistic practice as bringing 'a new

visual discourse to the city [of Kabul]' focuses on her desire to bring back a voice for

Afghani women through transforming the city's old and derelict architecture. [612] Hassani's

own articulation of her artistic concerns focuses on the transformative intentions in relation

to women in Afghanistan and the potential for recovery and positive changes following

conflict:

> Usually I am painting women in burqas in modernism shape on walls, I want to
> talk about their life, to find some way to remove them from darkness, to open
> their mind, to bring some positive changes, trying to remove all bad memories
> of war from everybody's mind with veering sad city's walls with happy
> colours.[613]

In terms of visual style, the graffiti works depicted prompted visitors to speculate on what

the images might represent in the context of a female graffiti artist working in a conflict

zone. Thomas commented on how he imagined it to be 'very dangerous and brave, to be a

female graffiti artist in Afghanistan'. [614] The form of the artwork made it challenging for

Rachel to initially make any connections between it and notions of war and conflict, as it to

her it seemed 'half-hearted and unfinished'.[615] When I provided more information as to the

reasons why it was presented in this way, Rachel responded that 'it suddenly becomes more

meaningful' and that she would have liked for more of the artist's personal story to have

---

in 2016, I assumed the information provided to me at the time by the Museum to be correct, and this informed some of my conversations with visitors who were curious as to the final format of images of her work being used rather than a display of the actual work she might have produced. *Asia Triennial Manchester 14: Festival Guide* (Manchester: MIRIAD, 2014) p. 7.

[612] Alnoor Mitha, 'Asia Triennial Manchester: Conflict and Compassion or Fear and Love in Contemporary Asian Art', in *Conflict and Compassion: A paradox of different in contemporary Asian art,* ed. by Bashir Makhoul and Alnoor Mitha (Manchester: HOME, 2016), pp.11-49 (p. 26).

[613] Shamsia Hassani speaking in 2013, quoted in Mitha p. 26.

[614] Conversation with Thomas, 3 November 2014.

[615] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.

been included.[616] The content of the graffiti works prompted the most dialogue with both Rachel and Louise commenting on how beautiful and haunting the works were, remarks which drew attention to the contradictions within the artworks. Rachel described them as 'actually quite beautiful and quite eerie at the same time'[617] and Louise remarked that 'the guitar seems a bit more upbeat, whereas if you look at even that one where she's sat in the basement that's really eerie, especially as it's got the bullet holes'.[618] Rachel's responses to Hassani's artistic practice as one which reclaims spaces very much echoed the intention of the artist. As did Louise's remark about the works 'trying to make something pretty in a place that isn't'.[619] Colin did not seem to feel that this work resonated with his expectation of what an artwork about war and conflict might look like, commenting that 'this is obviously an artist working in a war torn country, but most of the world is really. This isn't military or war inspired art is it?'[620]

While the majority of the visitor comments and questions were focused on Shamsia Hassani and her role as a female artist in a conflict zone, the nature of the work and its site-specificity (in terms of the original works being in Afghanistan) drew out connections with both the contemporary and personal nature of the artist's own experience of war. Louise in particular, made associations with how the works were very much embedded in the present and so 'more relevant to where we are now, but it also shows the timescale. This museum is going to go through time isn't it and this is the present day'.[621] Louise made comments which demonstrated an attempt to understand Hassani's position, particularly with respect to some of the humour in one of the graffiti pieces', which has the words 'you missed' above bullet holes left in the wall of a building: 'I suppose people in those countries have to be like that, they have to laugh and mock, because if they don't they'd probably realise what true

---

[616] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[617] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[618] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.
[619] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.
[620] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[621] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.

devastation they are in'.[622]

Throughout my dialogues with visitors I found myself 'explaining' this work. During the dialogues there were moments that stalled, and I felt that without my input about the artist and prompting through sharing my own thoughts and responses, the examples of Hassani's graffiti art not elicited many comments. I found this work quite difficult to engage with as the format felt to me very impersonal and the quality seemed lacking in the way that they were printed and stuck to the wall – not all were evenly attached to the wall, reminding me of advertising posters in the street put up in a hurry – and I felt that this did not respect the artistic quality of the original works, nor did it create any sort of visually striking aesthetic. My own response resonated with Rachel's, in that I felt that Hassani's own situation – that of being a female artist not granted permission to travel – was the core of this work, and that this interpretation was very much lacking in how her work was communicated. Louise also remarked that she did not identify with the piece, saying: 'I guess we're so lucky that we're not in a blitzed area here that you can't really grasp how it must be to be somewhere like that and then try and pout your stamp on it, as a woman as well'.[623] The majority of the dialogues around this collaged display were thus focused on the artist and the graffiti format used which was easily recognisable, with some comments made by women visitors indicating an empathy for Hassani's personal position as a woman artist and how it contrasted with their own experiences. Louise and Rachel were certainly willing to dedicate more time to this artwork, with Colin and Thomas moving away from it after only a few comments.

---

[622] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.
[623] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.

Zarina Bhimji, *Here was Uganda, as if in the vastness of India*

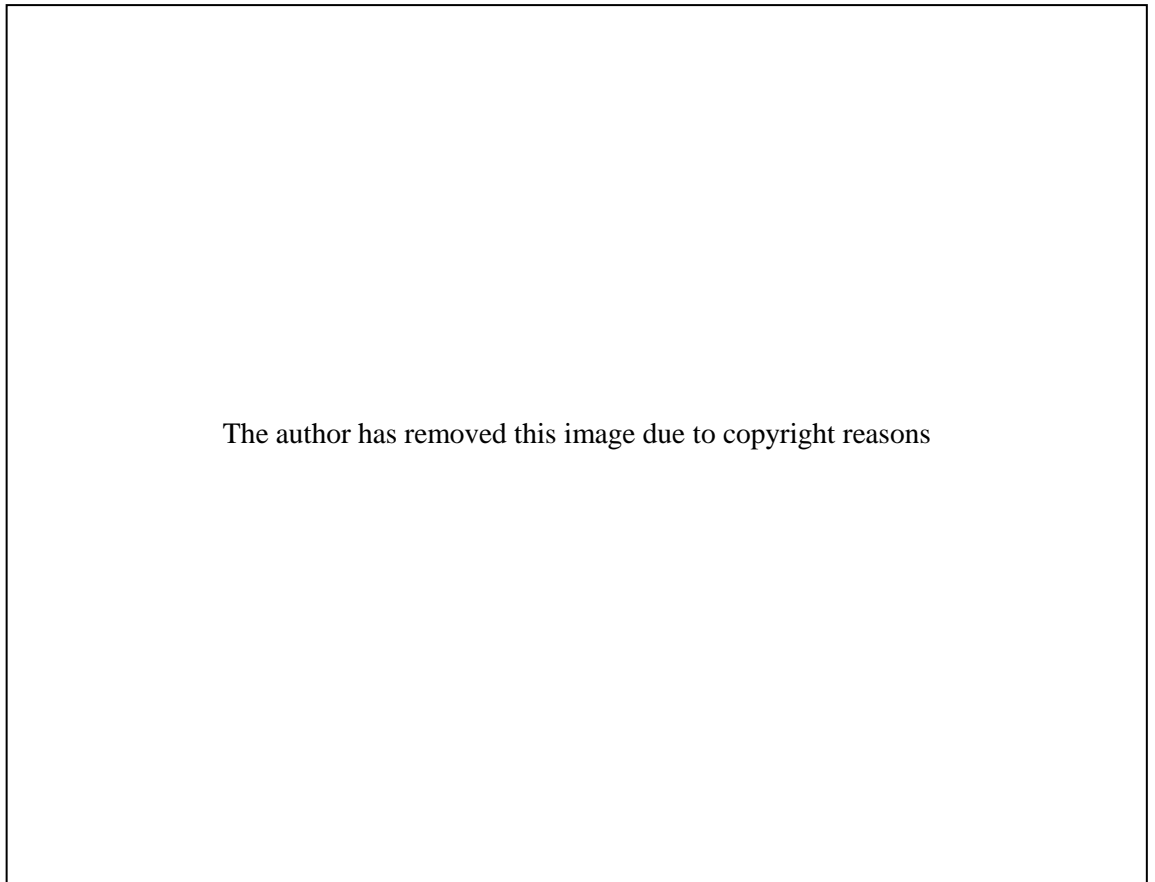The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 3: Zarina Bhimji*, Here was Uganda, as if in the vastness of India*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14, IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

Zarina Bhimji's photograph displayed in a wall in the Main Exhibition space, close to Alinah Azadeh's *Book of Debts*, was one of the most challenging artworks in the exhibition, both in terms of visitors being able to construct or articulate any connections with war and conflict and with respect to my own difficulties in making these same connections given the extreme cultural differences between my own position and that of the artist. Mitha chose to include a work by Bhimji due to his own relationship to her work and his sharing of the same cultural history as the artist: both artists are from families who lived in Uganda at the time of Idi Amin's expulsion of Asian communities from the country in 1972.[624] Bhimji's work addresses themes of loss and grief, rooted in this specific traumatic experience.[625]

---

[624] Mitha, p. 35.
[625] Mitha, p. 35.

Only two visitors were interested in engaging in dialogue about this artwork They made visual comparison with familiar buildings but struggled to make any direct connections with conflict or the artist's subjective position, using hesitant language and long pauses, and they moved on from the work quite quickly. I tried to follow their lead and if they moved away from a work I did not attempt to continue the dialogue (as with all of the works encountered). Thomas commented that is was 'quite a nice building', which resonated with his interest – evident throughout the whole exhibition visit – in architectural spaces. He compared the front of the building to a 'hobbit house', making a visual connection with familiar Lord of the Rings imagery. He made no effort to read the accompanying label text as he had with other works, and moved on from this work into the centre of the museum space quite quickly. Rachel also made visual associations, but with the port holes on the side of a ship. She also compared Bhimji's photograph to images of poverty that she was familiar with, although she had not experienced poverty as a result of war or conflict herself. While the image of the particular building did not resonate with me, as I had no knowledge of African or Indian architecture to compare it to, I did find the photograph strikingly beautiful but lacking in the emotional response I would usually feel which looking at photojournalism of landscapes or cities affected by war. My encounter with this work felt quite alienating, in direct contrast to that of the curator whose own life experiences resonated on a more intimate cultural and emotional level to that of the artist's.[626]

---

[626] Upon returning to the case study material, I found that this work by Zarina Bhimji resonated much more than it had done during the time I spent in the exhibition, both alone and in conversation with visitors. Expand with notes on artist – affect.
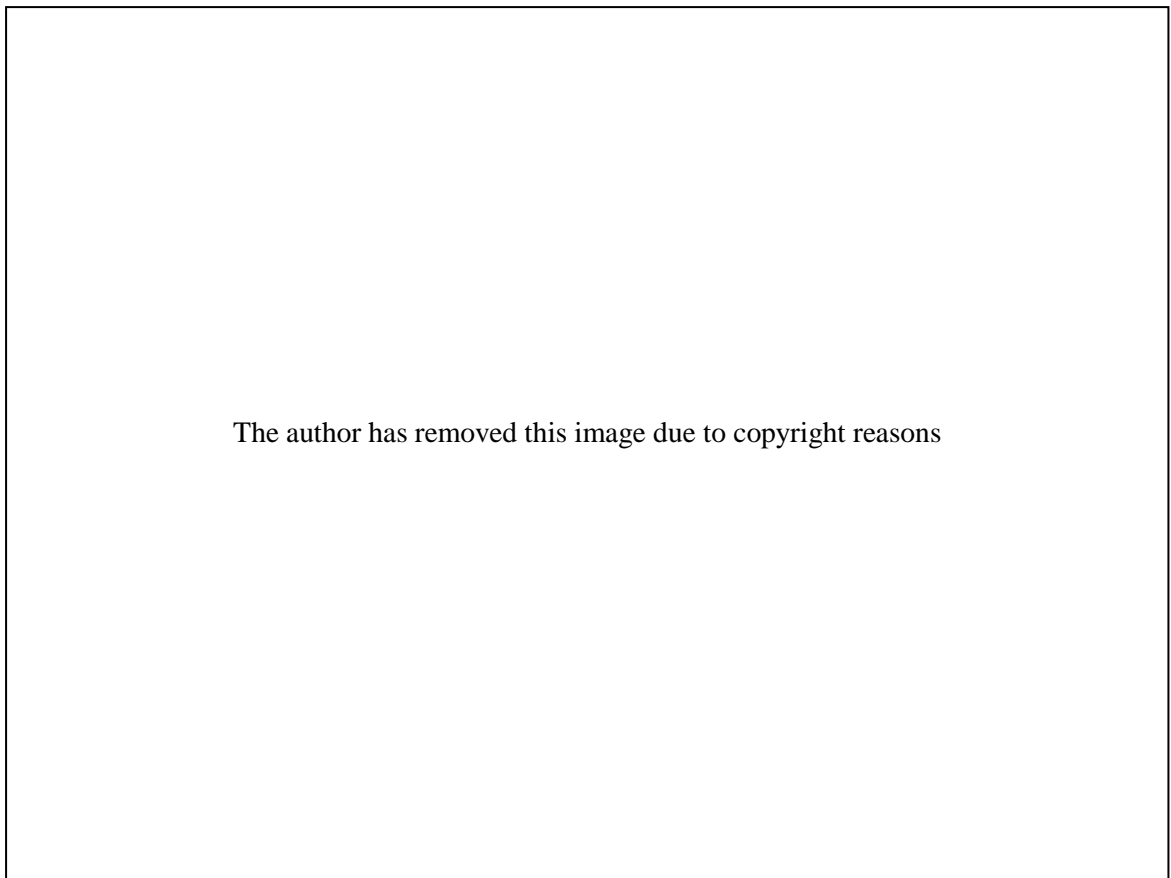
Bashir Makhoul with Ray Young, ***Enter Ghost Exit Ghost, The Genie***

The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 4: Bashir Makhoul, *Enter Ghost Exit Ghost, The Genie*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14', IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

This work by Bashir Makhoul was installed in the air shard and, similarly to the juxtaposing work by Hassani, it drew mixed reactions. Described by Mitha as a work which 'invaded' the physicality of the space, the hanging elements of the work intended to disoriente the visitor further in what is already disorientating space.[627] Through the construction of a temporary 'village' or community of dwellings from punctured cardboard boxes, this work addresses issues of migration and displacement resulting from war, particularly with respect to conflict in Palestine.

Thomas spent the most time looking at this work, although he did not verbally communicate his thoughts as much as the other visitors I spoke with about this piece. He

---

[627] Mitha, pp. 28-29.

initially told me that he was unsure of what to make of it, but he did spend more time walking around the space away from me than other visitors. He disengaged from our dialogue to see more of the work from different angles, looking up into the work and through the air shard, interested in the physical space that the artwork occupied and asking me questions about the work and the architectural space. After spending some time looking, he searched for the text as he had with many of the other works in the exhibition, and told me that he would not have understood the artist's intentions just from looking, but still would have found the work very interesting. When I asked if he would have been happy not to have read it and made up his own mind, he responded: 'Maybe, yes, I think I would have been happy with that as well, but it's interesting to know what his intentions were. I can see what, I don't know, I'm not really sure. It's very impressive to look at and it's an interesting space to be in'.[628] Thomas spent some time taking photographs of this work on his phone – this was the only occasion throughout all of my dialogues with visitors that any of them took any photographs. So, while his language was hesitant, and he repeated a few times that he 'wasn't sure what to make of it', this work certainly resonated with Thomas, perhaps in the way that it responded to the physical structure of the air shard more than the intentions of the work and its connections to the themes of the ATM14 and the museum.

Visual associations were made by other visitors when they encountered this installation. The boxes reminded Colin of buildings or 'favelas', and he commented that some of the hanging boxes looked like 'a robot doing a dance'.[629] This comparison to a robot was also made by Rachel. Rachel drew a comparison between this installation and the display of Hassani's work and the reclamation of post-industrial landscapes. Like Thomas, Rachel also read the accompanying text and compared it to her own interpretation of the artwork and confirmed that she would usually prefer to do this and understand the artist's intention as a way to develop her own understanding. In the instance of Makhoul's installation, Rachel's feelings about the work did not resonate with the artist's intentions for

---

[628] Conversation with Thomas, 3 November 2014.
[629] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.

the piece in terms of it both feeling like a lived-in environment and it connecting with issues of war and conflict: 'It's interesting but I don't have any kind of emotional response to it, and it doesn't, like any of the other paintings and visual arts about the war – when it really brings home the brutality and futil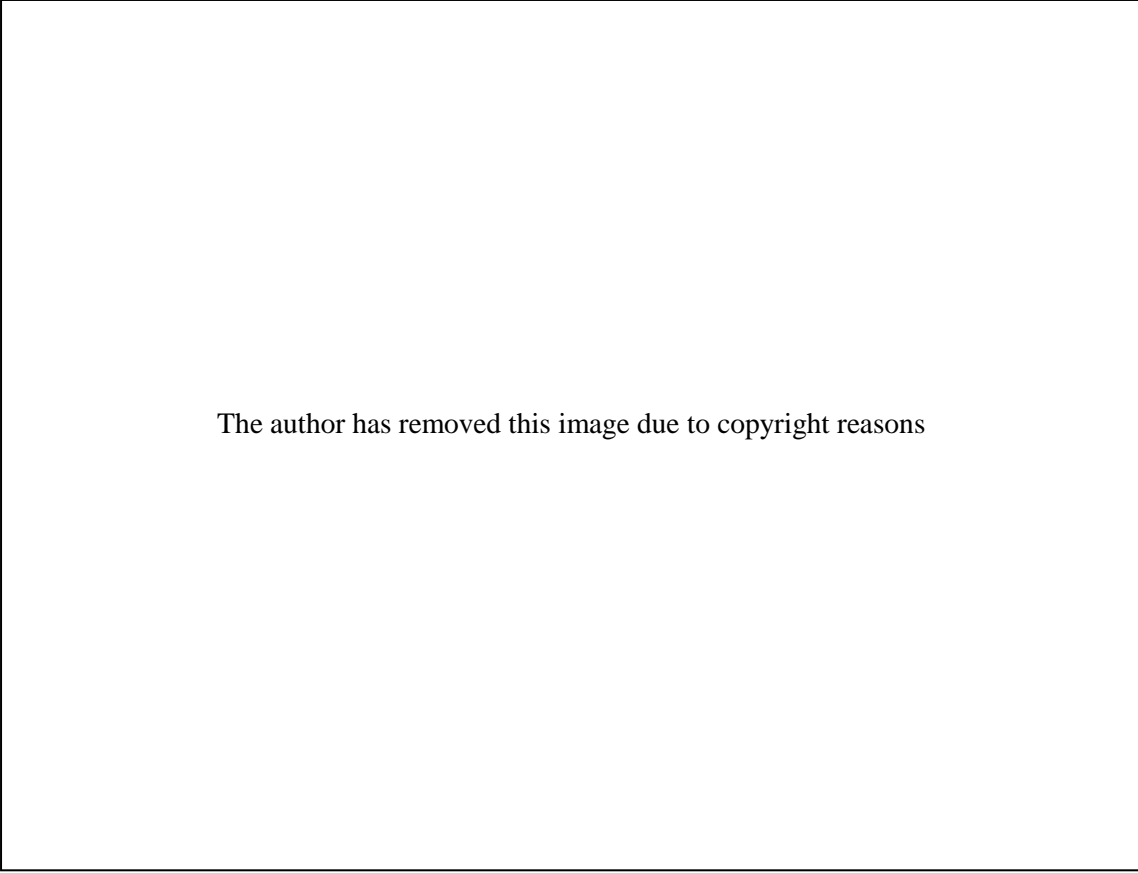ity of it. And this doesn't really do the same'.[630] Following this comment I asked further questions about the importance of an emotional reaction, and Rachel responded that a work 'has to' generate an emotional response because 'it's such an emotive subject that doing it without some sort of seriousness and emotion is almost wrong, it doesn't do justice to it'.[631]

For Louise, her understanding of this built environment seemed to be grounded in a previous visit to 'the trenches', after which 'the whole war thing seems a lot more real now, and you know that they barricade themselves like this in those trenches'.[632] As with Rachel and Thomas, Louise spent some time looking at the work after reading the text, and commented on the 'effectiveness' of the work and its installation in the specific location of the air shard, but unlike Thomas it did not hold her attention on the basis of its relationship with the physical environment. So, while there was an interest in the positioning of the work in the shard and the open and industrial feeling of the space, there seemed to be a lack of emotional connection to this work which was important for some of the participants. A recognisable visual association with 'war imagery' also seemed to lacking for those who did not find this work engaging.

---

[630] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[631] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[632] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.

Shezad Dawood, *Babylon Rising*

The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 5: Shezad Dawood, *Babylon Rising*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14', IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

During my first visit to the exhibition prior to my research dialogues with visitors, I was particularly intrigued by this work. The display of archaeological objects in a traditional museum glass case format alongside a contemporary fluorescent sign, and a large tank which loomed over the case in an aggressive juxtaposition of modern warfare and seemingly ancient artefacts was striking. Perhaps it was my own familiarity with this curatorial technique of juxtaposing incongruous objects which peaked my curiosity, in that I immediately felt that this work was setting up a dialogue between the elements, but upon first inspection I was unsure as to what the theme of that dialogue might have been. Alnoor Mitha details the site-specificity of this work in its response to both the physical architecture and the methods of display within the IWM North. The work was made as a comment on the destruction of relics and the looting which occurred as a result of the American invasion

of Iraq and the 'war on terror'. [633] The appropriation of imagery relating to ancient magical systems and feminine cults of ancient worlds were intended to contrast with the modern and masculine technology of the Russian T-3 tank.[634] This work was then quite complex, with the inclusion of symbolism largely unfamiliar to a more general, European audience, and through the use of a specific curatorial technique of positioning objects in a critical dialogue with each other.

All of the visitors who participated in the study found it difficult to connect the physical aspects of this work with the concepts of gender that the artist was exploring. Familiarity with ceramic objects arranged in the glass case as examples of archaeological artefacts seemed to prevent visitors from engaging with an alternative interpretation and connecting these to wider socio-political issues. Rachel described this work as having no 'measurable impact' prior to reading the label text, although she did comment that she was reminded of 'normal history' exhibitions such as the one she has recently seen at the Great North Museum in Newcastle.[635] Having read the accompanying information about the artwork and the artist's responses to the museum, Rachel asserted that while she understood the concept she struggled to make an emotional connection with the piece and its connection to war. I enquired further as to whether this lack of 'impact' would mean that she might normally walk past a display like this, she responded: 'well if I'm with somebody else I tend to say which is my favourite – decide which is my favourite and then walk off. So it's just more of an aesthetic thing'.[636]

Thomas, Louise and Colin all expressed similar responses; that the work looked out of place, or that it 'shouldn't be there',[637] and that it didn't 'scream war and conflict'.[638] While Colin expressed some interest in the individual pottery objects within the case, he did

---

[633] Mitha, pp. 37-38.
[634] Mitha, pp. 37-38.
[635] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[636] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[637] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[638] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.

not connect the objects and how they were displayed to issues of war. Louise guessed that the pottery might have been from Egypt or Palestine, but did not associate those objects with the feminine as the artist had intended: 'I'm not a feminist ether. I believe that men also cook and present wine, and when you go to places like China it's always the men that pour the tea, or at least in my experience… That's why I don't associate it…'[639] When Colin suggested that perhaps if some of the pottery had blood on it then maybe it would seem connected to war, Louise agreed. Thomas' initial response was very similar, in that he was unsure as to how the overall display related to the idea of war and the rest of the museum. I asked Thomas if this work and the way that it was presented in the museum space would make him think about wider issues of conflict, or think about it any differently than he had before, he responded that it wouldn't. He explained to me that he was already quite engaged with the issues through news sources, and described himself as a 'politics geek' who frequently watched documentaries as a way of being informed and often annoyed his housemates by having the news on television.[640] For Thomas, these documentaries and news stories contained imagery that help to 'get a better impression of what's going on'.[641] This notion again appeared to underline a requirement for the presence of concrete and familiar visual associations to war in order for the work to be understand as being 'about' war, at least in the case of this work. While the gender issues presented to the visitors in the label text did assist with visitors' understanding of the artist's view point, no connections were made between this and issues of conflict that may have been gender specific. Nor was the juxtaposition with the tank as a symbol of masculinity commented on.

---

[639] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.
[640] Conversation with Thomas, 3 November 2014.
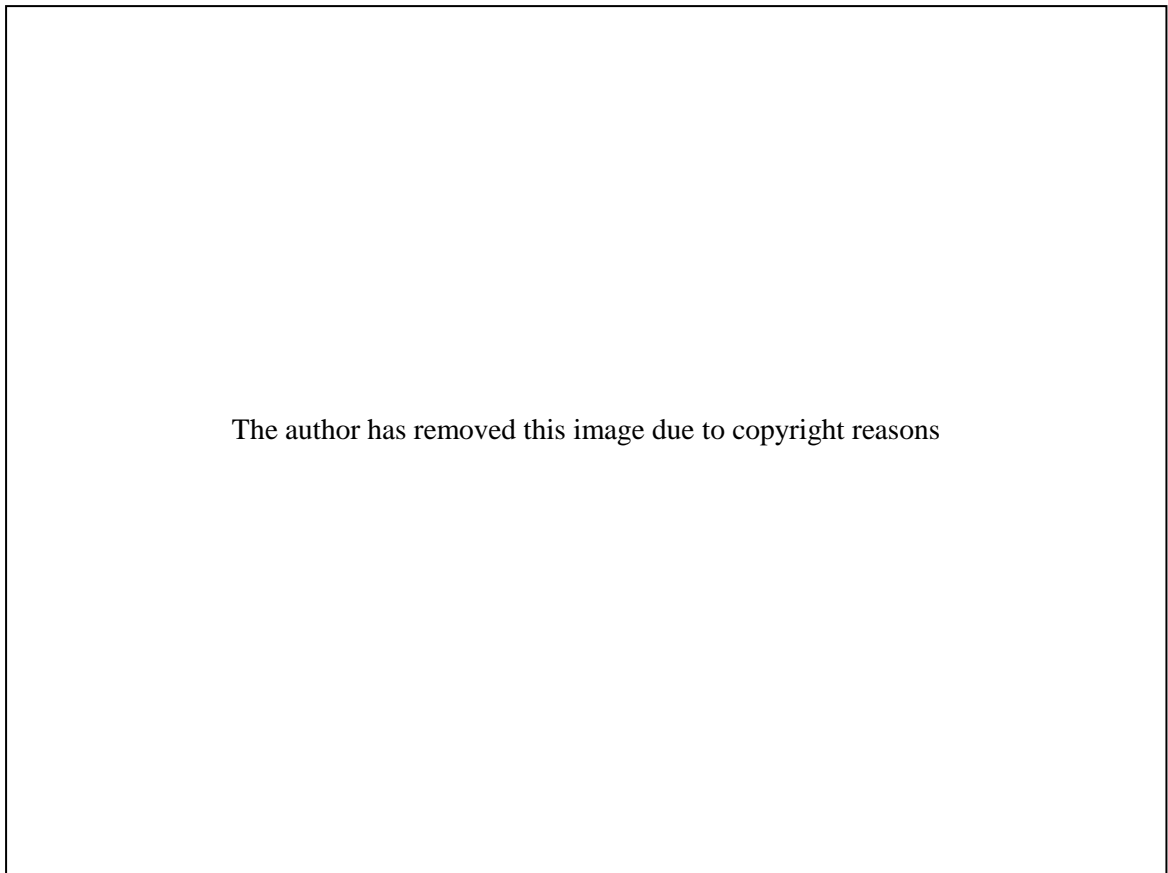[641] Conversation with Thomas, 3 November 2014.

Aman Mojadidi, *Commodified*

The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 6: Aman Mojadidi, *Commodified*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14', IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

Aman Mojadidi's work, *Commodified*, prompted the most discussion throughout the study and a wide range of responses in both the encounters I had as part of my study and in more casual dialogues I had with visitors in the museum. Conceived as a site-specific piece responding to the IWM North's gift shop, this artwork engaged with the complexities and transformation of conflict into commodities and 'war souvenirs'.[642] Mitha described this artwork as 'subverting the hegemonic interpretation of history through a merging of documentation and imagination' through an artistic practice that 'disturbs and challenges authority'.[643] The objects 'for sale' in this addition to the gift shop included a book of Taliban poetry, a bucket and towel partnered as a 'water boarding' set, a mug with the

---

[642] Mitha, p. 30.
[643] Mitha, p. 31.

printed slogan 'keep calm and carry on with PTSD' and postcard with photographs of sites of terrorist attacks accompanied with information on how many fatalities it caused. Mojadidi intended for the work to be handled by visitors and the objects sold, but this was not the case during my study, when the work had been demarcated by a rope barrier and a volunteer member assigned to stand close by.

Curtis initially questioned, with what felt to me like concern, whether the objects were actually for sale, and seemed visibly relieved when I answered no. He described the approach as 'light hearted', although he could see that some people may not like this, and that people who had experienced war first hand might be more against it being approached in this way. After reading the accompanying text, he returned to the work, smiling. He thought that the artist was trying to be controversial and that 'you know straight away that they're going to be from somewhere that has had – I imagine – some sort of conflict'.[644] This first-hand experience of conflict, for Curtis, meant that this work was not intended to be offensive, and that the work made him think about the artist's own personal experience rather than about broader issues; this broader context is something that he would get from more serious, or more literal images, of war and conflict.[645]

Both Thomas and Colin referred to this artwork as being a piece of 'satire'. Thomas compared it to a recent controversy surrounding the items that had been reportedly for sale in a gift shop at the World Trade Centre Memorial. For Thomas, this work spoke to 'how insane the world is getting' and how much further an artwork had to push to actually be considered as satire.[646] Colin compared the satirical approach to comedy programmes that draw from the news for their humour, and imagined this to be something similar. He also imagined what the wide response would be if visitor could have actually bought the items, particularly the bright orange t-shirt with the slogan: 'My uncle went to Guantanamo and all I got was this stupid t-shirt'. He questioned whether this would be ok if the message was

---

[644] Conversation with Curtis, 8 November 2014.
[645] Conversation with Curtis, 8 November 2014.
[646] Conversation with Thomas, 3 November 2014.

intended to raise some form of awareness about an issue, or even raising funds. Here, Colin remarked on the importance of context regarding the potential impact, in that the response would depend on who was wearing it, and where. He found this work interesting, explaining to me that he liked to be challenged. He also considered the possibility of the artwork being quite offensive, but thought that it would be dependent on 'who is saying it' - expanding on this point with relation to Mojadidi being an artist from Afghanistan and therefore being entitled to make this point, however he wished to do it, and that it was not appropriate to be offended 'on someone else's behalf' upon seeing the work.[647]

Louise and Rachel had quite similar physical reactions to Commodified, in that their facial expressions showed obvious signs of discomfort. Both of their responses centred on how the work made them feel when they encountered it. For Louise, 'it made me feel a bit ...' and she shook her head and screwed up her face into a frown.[648] Rachel described the work as 'too close for comfort' yet also 'really effective', and used her crossed arms to create a physical barrier between the work and her own body. Like Colin, Rachel also imagined people visiting the museum wanting to buy the objects and being uneasy when not able 'to tell if it's the real thing or not', referring to the Taliban poetry book.[649]

This artwork was described as 'challenging' and 'uncomfortable', as well as 'light hearted' and an 'alternative approach'. It appeared from many of the comments that the artwork was understood as being the voice of a specific person with a specific background and life experience. Dialogues around this work touched on themes of satire and who has the right to voice an opinion on such difficult and personal issues. The physical positioning of the work was also discussed: the impact of the work was understood to be largely due to the work being so close to the Museum shop and the ambiguity that this created.

---

[647] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[648] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.
[649] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November, 2014.

Nalini Malani, *In Search of Vanished Blood*

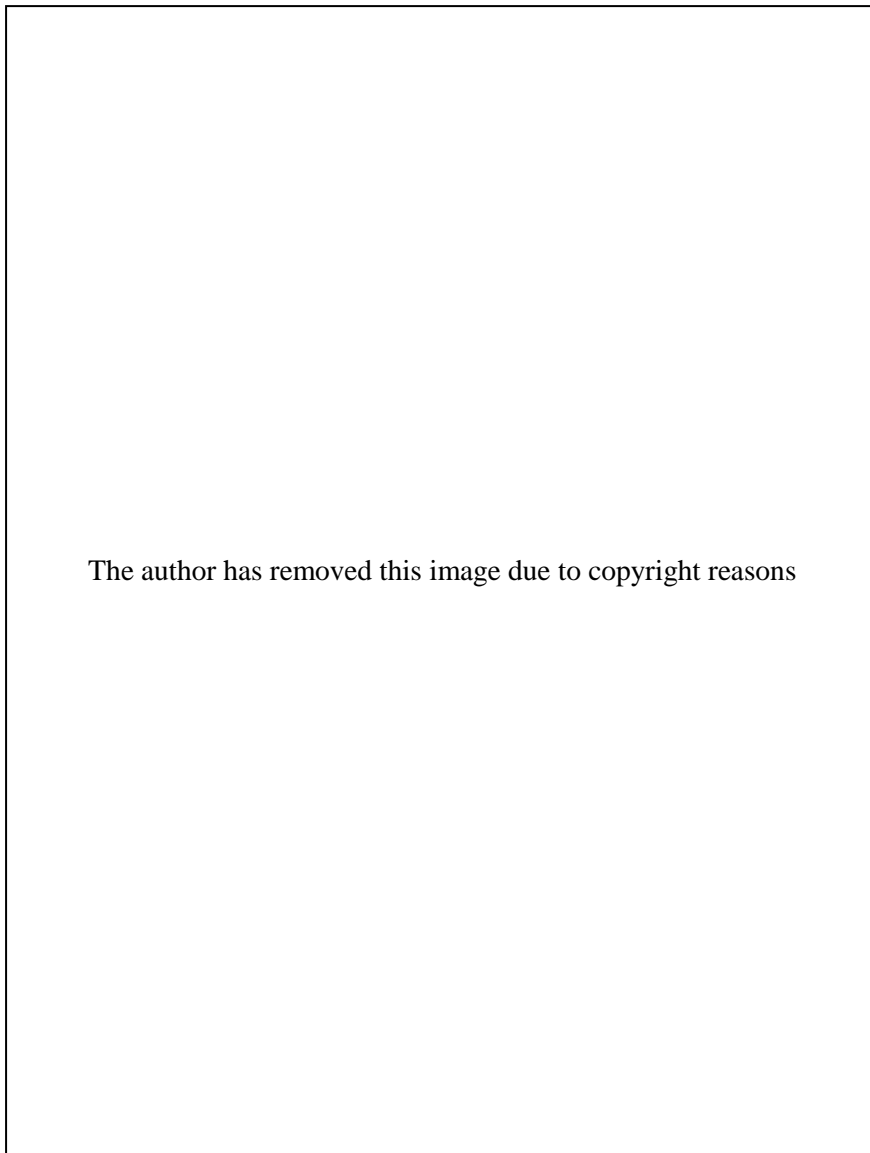The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 7: Nalini Malani*, In Search of Vanished Blood*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14', IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

This installation by Nalini Malani drew very much on the cultural and personal history of the artist. It was a site-specific single-channel re-iteration of *In Search of Vanished Blood*, a large scale multi-media work initially developed in 2012 featured in *dOCUMENTA* (13).[650] As an exploration of violence, the regenerative power of myth, the feminine voice and the geopolitics of national identity, the work was installed in the silo displaying propaganda

---

[650] Mitha, p. 40.

related objects from the IWM collection.[651] The work included a video projection and sound piece, along with images painted onto the glass of display cases containing material objects from the museum's collection. The work was therefore constructed through a layering of sound and visual imagery over objects displayed as examples of the construction of particular national identities through specific war time rhetoric. I found this work to be conceptually challenging and quite an uncomfortable sensory experience. The internal spaces of the silos are enclosed, and feel quite disconnected from the main space of the museum, and this work occupied the propaganda silos so that it could not be ignored in favour of the collection displays. I sat in the seat located inside, part of the usual exhibition in the silo, and listened to the sound piece and watched the projection in their entirety and, even after reading the accompanying text, did not feel like I fully grasped this work. I could understand the words I heard as relating the experience of a woman or women, but rather than feeling this as a point of connection, I instead felt further separated in that the language and references were culturally alien to me, as were the painted images around the space.

The form of the work was initially interesting to Thomas, due to his own work in video game design and interactive technology. While he looked at the painted figures and tried to see around them to the objects behind, we talked about the use of video game technology in contemporary art.[652] He did glance at the projection but directed the dialogue away to more general talk around technology and interactive artworks, and I followed his lead moving out of the silo and back into the main exhibition space. Rachel, on the other hand, took time to sit, as I had done, and watch the full projected piece. Telling me that she was quite distracted by the other video being in the silo on a smaller television screen depicting propaganda from the museum collection, Rachel felt that the silo was not the most suitable place for this work as there were too many other distractions. It did, however, prompt Rachel to consider the format of the work with respect to her own artwork that was

---

[651] Mitha, p. 40.
[652] Conversation with Thomas, 3 November 2014.

in development, and the length of time it is reasonable to expect people to dedicate to an artwork.[653]

Louise and Colin spent more time in this silo, interested more in the collection of propaganda material and expressing a dislike for the work. This dislike was related to both the form and the content of the installation. While Louise tried to understand the work without reading the text, she did feel that she needed it as she struggled to hear the sound piece in the echoing space of the silo.[654] Colin was interested to some extent in the 'Dali-esque' paintings, but more for their style than symbolism having recent visited a surrealist exhibition. Louise found the title of the work provocative and while she thought that she would need to spend more time in there to understand the work, she was not prepared to do so and was confused by what she should be looking at. Her concluding thought was that she 'just didn't like it'.[655] Colin found the work to be 'just noise' and compared it to the Big Picture Show, and would not have known that it was a distinct artwork had I not told him. Given that it was quite a complex piece, she thought it was 'wasted on people unless you've got someone to talk to about it'.[656]

One of the main issues which seemed to prevent visitors engaging with Malani's installation was its location in the silo exploring propaganda. Visitors struggled to distinguish it as a work of art from the rest of the objects and imagery in the Museum collection and tended to see it as part of the whole silo display. The concept of the work as communicated by the written label was not grasped both before and after it was read by visitors, with their interest in the propaganda material taking priority over any concern for the artwork.[657] This work was conceptually complex in the way is addressed culturally specific forms of history and identity through images and language that would have been largely unfamiliar to the visiting public. Unlike other artworks in the exhibition, this work

---

[653] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November, 2014.
[654] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.
[655] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.
[656] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[657] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.

was not identified as being an expression of the artist's personal history or experiences of war and conflict.

Alinah Azadeh, *Book of Debts* and *Child's Play*

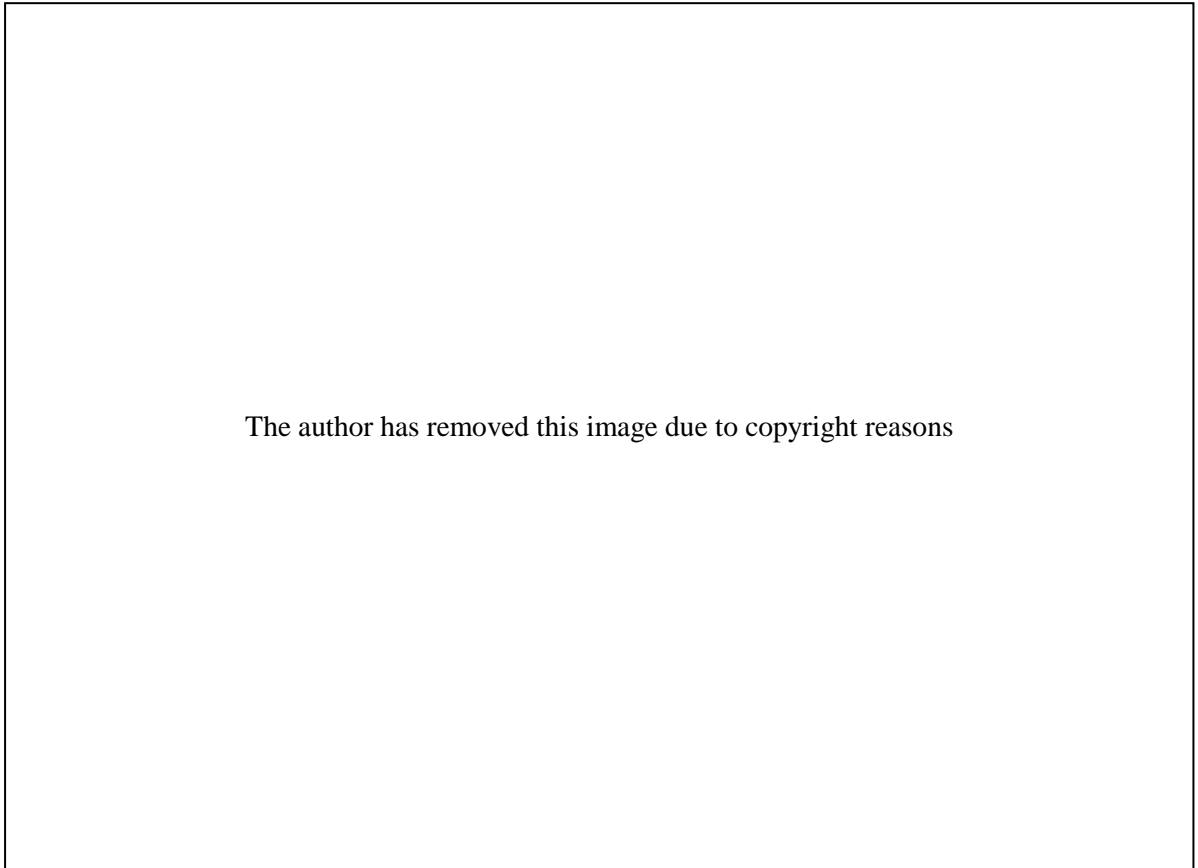The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 8: Alinah Azadeh, *Book of Debts*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14', IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

Artist Alinah Azadeh produced two related works for the exhibition: *Child's Play*, a site-specific work located in a narrow corridor between one of the silos and the wall of the exhibition space, and *Book of Debts*, a work which invited visitors to contribute personal comments on debt and conflict to a book which was then ceremoniously burned to be placed alongside the ashes from other books. Described by Mitha as 'collective meditations on loss, longing and human connection', the works produced for the ATM14 focused on the role

played by material culture and language in our relationship with conflict.[658]

Book of Debts, did generate some interest with all of the participants pausing to read some of the entries, and Rachel taking a few minutes to contribute something in writing. Rachel's initial reaction to the work, standing back and taking in the display of jars alongside the book was, 'so far, I don't get it'.[659] This prompted her to read the label text and following that moved to write in the Book of Debts. Louise spent a short time turning through the pages of the book reading the comments that had been left, making the remark, 'not sure it's a politicians fault' in response to one of the comments. Louise seemed to be situating the notion of debt in the wider context of the politics of war quite specifically. Curtis made a comparison with Facebook and Twitter and how people use these as a public document of their thoughts and experiences, also commenting on his own attempts at journal writing
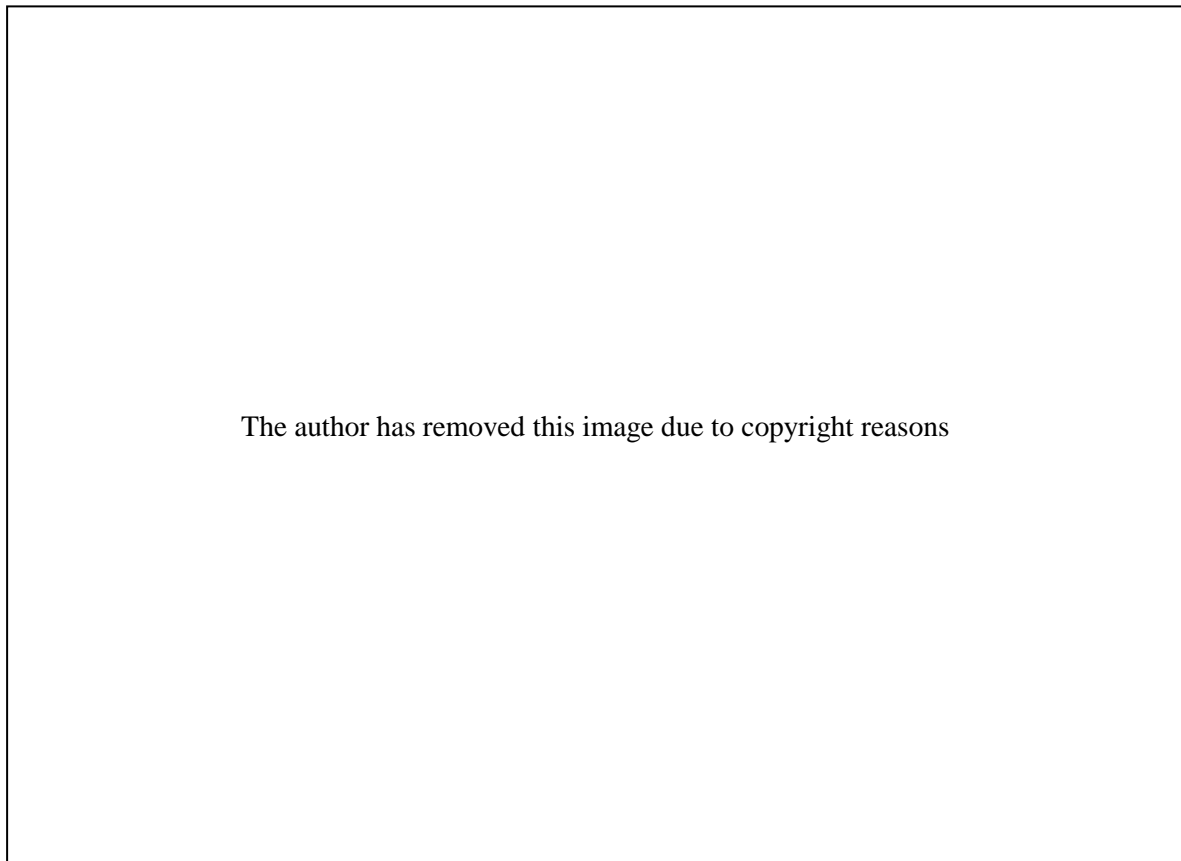
The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 9: Alinah Azadeh, Child's Play, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14, IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, November 2014.

---

[658] Mitha, p. 32.
[659] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.

The majority of the dialogues were focused on *Child's Play*, which visitors struggled to connect with the themes of *Book of Debts*. Thomas made some comments as to what the wrapped objects might be, but his focus was on the architectural space of the environment. This area of the exhibition space is very narrow, leading to a darkened corner with no indication of what might be around that corner. The walls and corners are sharp and angular and this particular area can be quite disorientating, with the hanging curtain taking up space making it more difficult to navigate. Rachel expressed some frustration with this work, partly due to it being too hidden in relation to the rest of the display, but also a frustration that it did not achieve the potential she thought it could have done had it been similar to Aman Mojadidi's work and been displayed as a child's play area that invited you to touch and play with the objects.[660] The notion of gift giving was not, for Rachel, an interesting or useful element. From her comparison to *Commodified*, I understood and empathised with her frustration. Had the visitor been implicated in the work, in a much more concrete manner as with Mojadidi's work, it may have had the same degree of resonance. *Child's Play* did generate more discussion between Louise and Colin, with Colin commenting that he had received all of those toys (the ones that he could identify in the wrapping) for Christmas as a child, and that he had memories of playing army with his brother using toy guns, grenades and knives. The colour of the wrapping did not, however, make him think of gift giving, whereas it reminded Louise of the red and green colours traditionally associated with Christmas, 'what it says to me, is this would be Christmas for someone who was in Palestine, because they teach their children to play with guns and grenades and to fight for what they believe in, but the butterflies confuse me'.[661] Colin commented on the ambiguity of this interpretation, in that 'years ago when we were going to war and fighting wars you've got kids who were fifteen and sixteen pretending they were old enough to go and

---

[660] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[661] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.

fight battles'.[662] Colin also felt that the work was 'trying too hard' to make a point and that: 'it does different things, it doesn't make me think or feel, it's just presents hanging from a thing. But talking about it does make you realise, is it a present or a grenade, but I think here different interpretations depending on if you're a man or a woman and what you were brought up on as a kid. Because that was my Christmas for about five years'.[663]

There was a lack of interest in the aesthetic aspect of the work as a whole, although all of the visitors did spend some time trying to identify the wrapped objects. The concept of gift giving as described in the label seemed of little relevance to any of the visitors I spoke with until I prompted them on this, but it did not create further connections with notions of 'collective accountability, justice and the capacity for resolution' in relation to war and conflict beyond those remarks detailed above.[664]

Imran Qureshi, *Selected Works (photography not permitted)*

Imran Qureshi was included in the exhibition as 'one of the most important figures on the Pakistani art scene' whose work 'combines the centuries-old Islamic art form of miniature painting with conceptual approaches and elements of contemporary abstract painting'.[665] Qureshi's work, *This Leprous Brightness*, was a series of watercolour paintings displayed in the WaterWay corridor leading from the entrance to the main exhibition space into the cafe area. Mitha quotes a description of Qureshi's work marked by a confrontation with global issues, such as 'the relationship between western and Muslim cultures, religion, gender roles, terrorism, and the politics of war'. *This Leprous Brightness* was developed from witnessing the aftermath of a terrorist explosion in Lahore.[666] This display was commented on by all participants as being aesthetically one of the most striking.

Rachel noted that she had walked past these works earlier in her visit to the museum prior to our dialogue and had not noticed them, not realising that the corridor was a part of

---

[662] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[663] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[664] Mitha, p. 32.
[665] Mitha, p. 41.
[666] Mitha, p. 41.

the exhibition space. While she told me that she would have struggled to understand the works without reading the label text, she found them to be very powerful, referring again back to the notion of reclaiming spaces – this time to space being reclaimed by nature. She remarked that she felt 'torn when looking at them, between recoiling from the blood and the beauty of them… it's quite powerful actually'.[667] For Rachel, this work represented 'going right back to the first thing that you can make, the footprints'.[668] The work depicting a footprint resonated with Colin, and he related it to a memory of taking off his shoes after a cycling race and leaving bloody footprints on a towel, caused by blood that had trickled into his shoes from a cut.[669] Colin was intrigued by the detail in the works and remarked on the quality of the works, affirming that he valued the technical skill required to make paintings such as these. Louise took time to read both the label accompanying this series of works and a panel with more details about the ATM14 that was installed close by. On walking over to Qureshi's works she stopped for a moment and said 'wow'. She was intrigued by the technique used and tried to look closer at the works. Describing the details as 'flowers'.

While the connection to a specific terror attack was discussed – even after reading the accompanying labels – the visual qualities of this series were interesting enough to provoke comments about wider issues around the subject of conflict. The visual impact of the artwork seemed to engage visitors and negate, so some extent, the need for information about the artist in order for dialogue to develop around the themes of Qureshi's art practice.

While the other works in this display were quite difficult for participants to understand in terms of the symbolic content, *This Leprous Brightness* did provoke associations with nature reclaiming spaces, beauty and atrocity, and associations with poppies as a symbol of remembrance made by Thomas.

---

[667] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[668] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.
[669] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.

Sophie Ernst, *Victory* **and** *The Vanquished*

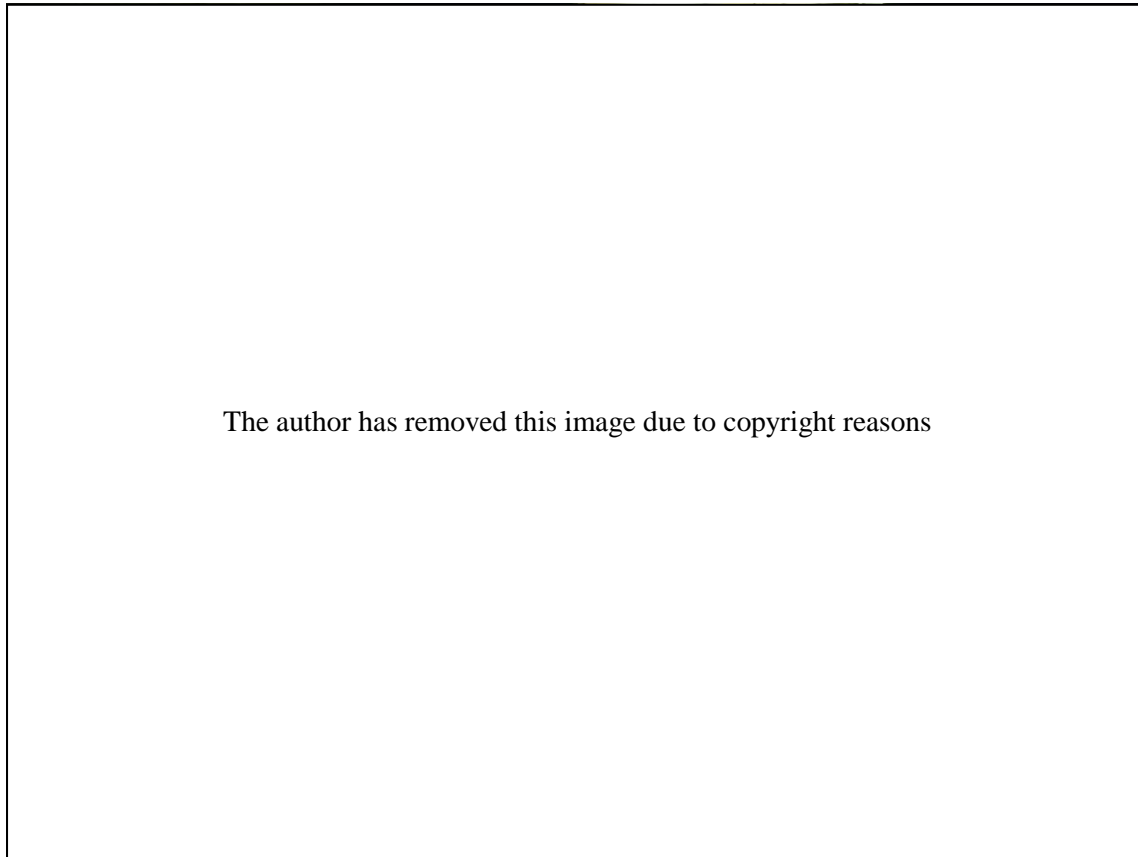The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 10: Sophie Ernst, *Victory*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14', IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

Sophie Ernst's two works were installed in the silos concerning war and the Commonwealth. These two works received quite mixed responses. *The Vanquished* engaged visitors in dialogue more closely related to themes of the work, whereas *Victory* incited very negative responses to both the perceived lack of aesthetic content and the intent of the artist. In these works, Ernst addresses the relationship that conflict shares with the purpose of Imperial conflicts, and the notion that the reigning 'Empire' has engaged in the most significant conflicts.[670]

Both Rachel and Louise took time to watch *The Vanquished* in its entirety, which

---

[670]Sophie Ernst, quoted in Mitha, p. 35.

showed dialogues with Madrassa students from Lahore talking about ideas of death and paradise projected onto plaster-cast heads of The Galatians.[671] Rachel struggled to hear the voices over the sounds of the Big Picture Show also playing at the time, and moved away from our dialogue to hear as best she could. Louise was interested in this piece and could have 'watched it for an hour' had it been better placed. Colin expressed that he had no interest in the piece and pointed out other museum visitors who were walking past it without paying it any attention.[672] While Louise was intrigued by the format of the projection, Colin found it 'off-putting' and both visitors thought that the positioning of the work would have a negative impact on how it was received. The busts were placed either side of the entrance to the silo, which was located along another dark, narrow corridor around the outer edge of the main exhibition space. The piece did prompt a discussion between Louise and Colin about the writing in the Qur'an and how it can be radicalised in the same way as the Bible. The themes of life, death and the afterlife which were discussed in *The Vanquished* were referred to as 'universal' themes by Rachel, relevant to many people with different backgrounds and beliefs.

Victory, however, did not provoke wider discussion about the Bush administration and issues of 'victory' in relation to Iraq that the work engages with through the projection of a video of cock fighting onto a 3D printed copy of a second century sculpture of the goddess of victory, Nike. Instead, visitors commented on the lack of aesthetic content and the status of the art object and how much its perceived 'meaning' relied on the context of the Museum. Rachel compared this work to *The Crusader*, displayed near the entrance of the main exhibition making it the first object encountered when entering the space. Here, Rachel remarked on the importance of the aesthetic qualities of a work, and how these qualities were just as important as there also being 'something more it'; that 'something more' was not present in *Victory* in the way that is had been with *The Crusader*.[673] Louise's

---

[671] The Galatians are Roman copies of Hellenistic sculptures commissioned by Attalus I of Pergamon to celebrate victory over the Galatians.
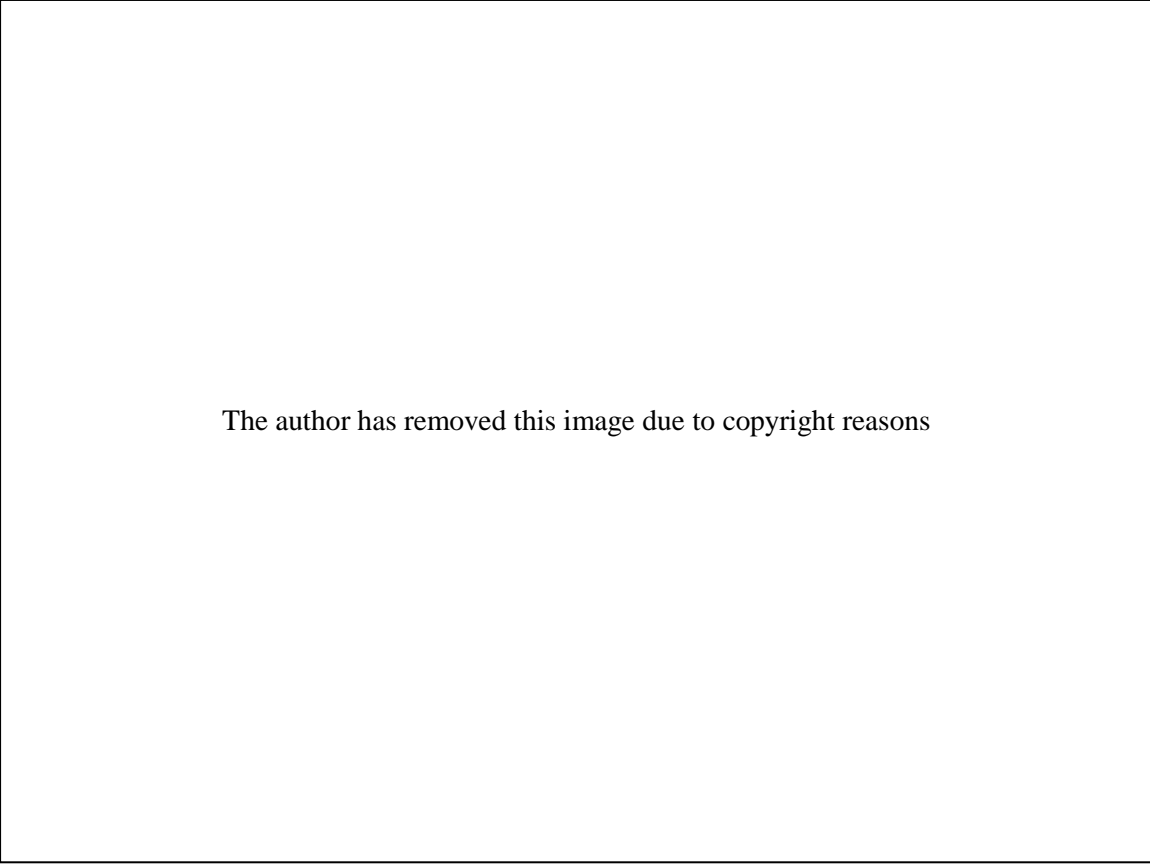
[672] Conversation with Louise, 5 November 2014.

[673] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.

immediate reaction to this work was very negative due to the animal cruelty in the video projection. Colin, while interpreting the fight to be the US and its approach to conflict, found this work to be 'pretentious'.[674] Both of their expressed dislike for this work prompted a dialogue around notions of context and authenticity in relation to the production of artworks. Colin in particular, felt that *Victory* was appropriating the work of others through its reproduction of the sculpture, and that this worked depended on the context of the IWM North to validate its subject matter, and that if the work was displayed somewhere else, such as the Tate, than you would not necessarily understand what the work was about. For Colin, if it is not possible to understand the intention of the work on its own without a context to frame it, then the work does not serve its purpose. He also felt that the language used in the label was intended to make visitors feel 'stupid'.[675] Following on from this, I questioned how this worked compared to that of Mojadidi, which is site-specific to the IWM North gift shop. Colin responded that there was something engaging about Mojadidi's piece and that it was welcoming people to engage in a way that *Victory* wasn't, and that 'it would still work in Tesco' in terms of communicating its purpose.[676]

---

[674] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[675] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.
[676] Conversation with Colin, 5 November 2014.

The author has removed this image due to copyright reasons

Figure 11: Sophie Ernst, *The Vanquished*, 'Asia Triennial Manchester 14', IWM North. Photo: Joanne Williams, 2014.

In order to understand why these particular artworks were significant to some visitors, it is necessary to understand how they created meaning in relation, both with respect to the perceived meaning of the artworks themselves, and their meaning in the context of the IWM North. Nearly all of the participants engaged with the work through the personal experience of the artist. They approached the work from the artists' motivation as described in the accompanying text panels in order to understand what the artist was 'trying to say'. When they seemed to be struggling to articulate their own thoughts and initial responses to the work they would seek out the exhibition label without prompting, even if this meant moving away from me and any dialogue we were having. They also understood the artwork as being the voice or opinion of that particular person rather than positioning it in a broader conceptual framework.

Visual associations were important to visitors and their engagement with the works.

Recognisable imagery played an important role in participants being able to explore the artworks in some way. I identified two types of visual associations in the dialogues, familiar imagery associated with conflict and visual associations made in relation to participants' own life experience. With respect to the first, visitors did make comments that works did not contain imagery that they would usually associate with war and conflict, such as the images shown in the news and documentaries, and that they would normally think about wider issues of war through those particular types of images rather than the pottery displayed as part of Shezad Dawood's work, for example. Where the visitors identified imagery associated with their own life experience, but not necessarily associated with war and conflict, this provided an initial talking point from which other themes and associations could emerge.

The artworks were predominantly understood as being an articulation of an artist's individual experience or opinion on war and conflict. The text was important for the majority of participants in order to understand the intended 'meaning' of the works and how this married up with their own interpretations. The artworks seemed to be a catalyst for an encounter/dialogue between the visitor and the artist. Understanding the works in this way, as part of a personal narrative, is very much in the vein of the overall Museum narrative of 'war shapes lives'. While this would suggest that the interpretive aims of the IWM North have been successful and the artworks achieved have the aim of constructing a 'critical historical consciousness' with respect to visitors, understood as 'an ability to reflect on the past, draw parallels to the present, and consider other peoples' stories in relation to one's own', the awareness of the historicity of knowledge production proposed by Gadamer's notion of historical consciousness is not present.[677] I would argue that the meaning constructed by visitors located the experience of the artists in the exhibition very much in relation to their own – or more specifically their inability to comprehend the experiences of the artists – the notion of locating these experiences within more complex interpretations of temporality, cultural specificity and knowledge production necessary for this form of

---

[677] MacLeod et al, p. 8.

understanding to be framed as 'critical', were lacking. It is also notable that while the encounters with the ATM14 artworks rendered visible the artists who produced them, this process obscured the IWM North as an institution and the institutional politics of display which determined the circumstances of the exhibition.

Affective Encounters

Following the production of the report for the IWM North, I explored an alternative writing approach in order to account for my own experience of shared encounters with the artworks in the museum as a method of writing through my interpretative process, attempting to account for my own processes of understanding how visitors 'engaged' and how I understood interpretive cues. On reflection, I found the dialogue with Rachel to be a significant experience of engagement from my subjective position as a researcher, therefore I have explored this in more detail, attempting to account for my own responses and interrogate what it might mean to be an 'engaged researcher'.

Approaching Rachael in the Main Exhibition space was relatively easy and comfortable; she was visiting alone, and seemed to be looking around the expansive space for something to 'latch onto'. This look became quite familiar after spending some time in the Museum. I had seen Rachael earlier in the entrance foyer trying to orientate herself and it had taken a little time to work her way up to the first floor exhibitions. Coming through the door she hesitated, looking up and around and seeming unsure where to go. The architecture of the Museum is designed to create disorientating spaces; the enclosed, jagged stairway is an odd passage between the light and open entrance foyer with its shop most often filled with noise and chatter, and the dark, cavernous expanse of the main exhibition space. The stark white Crusader offers an almost ethereal contrast to the harrier jet, both looming above you as you move into the space, making the ceiling seem higher and the darkened space all the more ominous. Beyond these two welcoming spectacles are towering silos with no obvious route through the areas of light and shadows. If you time it right (or wrong) you also risk

entering head on into the booming noise of the Big Picture Show playing sometimes

harrowing recollections of war and remembrance, or a strangely jovial 'Horrible Histories'

account of wartime rationing. More often than not you find yourself directly in the path of a

loosely herded and excitable school group, who may prove to be a considerable trip hazard.

This sensory bombardment in an unexpected and initially confusing space leads visitors to

stop still and take a moment, before being drawn this way or that.

I introduced myself to Rachael as a PhD researcher interested in visitors' engagement with

art and asked if she would like to take part in a visitor study, much like any other visitor(s)

who had made eye contact, or seemed open to be being approached. I had found a direct

approach the most useful thus far in recruiting participants and Rachael was keen to be

involved. She introduced herself as an artist undertaking a practice based PhD, and was

surprised to learn of any contemporary art in the Museum at all. The motivation for

Rachael's visit was to see the 'From Street to Trench' exhibition, as her own work involved

a commissioned piece for the First World War Centenary celebrations. We were both here

for the purpose of research relating to contemporary art and so I immediately sensed a

common ground for dialogue.

I felt almost instantly at ease talking to Rachael after my tentative request for permission to

be a part of her visit. Approaching visitors was undoubtedly the most challenging and self-

conscious part of the dialogue. I became intensely aware of the pressure the invitation could

put on visitors who may not have been expecting or wanting to be engaged with so directly.

My 'on-the-spot' invitation made some visitors visibly uncomfortable, and they declined

physically as well as verbally by turning their body or taking a full step away from me.

Rather than thinking about consent as something which the visitors give in order to become

a part of my research, I began to think about this as the visitor consenting to their

experience being altered, shaped and shared in a way that they might not have intended,

and consenting to me being a part of their experience.

My affinity for Rachael's motivations, as well as her role as a practising artist introducing a new dynamic to the research, seemed to make the dialogue flow much easier than with previous participants. I felt a mutual passion for the dialogue topic and a certain shared understanding of art and what we felt it could do, and be. Rachael had also struggled with generating the type of feedback she required in response to her own works, and so understood instantly the challenge I was facing in attempting to move beyond the more familiar 'did you like it' and encourage responses with more complex thoughts and feelings. I felt that in some sense I had a research companion who had a visceral engagement with the challenging issues that I am working through.

The intention of the artist was explicitly addressed by my own probing questions when I noticed that Rachael took time to initially take in the artworks, read the label text, and then go back to the artwork, physically moving between the artwork and the text panels. There seemed to be a physical enactment of the back-and-forth assessment of her own impressions and the artists' intentions, and how these related. Her willingness to physically engage with the works – she almost stepped into them, and shared their space without hesitance – was also encouraging to me and I felt myself drawn into the encounter with her. I also felt this physical 'pull' in a dialogue with another visitor, Thomas, as we entered into the air shard and he became fascinated with Bashir Makhoul's Enter Ghost Exit Ghost, The Genie, a work which filled the architecture of the shard with cardboard boxes intended to be reminiscent of temporary dwellings of military or refugee encampments. His gaze remained fixated up and around, trying to take in all of the installation, barely acknowledging my presence but for a few short answers to my questions. I stepped back while he took out his phone, using it to take photographs of the work, moving around in the space, stepping back or forwards and turning the phone in order to frame his frozen images. I saw Thomas as enacting a purely embodied engagement with this art work. Being with another person who was keen to immerse themselves, both physically and emotionally in an encounter with the

artworks, made me much more enthusiastic about their verbal responses; I felt a genuine and honest investment in the encounter. I also felt a real effort from Rachael in trying to verbally work through this process, much more than with Thomas, and she often questioned me on what I knew of the works. While I was certainly being used as a resource for her exploration of the artworks, I also felt that the questioning was an invitation for me to be a part of the process through which she constructed meaning in relation to each work.

We discussed the ethics of producing an artwork after Rachael struggled to feel any emotional response to particular piece in the air shard: '...it's such an emotive subject that doing it without some sort of seriousness and emotion is almost wrong, it doesn't do justice to it. I'm finding this with my own piece that I'm trying to do, I'm really having to think about how I can do it in a way that, I can justify to myself doing it almost.'[678] In response to this reaction, I suggested that there was an ethical element to the work. I felt comfortable suggesting the word 'ethical' in response to what I understood to mean the personal responsibility of the artist and necessity of emotive content. With other participants I felt more hesitant and cautious about suggesting words or concepts that they might be alluding to, for fear of 'putting words in their mouth' that they did not necessarily agree with. I had an awareness of my role as a researcher more acutely in dialogue with other participants, in particular as an interpreter (even when not necessary). My own desire to 'engage' participants with an art work at times superseded my research aim of understanding their experiences, especially if I sensed them waiting for a cue or visibly struggling to articulate their thoughts – frowns, furrowed brows, false starts and unfinished sentences. If they struggled to get a handle on a particular work in a way that they could articulate, I found myself filling in the blanks, so to speak, with more information about the 'subject' of the work, even if this was only reading from the exhibition label if they had not obviously looked over it. I was trying to facilitate engagement by coaxing a response through providing interpretation when it had not been offered freely or encouraged by questioning.

---

[678] Conversation with Rachel, 17 November 2014.

I felt that I had to hold back my own responses to some extent, and being conscious of my own use of language meant that I did not engage with the works in ways that would have been more instinctive.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital was something I felt being enacted throughout this dialogue.[679] Rachael had remarked early on that she was very conscious about the language she used when talking about her own work or her 'practice' - she had pointed out the 'proper' word she had found herself using at a recent conference, taking the lead from other artists. Developing the language to describe her own works was not, for her, a linear process. The difference between 'art language' and 'normal language' was understood by us both without explicitly needing to talk it through. This contrasted with Thomas' self-consciousness about the language he used. He was aware that his language was often uncertain, and not the 'art language' that you were 'supposed' to use. Rachael appeared to be quite comfortable questioning the works out loud and the experiences of war which they refer to, expressing likes and dislikes about the works, describing elements of the works which she found to be particularly engaging (or not), and situating them in the context of her own previous experience of contemporary art and her expectations of an encounter with issues of war and conflict. This was particularly evident in her critical interrogation of the works – imagining how differently they could have been executed in order to achieve the emotive content she thought to be appropriate and necessary. Rachael's familiarity with other museum and gallery spaces was evident throughout the dialogue – she appeared to be a confident, frequent visitor, comfortable in the space and showed little hesitation moving to and around works. While she was happy to be 'lead' around the exhibition somewhat – I ensured that the route taken would bring her into contact with the artworks – and while she

---

[679] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 2010); Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The love of art: European art museums and their public*, trans. by Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990)

referred to me when she lost orientation, she was also happy walking further ahead or away from me if something caught her eye. In comparison to at least two of the other research participants, her discussions of the artworks was much more assured. That is not to say that other participants were not comfortable in talking about the works and their opinions, but her use of language (after the initial mention of it in relation to her own work) was less hesitant, and her opinions flowed much more freely in relation to the works, whereas at times in other dialogues it felt that the participants was pausing, waiting for a question or a queue, or even reassurance.

Talking to Rachael I found myself becoming more engaged with the dialogue and wanting to know as much about her about her experience as I could, to discuss and to question. Moving into a darkened corner away from the noise of the Big Picture Show, The Vanquished, an installation by the artist Sophie Ernst, caught Rachael's eye in the entrance to one of the silos and her attention turned from me. She became wholly focused on the art work and reading the slightly distorted text projected below the sculptural forms. Watching intently and straining slightly to hear the sound track of the work over the Big Picture Show, she told me that she was trying to read all of it. I waited, somewhat impatiently, knowing that it was roughly a four minute loop. I stepped back away from the silo to give her the time and space that she needed without feeling any pressure to talk to me while she concentrated on the art work. My own desire to hear her opinions and continue what I was feeling to be an enjoyable dialogue made it difficult to stand back and allow her to engage with the work in her own way. Here, engagement became my desire to respond or interact.

Throughout the dialogue, I asked Rachael about her own practice, as she seemed to be making mental notes about her critiques – the length of time some of the works required, the possibility of interactivity and the emotive content. She began to verbalise possible critiques of her own ideas drawing on these encounter in the Museum, and towards the end of the Rachael lead the discussion to talk about her own research and how it was informing the process of creating her own art work. Hearing how her own artistic responses were developing was fascinating, particularly the weight of responsibility she felt in addressing

the subject matter in an honest and respectful way. I wondered about the extent to which the artists involved in the exhibition had also considered this ethical issue; perhaps, as they spoke/created from lived, personal experience, this was more or less of a concern. The dialogue left me with a feeling of Rachael's concern for the emotional impact of each work on her. Perhaps shaped by my academic focus and having not made any art work of my own for a long time, my own responses to contemporary artworks tend to be more towards understanding it in a specific way, situating it in a conceptual context, so I found this dialogue both refreshing and engaging. The importance of intimacy was present throughout the dialogue, and also evident in reviewing my own notes along with the transcript; both physical and emotional intimacy in relation to Rachael's own engagement with the artworks, and importance of intimacy in our dialogue.

This experience I shared with Rachel throughout her visit to the Museum evoked questions around my own subjectivity, and how I was 'made present' throughout our conversation. There were also moments in which I noticed Rachel becoming self-aware with respect to particular artworks. I will here refer to Sara Ahmed's work on the 'encounter' as a useful lens through which to approach the complex relationships between the Museum, visitor, artist and art work in the exhibition space.

> Identity itself is constituted in the 'more than one' of the encounter: the designation of an 'I' or 'we' requires an encounter with others. These others cannot simply be relegated to the outside: given that the subject comes into existence as an entity only through encounters with others, then the subject's existence cannot be separated from the others who are encountered. As such, the encounter itself is ontologically prior to the question of ontology.[680]

What might this relational view of subjectivity mean with respect to those relationships existing with respect to contemporary interventions in the Museum? Contemporary art in the IWM North is positioned as both inside the institution – as being integral to its collecting and display practices – and outside of the institution through the designation of

---

[680] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 7.

these works as individual artists' personal, political and conceptual responses to war and

conflict.[681] The artist also occupies a similar duality of being a voice speaking from within

the institutional narrative, when the art work is produced as a curated intervention framed as

a form of affective interpretation, simultaneously maintaining their autonomy through both

the designation of the pieces as a work of art situated in their personal and artistic trajectory,

and through its assumed ability to act as an intervening entity in the visitors' experience. As

a form of interpretation, the intention is that the art object operates as a mediator between

the visitor and the institutional narrative, and as such exists in the relationship between the

two, at once belonging to both and to neither, having the power to act upon the visitor's

experience in such a way that a desired state of understanding is generated. The visitor is

framed as both an active participant of meaning-making – being an embodiment of cultural

and socio-political knowledge and experience which is both enacted and constituted within

the site of the encounter – as well as being acted upon by an entity specifically delineated as

'Arts and Culture' within the broad institutional and political rhetoric of impactful

experiences. The art object also occupies a duality in its role as both an art work to be

interpreted, and as a route to an interpretive understanding. It also occupies the space of an

artefact of social history, being framed as a mode of understanding the experiences of

individuals with respect to the Museum's tag line of 'war shapes lives', as well as being

designated as an art object – which is often understood as not 'belonging' in this space.[682]

This layering of these seemingly paradoxical positions of inter-relational and

mutually constitutive elements, which are situated at once both within and without,

constructs a complex dynamic of encounters – a dynamic which complicates the ontological

separateness assumed by contemporary modes of evaluation. Through framing the

encounter as ontologically prior to the question of ontology, however, we assume

subjectivities to be produced within an encounter, and as such can only be recognised after

---

[681] This can be seen in more detail in the label text, included in Appendix 1.

[682] Chris Whitehead, 'Visiting with suspicion: Recent perspectives an art and art museum', in
Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader, ed. by Gerard Corsane (London:
Routledge, 2005), p. 39.

the matter (through their distinction from the 'other'). In this instance, a subjectivity

constituted through ontological connectedness then presupposes the possibility of a

separation. If we then suppose that subjectivities are constituted through ontological

connectedness, what might this mean for the possibilities of 'knowing' in relation to visitor

engagement? The issue then becomes a methodological one – how are we to understand

meaning-making in a register of relationality that breaks down the conceptual

'boundedness' of entities, and which problematizes a processual mode of thinking that

operates within traditional linear trajectories working towards desired and defined

outcomes?

Affect as a mode of knowing has been proposed by Sara Matthews, where affect is

understood as 'an internal phenomenon through which the self is called into presence in

relation to an encounter with the outside world.'[683] Referring to Andre Green's definition of

affect as both somantic and physical, described as the 'bringing about a bodily experience

that has yet to be named into representation through the work of psychic symbolisation',

Matthews considers affect as an alternate to pedagogy as a means of recovering what is lost

when relying on a representational analysis.[684] Andrea Witcomb has evoked similar notions

of affect, in particular as proposed by Susan Best who related affect to signification,

wherein affect 'becomes the stuff of signification', and Claire Colesbrook who stated that

affect works through a range of sensations outside of rational processes of thought.[685] Affect

is thus positioned as prior to any form of intellectual recognition. This desire to recover

what is lost is echoed by Karan Barad questioning of representationalism, in which matter is

deemed passive, only gaining potential as derived from language and culture.[686] Witcomb

thus frames 'the transformative power of affect' as useful to understanding 'the

transformative potential of the museum'.[687] Thinking back to experiences I shared with

---

[683] Ahmed, p. 274.
[684] Ahmed, p. 274.
[685] Susan Best (2001) and Claire Colesbrook (2002) in Andrea Witcomb, 'Remembering the Dead by Affecting the Living: The case of a miniature model of Treblinka', in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagement, Interpretations*, ed. by Sandra H. Dudley (Oxon: Routledge, 2010) pp. 39-52 (p. 41).
[686] Barad (2003), p. 801.
[687] Witcomb, p. 41.

visitors in the museum, there were moments in which the materiality of the artworks became present:

Enter Ghost Exist Ghost, The Genie

Moving from the foyer into the Air Shard I stepped back slightly to allow Thomas to walk by me and into the space. He looked upwards to the towers of cardboard boxes, 'I don't know what to make of this' he said while stepping away from me and walking through the installation. 'Is something moving up there'? *Asking without looking at me, his gazed fixed on the swaying structure being gently nudged by the cold wind blowing in through the open walls, 'I think it's the wind, and the lift goes up and down as well which vibrates through it' – 'ah I see…'. This response felt uninterested as he continued looking upwards, not noticing the people walking around him heading for the exit. After reading the text panel he speaks to me, again without looking to me* 'see I'm not sure I would have got that from just looking at it', *stepping back into the open space and looking up through the work. Watching Thomas moving through the installation, shifting his view point, looking through spaces in the cardboard boxes, I felt myself being at once excluded from this intimate moment between him and the space, and also drawn towards him, wanting to see what he was seeing, what was captivating his attention. Reaching out, keen for him to try and articulate his thoughts and open his experience I asked how he felt about the piece after reading he information:* 'it's interesting to know what his intentions were. I can see what, I don't know, I'm not really sure. It's very impressive to look at and it's an interesting space to be in'. *His gaze remained fixated up and around, trying to take in all of the installation, barely acknowledging my presence but for a few short answers to my questions. I stepped back while he took out his phone, using it to take photographs of the work, moving around in the space, stepping back or forwards and turning the phone in order to frame his frozen images. As we moved back into the foyer space he continued to look up at the swaying cardboard and inquired about going up in the lift so that he could see the rest of the work. This desire to frame and capture the installation and to continue to dedicate time to exploring the space remained with me, and incited my own curiosity for the work which I then returned to*

following our dialogue.

Commodified

Approaching this work through the foyer I drew Rachel's attention back towards it, as she continued walking past, uncertain of which direction to take in the confusing space and not noticing the piece. She stepped backwards in surprise as her eyes fell on the 'shop' table top, 'ah, that's really interesting', *her eyes scanning over the items and she walked by me.* 'I wouldn't have noticed it … keep calm and carry on with PTSD? Are these actually for sale?' *She leaned in closer to read the text on the accompanying 'sales tag'.* 'I wonder how many people have picked them up and tried to buy them?' *I explained that the work she was carefully leaning over to read more closely was put there because people had tried to take them to the shop counter, she responded,* 'You could see people buying them, you can imagine them being sold in the shop. [Gesturing over to the actual Museum gift shop] It makes you think, hang on, this is really close to… it makes you think…' *As her words trailed off she stepped backwards towards to me and away from the work, her eyes continuing to scan the table top, but now standing a distance away with one arm firmly across her chest, hand on heart, and other with her hand reaching up to cover her mouth.* 'You don't seem comfortable with it', *I said to her, realising that her discomfort was becoming my own as she protected herself with her crossed arms, tentatively moving forwards and again stepping back.* 'No I'm not … it's too close for comfort'. *As we discussed some of the items and the impact of the work, I found myself explaining more of the motivation for the work and the artist's background – the more uncomfortable she seemed, the more I wanted to provide information, to explain away her uneasiness with the life of the artist and his methods of working, to naturalise her experience in the context of this challenging approach. I was unsure of how describe Aman Mojadidi's provocative works and cavalier subversion of themes of jihad and politics in Afghanistan… 'Trying to describe his practice, I'm not sure what word I'd use…… brave? Stupid?' A laugh broke the tension and her arms dropped a little;* 'Brave yes. I like it in that way, it's very powerful'. *I saw her still scanning over the objects; a bucket and towel, poetry books and gold painted*

toy grenades, more at ease but still maintaining the space between herself and the work, a barrier between this souvenir shop and her own discomfort. 'Do you want to go and see the others? You're looking quite uncomfortable still'. With a firm 'yes', she stepped away, dropping her arms and following my lead away from the work and up the stairs. As we continued around the rest of the exhibition Rachel referred back to this work frequently using it as a paragon of powerful experience; while the visible discomfort had faded, the affect of the work remained.

This consideration of the role of the artist with contemporary art interventions prompts a return to the notion of affect in the Museum, with respect to affect being employed as an interpretive strategy in IWM North, and the implications of the subjectivities it might produce within the space of the exhibition. The subjectivity of the artist manifests through multiple, complex relationships with the museum institution. Given that the desired result of these encounters is a 'critical historical consciousness' brought about through an affective encounter with artworks in the Museum, it is imperative to consider the possibility of 'ways of knowing' through these encounters.

Jennifer Bonnell and Roger I. Simon have proposed the concept of 'intimacy' as a frame for encounters occurring within the space of 'difficult' exhibitions.[688] Akin to the notion of the 'terrible gift', a difficult exhibition is one which represents a shift in institutional narratives away from pedagogic models of knowledge acquisition, and as such introduces 'an aspect of visitor experience that implicates both cognitive and affective aspects of that experience', thus causing the visitor to undergo significant challenges to their interpretive abilities.[689] Thinking back to the IWM North's approach – using contemporary art to explore and interpret issues of 'Conflict and Compassion' through sensory knowledge – the introduction of contemporary art as an interpretive layer challenges the visitor in that other skills are required in order for them to 'read' the works. Bonnell and Simon propose

---

[688] Jennifer Bonnell and Roger I. Simon, '"Difficult" exhibitions and intimate encounters', *Museum and Society*, 5 (2) (2007), 65-85.
[689] Bonnell and Simon, p. 67

'intimacy' as a lens through which this specifically contextualised experience of difficulty can be viewed, and through which the meaning making that is constituted in relation to the visitors' encounter with the material art object can be explored. Described as the quality of a relationship which embodies a significant degree of exposure and a 'relationship that cannot be contained conceptually; the cognitive and emotional quality of the relationship exceeds the sayable', the concept of 'intimacy' suggests a frame within which encounters such as the one Rachel experienced with the *Commodified* artwork, or Thomas with *Enter Ghost Exist Ghost, The Genie*, where they both struggled to articulate their responses to those works using language. 'Intimacy' is proposed by Bonnell and Simon as an alternative to traditional forms of 'knowing'.[690] Understood as a 'receptivity to experience and the acknowledgement of this experience as a possibility for insight and transformative critique of one's way of understanding the world', 'intimacy thus suggests a way of knowing akin to that of the critical historical consciousness intended by the IWM North.[691]

Writing on the concept of art as a visual language for trauma, Jill Bennett articulated a discussion around affect, trauma and contemporary art that is useful to the notion of affect that occupies this thesis and the possibilities of 'knowing engagement' with art in the IWM North.[692] Here, I will take some time to analyse how Bennett has constructed an argument which brings together conjunctions of 'affective and critical operation' as a basis for the concept of 'empathic vision'. It is this intersection of the affective and critical modes of being as a frame within which to understand our experience of contemporary art, and provide a perspective from which to approach the artworks in the IWM North and their capacity for facilitating a 'critical historical consciousness'. I suggest that, while trauma is not explicitly discussed in the exhibition material, many of the works are embedded in experiences of personal and cultural trauma and this aspect is integral to these artworks. As such, trauma provides a useful lens through which to examine the possibilities of affect as a

---

[690] Bonnell and Simon, p. 69.
[691] Bonnell and Simon, p. 69.
[692] Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: affect, trauma and contemporary art* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005)

mode of catalysing both emotional and critical responses to the themes addressed within the

ATM14 exhibition and within the broader narratives of the IWM North. For example, Nalini

Malani's work, *In Search of Vanished Blood*, has been defined by Carolyn Christov-

Bakargiev as 'bearing contemporary witness to the traumatic events' of Partition.[693] The

Partition of India in 1947, taking place only a year after the artist was born, has been

described as a core preoccupation and founding trauma of the artist's work.[694] Christov-

Bakargiev has conceptualised the visual elements of the works and the feminine figured

depicted in Malani's paintings as 'often conveying for the viewer a feeling of the traumatic

consequences of history, they represent a feminine aspect that is nonetheless able to speak in

a de-gendered and potentially shared language'.[695] Zarina Bhimji's work included in the

ATM14 exhibition shared similar concerns in that it is rooted in a violent displacement of

people in the context of British colonial power, specifically the mass traumatic event of the

Asian population of Uganda being expelled by Idi Amin in 1972. Bhimji's work is

described by T.J Demos as drawing links between aesthetics and politics, and historical

consciousness and affective sensation through its exploration of abandoned buildings and

architecture.[696] The buildings in Bhimji's work, such as the one depicted in *Here was*

Uganda, as if in the vastness of India, are framed by the artist as metaphors of painful loss,

brutality and abandonment, standings as 'material and architectural reminders of the

colonial project and its immediate post-colonial transition'.[697]

In her book, *Empathic Vision: affect, trauma and contemporary art*, Bennett works

through examples of contemporary art in which she identifies trauma as being an 'affective

dynamic internal to the work' and thus not necessarily evidenced in the works' narrative

component.[698] Her intention is to explore the possibilities of finding a 'communicable

---

[693] Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, 'Introduction', in *Nalini Malani: In Search of Vanished Blood* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2013), pp. 1-11, (p. 8).
[694] Arjun Appadurai, quoted in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, p. 6.
[695] Christov-Bakargiev, p. 9.
[696] T.J Demos, 'Zarina Bhimji: Cinemas of Affect', in *Zarina Bhimji*, exhibition catalogue (London: Ridinghouse) pp. 11-32.
[697] T.J Demos, p. 12.
[698] Bennett, p. 2.

language of sensation and affect to register the experience of traumatic memory', not by attempting to uncover how trauma is represented, but rather by asking the question: what does art tell us about trauma?[699] Traditional art historical methods defined in terms of identifying the representational or signifying function of art are, for Bennett, unable to adequately account for the experience of trauma in art due to the fundamental nature of trauma being non-conforming to the logic of representation. Bennett frames her opening discussion by taking issue with Leo Bersani's claim relating to the realist underpinnings of art's claim '*to salvage* damaged experience and therefore redeem life.'[700] It is with respect to the politics of testimony, particularly relating to Holocaust studies and to trauma studies, that Bennett locates her issue with this realist claim and the notion that art can capture and transmit real experience. Instead, Bennett refers to Ernst van Alphen's notion that the function of art should be limited (to its representational role) and takes as her point of departure the notion that art challenges rather than reinforces the boundary between art and the reality of war and trauma. From this, she focuses her analysis on contemporary artworks that she conceptualises as working on this boundary between and asserts that a traditional discursive framework which prioritises meaning over form is not appropriate if we are to explore possible answers to the question posed regarding what art can do.

In order to undertake this exploration, Bennett locates her work in relation to earlier work undertaken by Hal Foster in relation to art and trauma and her reading of this as a tendency to reduce trauma to an aesthetic concern rather than a political impulse.[701] For Bennett, this tendency, located in a realist aesthetic, does not enable the possibilities of considering art as a vehicle for the interpersonal transmission of experience. As transactive rather than communicative, affect emerges from a direct engagement with the sensation registered in the work rather than through the extrapolation of a persona or a subject from a representational or realist narrative.[702] Thus, in order to understand how artworks might lead

---

[699] Bennett, p. 2.
[700] Bennett, p. 3.
[701] Bennett is here referring to Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: the avant-garde at the end of the century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996)
[702] Bennett, pp. 6-7.

to a conceptual or critical engagement, it is necessary to understand affect as unconstrained by more traditional narrative or signifying forms. Drawing particularly on Giles Deleuze and his work on the encountered sign, Bennett addresses affect as a sensation that can operate as a catalyst for a form of critical inquiry through the forcing of an involuntary engagement:

> The truths which intelligence grasps directly in the light of day have something less profound, less necessary about them than those which life has communicated to us in spite of ourselves in an impression, a material impression because it has reached us through our senses.[703]

This proposition resonates with the concerns of this thesis and the notion of a mode of criticality brought into being through a material encounter. Bennett connects this notion of the encountered sign as its ability to engender a particular mode of thinking to the notion that any 'intelligent' understanding cannot prelude the embodied sensational experience; it is thus, 'by virtue of its specific affective capacities' that art is able to 'exploit forms of embodied perception in order to promote forms of critical inquiry'.[704] This process of a material encounter as a catalyst for instigating 'critical historical consciousness' is embedded in the IWM North's strategic programming in relation to the curation of contemporary art in the Museum displays. While the Museum has acknowledged that this approach creates additional work for the visitor in an already challenging space, there is little understanding as to the mechanisms through which this transformative process might occur.[705] The problematic issue here faced by the Museum is expressed in Bennett's writing and her framing of the current task for art theory: 'to determine the specific nature of both the aesthetic experience of affect and the manner in which art is able to open up traumatic to an audience'.[706] I will return here to the suggestion that artworks sit on a boundary. Bennett's suggestion here echoes certain sentiments in Foster's earlier writing on works of

---

[703] Giles Deleuze, quoted in Bennett, p. 7.
[704] Bennett, p. 10.
[705] Suzanne MacLeod, Jocelyn Dodd and Tom Duncan, *Developing the IWM North* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2014), p. 11.
[706] Bennett, p. 11.

institutional critique in establishing positions of 'inside' and 'outside'. Drawing on theories of trauma studies, Bennett opens up the tension in the experience of traumatic memory and the necessity of engagement with forms of experience that are lived and negotiated at an intersection of an 'inside' and an 'outside'. It is through this temporal and spatial positioning - in broader fields of experience rather than confining them to a single point in time of one individual's experience - that Bennett articulates the possibilities of trauma in art as an intervention into political fields.[707]

Intervention as Interpretation

In order to consider the use of contemporary art as an affective strategy of interpretation at the IWM North, it is important to understand how and why contemporary art came to be present in institutional rhetoric in the specific form of 'interpretation'. During the past twenty years contemporary art has emerged as an audience development tool, employed by museums, galleries and heritage sites as an alternative to information panels, audio and guided tours, talks and interactive activities. Often referred to as 'artists' interventions', these works engage with discourses of space, place, narrative and ideology. Although the use of art interventions as a mode of interpretation is a relatively recent venture for museums of social history, science and heritage, art as a mode of critical intervention has an extensive theoretical foundation in aesthetic discourse.[708] The term 'intervention' indicates a specific type of action, one which will alter a particular set of circumstances in order to affect the outcome. In the context of critical art interventions, the site of intervention has often been the museum or art institution, or the wider ideological framework within which the institution operates. In these instances the critical activity of the artist is a notable presence between the museum or gallery and its visitors, intended to renegotiate the terms of

---

[707] Bennett, p. 12.

[708] Buchloh, Benjamin, H. D., 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', *October*, 55 (1990), 105-143; Foster, Hal, 'The Artist as Ethnographer?', in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, ed. by George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, (London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 302-309 Foster, Hal, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge; Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 36-37; Fraser, Andrea, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum* (2005), 100-106.

the visitor experience in and of the institution through the intervening art work.

A now seminal work by artist and curator Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum* (1992) at the Maryland Historical Society is an example of an artist working directly with museum collections and archives as a mode of intervention and critique, rendering the museum visible as a politically and ideologically constituted space, whilst concurrently offering alternative configurations of history by drawing attention to absence through the juxtaposition of material objects. Described by Howard Halle as a project of 'excavating institutional racism', Wilson's use of parody in his subversion of curatorial decision making and practices of display called attention to racial biases embedded in traditional historical exhibitions.[709] Sitting within Claire Robin's frame of 'orchestrated transgressions', Wilson asserted the intention articulated by Robins in her account of works such as *Mining the Museum*, in that his interest for the project was located in the act of disarming people in order to move them outside of their comfort zone: 'I'm really interested in surprise and how one reacts on an emotional and intuitive level before the intellectual self kicks in'.[710] This response was evident in the visitor reactions to Aman Mojadidi's work *Commodified* in the ATM14 exhibition, and it is notable that Mojadidi's practice of parody as a means of making ideologies visible is similar to that of Wilson. This approach employed by Wilson is evident in contemporary curatorial practices as explored by Andrea Witcomb with respect to contact histories wherein relationships between the past and present – how the past can be constructed and obscured in the present – are acutely manifest in dynamics of recognition and identification.[711] Taking one well known aspect of *Mining the Museum* as an example of the strategy to problematise historical narrative and make visible power relations and positions of complicity it is evident how a juxtaposition of particular objects can create an affective space of recognition intended to both unsettle the viewer and to encourage a mode

---

[709] Fred Wilson and Howard Halle, 'Mining the Museum', *Grand Street*, 44 (1993), 151-172, (p. 170).

[710] Martha Buskirk, 'Interviews with Sherries Levine, Louise Lawler, and Fred Wilson', *October*, 70 (1994), 109-112 (p. 110).

[711] Andrea Witcomb, 'Understanding the role of affect in producing a critical pedagogy for history museums', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28 (3) (2013), 255-271

of critical thinking akin to historical consciousness.

In a display case categorised by Wilson as 'Metalwork', visitors were presented with a glass case containing a set of 'Silver Service' were dated c. 1830-80, including pitchers, steins and goblets in a Baltimore repoussé style. The items were arranged in a semi-circular fashion, centering what would usually be a 'star' object; in this instance the central object being a pair of 'Iron Slave Shackles', c. 1793-1872. The iron shackles were of the same time period, but clearly not belonging to the same echelon of decorative arts a visitor might expect to be on display as an exemplar of Baltimore's history. The inclusion of the anomalous objects not typically on display was motivated by the artist's archival research in the Historical Society and the lack of organisational knowledge (and often lack of interest) around objects of material history related to slavery and colonial pasts.[712] This work of archival recovery was rooted very much in both the artists' own curatorial experience and his own responses of discomfort when visiting the museum during the project's research phase where Wilson, along with The Contemporary, Baltimore, were looking for an appropriate site for his commissioned work.[713] Using a video to frame the exhibition, Wilson makes himself present to visitors as an artist producing both a personal and critical response: 'A very sort of imagistic, dreamlike video basically saying "I came into this space and I felt very uncomfortable and everything looked familiar but now everything seems to be speaking to me and saying different things"'.[714]

Wilson has stated that this work was grounded more in his identity as an artist than as a curator – even though it was executed using his curatorial knowledge – as he understood the artist as having a certain amount of leeway in their response that was not granted to a curator due to the necessity for an amount of 'objective' scholarship required from a curator in a public museum.[715] From this comment it becomes apparent where Robins grounds her concept of the 'artist as *parrhesiate*', wherein the artist claims a space

---

[712] Fred Wilson, *A Change of Heart* (2010) <https://vimeo.com/11838838> [Accessed 28 Sept 2017]
[713] Wilson (2010).
[714] Fred Wilson (2010).
[715] Buskirk, p. 109.

of free speech within which they can address difficult and controversial issues.[716] The

contention in the particular instance of *Mining the Museum* is not regarding the history of

slavery and colonial history *per se*, but the issue of complicity that is located within the

museum and its collections, made visible at a number of intersections. Taking the

'Metalworks' display as an example through which to illustrate this, the artist asks the

questions: 'Who served the silver and who could have made the silver objects in

apprenticeship situations, and certainly who's labour could produce the wealth that

produced the silver?'[717] In using a label akin to all others used throughout the Museum

Wilson highlights the erasure of these issues inextricably embedded in the materiality of the

iron shackles, made all the more prominent through the presence of the juxtaposed

silverware. Thus, the Museum's complicity is also laid bare, through its failure to

adequately interrogate the material and socio-political relations between the objects in its

collection, and its complicity in the perpetuation of racial bias, by privileging the presence

of white histories in its exhibition displays.

Considering this work as an act of intervention, there are multiple relations which

have been affected by this process of 'coming between'.[718] The works acted as a point of

critique, occupying the relationship between the visitor and the museum revealing the power

structures that had remained hidden through exhibitionary narratives and curatorial decision

making while concurrently bringing to the fore those stories being obscured. The work also

intervened in internal relationships within the Historical Society and acted as a catalyst for

dialogues between museum professionals, who had limited knowledge of the stories, and

African-American staff in security and maintenance roles who were intimately familiar with

these narratives, thus facilitating a power shift within the organisation around the exhibition

and instigated by lines of communication that not been previously considered in working

---

[716] Robins (2013).

[717] Fred Wilson, (2010).

[718] Oxford English Dictionary, 'intervention' definition
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/98431?redirectedFrom=intervention#eid> [Accessed 27 October 2017].

practices.[719]

I argue that this form of intervention was successful in part due to a process which makes visible all interlocutors involved in the dialogue: the artist (in the introductory video), the museum (through using the museum's own display techniques and decision making processes), the visitor (and their own complicity perpetuating an obscuring certain historical narratives by not challenging the status quo) and the communities from Baltimore (through the recovery of their social and political history through a recovery of their material history from the archives). I propose that the success of this work was rooted in engendering a critical historical consciousness through implicating the Historical Society and their visitors in processes of knowledge production which both privilege and obscure different racial narratives within systems of power. This move has the potential to facilitate 'thinking explicitly about the historical horizon which is co-extensive with the life we live and had lived'.[720] The questions brought to the fore are concerned with the role of the artist as an interlocutor in these relational dialogues and why it is the responsibility of artists to undertake this specific form of critical work, and in connection with these, what is it about contemporary artworks that (supposedly) facilitates this shift in visitors' critical thinking and orientates towards a self-conscious historical specificity? I will address these concerns through a critical interrogation of site-specific intervention practices and the dialogues they construct between artists and the museum and heritage institutions and organisations commissioning them. Thinking through the lens of the relationship between 'artist and *parrhesiate*' and the concept of interventions as 'orchestrated transgressions' as articulated by Claire Robins, I aim to locate these intervention practices within art historical discourse and explore the tensions embedded in these works as both sites of critique and mechanisms for a form of transformative interpretation.[721] [A. MOJAD. WORKING IN SINILAR WAY]

Site-Specificity and Critique as 'Interpretation'

---

[719] Fred Wilson (2010).
[720] Gadamer, pp. 8-9.
[721] Robins (2013), p. 208.

Shortly after *Mining the Museum*, Miwon Kwon, in the essay 'One Place after Another:

Notes on Site Specificity', considered processes of engagement between the art object,

viewer, environment and artist in the context of art historical discourse, with intervention

works being located in relation to site-specific art.[722] It is particularly pertinent to revisit

Kwon's discussion with respect to contemporary programming in museum and heritage sites

and her tracing of site-specific works through the paradigms of phenomenology,

social/institutional critique and engagement with/production of critical discourse.[723] An

exploration of these processes is relevant to a consideration of contemporary art as an

interpretation strategy in a museum context, as the possible sites of meaning have

significant consequences in terms of the efficacy of these art objects in facilitating forms of

visitor experience. Kwon's assertion that these paradigms of phenomenology, critique and

discursive interventions do not constitute a linear trajectory, nor are they mutually

exclusive, provides a possible framework within which the nuances, contradictions and

multiple sites of meaning of an artwork can be unpacked.[724] Locating the dialogue within art

historical concerns that have expressed a preoccupation with sites of meaning, Kwon credits

Minimalist art theory with initially expanding the aesthetic field beyond an autonomous

object – that is, an object which contained the properties or characteristics which defined it

as aesthetic within the boundaries of the object itself – to include the physical environment

and the body of the viewer.[725] This transgression of the ideological boundaries of the

autonomous art object thus served to relocate the terms of the aesthetic form in the viewer's

encounter with the object. This move away from an aesthetic object towards an aesthetic

encounter is fundamental to the rhetorical framing of contemporary artworks in the ATM14

and the meaning of the works situated in the Museum being derived from their capacity to

intervene and challenge preconceptions held by visitors by proposing new forms of

dialogue. Meaning, therefore, is derived not solely from the artworks as aesthetic responses,

---

[722] Miwon Kwon, 'One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity', *October*, 80 (1997), 85-110.
[723] Kwon, pp. 90-105.
[724] Kwon, p. 95.
[725] Kwon, p. 88.

but from the *affective responses* experienced by visitors in their encounters and the interventions made by the artworks into broader discourses.

The relationships between the artworks as material objects and the physical spaces they occupied was brought to the fore of aesthetic theory and criticism in the 1960s in an act of resistance towards to the illusionary space constructed by Modernist formalism in which the content of the artwork was embedded in the characteristics of artistic mediums.[726] Robert Morris and Donald Judd have been canonised as the central protagonists of this ideological shift, expressing their aesthetic philosophies in the seminal essays 'Notes on Sculpture I-III, IV', and 'Specific Objects', respectively.[727] Judd emphasised the 'intrinsic power' of actual space as occupied by three dimensional objects as a rebuttal of Abstract Expressionist paintings' containment of illusionistic space within the confines of a rectangular canvas.[728] Concurrently, Morris referred to the viewer's 'experience' of art objects explicitly as a physically encounter, juxtaposing the object and the body of the viewer in the same conceptual space where the encounter is located. Referring to this as processes as a 'restructuring of perceptual relevance', in 'Notes on Sculpture IV: Beyond Objects' Morris articulates this encounter as taking place in relation to the material form of the object existing in actual space. For Morris this encounter provided the basis of his investigation into aesthetic experience.[729] This deference to the space of encounter with a material artwork is relevant to the discussion of this thesis and the relational approach proposed to account for experiences within the IWM North with respect to the contemporary artworks intervening in the Museum spaces. Given that considerations of

---

[726] As discussed in Kwon (1997), Foster (1996) and Buchloh (1990).

[727] Robert Morris, 'Notes on Scultpure 1-3', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 828-835. Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculture 4: Beyond Objects', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 881-885. Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 824-828.

[728] Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh, '1965: Judd, Morris and Minimalism', in *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), pp. 492-495, (p. 492).

[729] Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture 4: Beyond Objects', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 881-885

'outcomes' of engagement with arts and culture devote little, if any, attention to the materiality of the intervention of artworks – be that into economics, social issues or health and wellbeing – it is useful here to review how these artworks as material objects have been previously conceptualised with respect to viewer experiences and processes of meaning-making.

This move to undermine a hierarchy which prioritised the characteristics of the art object, in and of themselves, manifested a shift evident in broader philosophical thought contemporary to Morris and Judd's artistic practice concerning the relationship between the subjective self and the 'objective world'. The influence of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of phenomenology is apparent in the Minimalist theories of artists and critique such as Morris and Judd. Underpinning phenomenological theory is a positioning of the world as an entity that is *experienced*, as opposed to the world as *known* through processes of empirical reasoning as framed within a purely epistemological approach.[730] As initially conceived by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology was intended to be a theory of science, concerned with consciousness as a 'basis of all experience',[731] and, as such, the processes by which consciousness obtained objective knowledge were of primary importance. Thus for Husserl, consciousness is the condition of all experience thus constituted the world.[732] This claim of a constitutive relationship was rejected by Merleau-Ponty in favour of a relationship which posits subjective consciousness in a *dialogue* with the world, and therefore the construction of meaning occurs through this dialogic process.[733] As a consequence, for Merleau-Ponty consciousness is embodied in a situation, thus positioning bodily experience as a primary site through which the world is both encountered and understood. This mode of philosophical thought manifested in Morris' account of the aesthetic encounter is articulated in these terms: '...the major aesthetic terms are not in but

---

[730] Lauries Spurling, *Phenomenology and the social world: The Philosophy of Merleu-Ponty and its relation to the social sciences* (London; Boston: Rotledge, 1977), p. 7.
[731] Dermot Moran, 'Edmund Husserl: founder of phenomenology', in *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 60-90 (p. 61).
[732] Moran, pp. 60-61.
[733] Spurling, p. 10.

dependent upon this autonomous object and exist as unfixed variables that find their specific

definition in the particular space and light and physical viewpoint of the spectator.'[734] Here,

the 'art object' – or 'specific object' in Donald Judd's terms – is positioned as a facilitator or

catalyst for an aesthetic situation and meaning is derived not purely from the object, but

rather the perception of the object as it is encountered in a specific context.[735]

A criticism of the intention of Minimalist's redefining of sculpture in a break with the

concept of transcendental space was proposed by Hal Foster with respect to the conflation

of this break with a phenomenology.[736] According to Foster, the Minimalist interrogation of

the 'perceptual conditions and conventional limits of art' neglects a consideration of the

'formal essence and categorical being' of artworks that is necessary in order for it to be

defined as an ontology.[737] Instead, Minimalism engaged in an intellectual interrogation with

the aesthetic potential of an encounter with a material art object and thus operated as an

epistemic rather than ontological project.[738] Foster did, however, concede that the presence

of a viewing subject was essential in the construction of meaning of an artwork: '...just as

phenomenology undercuts the idealism of the Cartesian "I think", so minimalism undercuts

the abstract-expressionist "I express", both substitute an "I perceive" that leaves meaning

lodged in the subject'.[739] Foster offered a further criticism of perception (in Minimalist

terms) in that it was considered outside of history, language, sexuality and power relations;

relations that could not be more pertinent to artworks such as those of the ATM14 in that

perception of these works is very much rooted is historically and culturally specific socio-

political circumstance.[740] Thus, to frame encounters with artworks as *purely*

phenomenological would neglect to account for these encounters as possible 'sites of

articulation', with respect to Stuart Hall's work, wherein 'ways of knowing' experiences

---

[734] Robert Morris,' Notes on Sculpture' in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by. Gregory
Battcock (London: University of California Press Ltd, 1995) pp. 222-235, (p. 234).
[735] An extended discussion of the circumstance of these shifting ideals can also be found in Rosalind
Krauss, 'The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum, *October*, 54 (1990), 3-17.
[736] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge; Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 36-37.
[737] Foster, p. 40.
[738] Foster, p. 40.
[739] Foster, p. 43.
[740] Foster, p. 43.

with contemporary artworks intervening in museums and heritage spaces can provide

opportunities to examine the relationship between subjectivities and social (determining)

structures.[741] This issue will be explored in more detail through a closer reading of Aman

Mojadidi's work, *Commodified*, later in this chapter.

The paradigm of institutional critique is introduced by Kwon as a paradigm of site-specificity that continued that expansion of the aesthetic boundary that Minimalism had

instigated. While Minimalism challenged the idealist hermeticism of the autonomous art

object by deflecting its meaning to the space of its presentation, institutional critique further

complicated this displacement by highlighting the idealist hermeticism of the space of

presentation itself.[742] Emerging during the late 1970s and early 1980s as a challenge to this

phenomenological model which, through a focus on physical perception of a material

object, negated the discursive context of the space it occupied, institutional critique took aim

at the ideological condition of viewing framed by the art gallery as a culturally coded

institution.[743] Here, the art institution is exposed as a cultural framework which determines

that status of objects on display *as art*, and as such assigns to them particular aesthetic,

cultural and economic values. Artists such as Andrea Fraser, Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren

and Michael Asher and Marcel Broodthaers engaged in forms of artistic practices that made

visible the art institution as a site of critique – both as a physical and discursive site –

through which the social, political, cultural and economic relations which constituted the

'art world' could be exposed as both ideological and concrete sets of relations.[744] Kwon

defines the critical potential of these as grounded in their operation as a verb or process. The

meaning of these works is thus located in the processes of engagement through which the

visitor encounters them in the ideological context of the museum.[745] The forms of the works

were not restricted to the self-contained 'gestalt' forms of Minimalist sculpture, and instead

---

[741] Gray, p. 32.
[742] Kwon, p. 88.
[743] Kwon, p. 89-91.
[744] Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), pp. 540-560.
[745] Kwon, p. 91.

took the form of performances, installations and even empty rooms painted to highlight the rooms as physical and conceptual 'frames'. Kwon defines the social nature of the production and reception of art in public space in terms of a semantic slippage between content and site. The context of these works is, for Kwon, anchored in the discursive realm, and thus cultural debates, theoretical concepts, institutional frameworks and such like which the artworks are critiquing, also come to function as the site.[746]

A further consideration of institutional frameworks as a site for critique was offered by Vered Maimon, who located forms of artistic practices in the pertinent contemporary context of 'new forms of power and global violence', a context which speaks explicitly to the ATM14 exhibition there of 'Conflict and Compassion'.[747] Defining institutional critique as a reaction to a 'loss of the real', Maimon situated these processes of art production with respect to a hyperreality determined by a collapse of the sign by the 'liquidation of all referentials', to the extent that the 'real' no longer exists and there is 'no imaginary to envelop it'.[748] It is within this destruction of the distinction between the real and the imaginary that Maimon frames his own critique of the work of Hans Haacke. Discussing a series of works in which Haacke invited museum and gallery visitors to complete surveys at polls during visits to different art museums, Maimon addressed the processes of politics and bureaucracy exposed by the artist in order to make them apparent to visitors with the intention of 'activating the viewing subject' through making them aware of the construction of their own subjectivity by those same politics and bureaucratic processes.[749] Here, Maimon employs Jean Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreal to expose the fallacy inherent in Haacke's work, centred on a critique of the assumption of a 'truth' or 'real' society being masked by political processes. In Haacke's *Polls* works, Maimon understands the artist to have cast

---

[746] Joanne Williams, 'Contemporary Art Interventions: An Investigation into the Status of the Art Object and the Facilitation of Visitor Engagements' (unpublished masters dissertation, University of Leeds, 2012)

[747] Vered Maimon, 'The Third Citizen: On Models of Criticality in Contemporary Artistic Practices', *October*, 129 (2009), 85-112 (pp. 85-86).

[748] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 2.

[749] Maimon, p. 88

himself in the role of one in possession of a revelatory knowledge that they unveil to the visitor, thus drawing attention to the inherent 'condition of inequalilty' wherein visitors are made aware of Haacke's ideological critique whilst remaining passive receivers of this knowledge.[750] The form of this work is thus constrained by the role and activity of the artist.

Baudrillard's concept of the 'loss of the real' was also pertinent to theorist Hal Foster, who approached institutional critique through the operation of the sign in the context of capitalism.[751] Emerging, for Foster, as a response to a crisis of representation prompted by the absence of the referential – wherein a lack of the 'real' negates the possibility of a representation of it[752] – institutional critique developed as a new mode artistic practice.[753] According to this interpretation, critical interventions were thus born from a necessity to ground art in tangible indexical relationships.[754] Michael Asher is cited as one such artist, whose 'situational aesthetic' mode of practice involves 'an aesthetic system that juxtaposes predetermined elements occurring within that institutional framework that are recognisable and identifiable to the public because they are drawn from the institutional context itself'.[755] Aman Mojadidi's work, *Commodified*, exhibited at the IWM North as part of the ATM14 exemplifies this form of work that is deeply imbued with the politics of display evident in the site of its specific institutional framing. The uncertainty expressed by visitors encountering this artwork stemmed from a recognition of the elements of the Museum's own gift shop and the implication of themselves as contributors to this process of the commodification of war and conflict in imagining what it would be like to purchase the items.

Relevant to my case study of contemporary interventions as a form of interpretation within museum praxis, Kwon also addresses the authority of the artist within collaborative

---

[750] Maimon, p. 92.
[751] Foster, p. 80.
[752] Baudrillard, p. 6.
[753] Foster, p. 83.
[754] Foster, p. 83.
[755] Claude Gintz, 'Michael Asher and the Transformation of "Situational Aesthetics"', *October*, 66 (1993), 113-131 (p. 113).

relationships with institutions, wherein artistic practice becomes determined as a nomadic one being reinvented through processes of site-specificity.[756] The role of the artist in these relationships is framed as that of a facilitator, providing a 'critical-artistic' service legitimated by the authorship of that particular artist. Citing the artist as the central progenitor of meaning, Kwon notes that the 'signifying chain of site-orientated art is constructed foremost by the movement and decisions of the artist, the (critical) elaboration of the project inevitably unfolds around the artist'.[757] For Kwon, this conceptualisation of the artwork frames the site of the intervention works as concurrent with the exhibition history and oeuvre of the artist. Thus, visitor engagement is not considered to be contributing factor to the meaning of the work. Again, this notion is also evident in the artworks in the ATM14 exhibition, in that they were framed quite specifically as responses by artists who 'live in, work in or address issues surrounding Asia' and produce works which respond to 'social, political and artistic narratives that made a compelling story of our time and place'.[758] While the IWM North frames the artworks within their remit, as previously asserted by the Museum's then Director, the curation of the exhibition and the texts installed alongside the works, located them quite specifically within the narrative of each artist's own practice, also detailing the works which were part of a series or which had been reimagined in response to the IWM North space.

Considering artists' interventions in terms of art historical discourse, it is evident that the relationship between the artists and the institutional context has been the site of critical or interventionist activity. While the viewer may be a necessary element to the work, such as Haacke's *Polls*, the critical process embedded in the work has been predetermined by the artist prior to viewers' encounters or participations. If art interventions are to be effective in facilitating the visitor engagement within the IWM North and contribute to the construction of critical historical consciousness, the exclusion of the visitor from the critical

---

[756] Kwon, p. 101.
[757] Kwon, p. 104.
[758] Mitha, p. 14.

activity must be addressed. For Maimon, the work of artist Walid Raad demonstrates the

critical potential for contemporary interventions. Approaching Raad's work through the

problem of knowledge articulated by Jacques Rancieré, Maimon has engaged with the right

to participate in communities of knowledge production, a problematic concept which which

takes the form of a fictional archive of the history of Lebanon and the country's civil

wars.[759] In this particular work, Maimon understands politics as 'conceptualized as a

disruptive event enacted by....those who, on the one hand, are defined as deprived of *logos*,

and yet, on the other, are addressed as ones who share the universal capacity of

understanding'.[760] Politics thus 'happens' when this paradox is made visible and

challenged.[761] The use of fiction in relation to the institutional form of the archive highlights

the 'problem of knowledge to the allocation of roles' by asking what constitutes reliable

documentation, an issue which is inherent in the question of who has the right to produce

knowledge.[762] For Maimon, this body of work by Walid Raad offers the potential for

thinking about what constitutes community, whereas Haacke's form of critique served to

perpetuate the inequality and exclusivity of knowledge.[763] The role of the artist is not to

unveil to the visitor a hidden knowledge, but to facilitate the *visitor's* critical engagement

with the institution and the narratives on display.

Authorised Transgressions

Writing in the mid-nineties, Hal Foster raises issues around the notion of the 'artist as

ethnographer' that are pertinent to contemporary art intervention programmes and their

transformative intentions within museum displays, more specifically in relation to the

ATM14 and the transformation of people's perception of Asia in the context of war and

conflict.[764] Drawing on the writing of Walter Benjamin, Foster recalls Benjamin's urge to

---

[759] Maimon, p. 94.
[760] Rancieré, quoted in Maimon, p. 95.
[761] Maimon, p. 95.
[762] Maimon, p. 97.
[763] Maimon, p. 95.
[764] Hal Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer?', in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, ed. by George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, (London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 302-309.

the 'advanced' artist to embody the concerns of the proletariat and to intervene in the means of artistic production as a transformative move, one which had the potential to transform the 'apparatus' of bourgeois culture.[765] Foster relates this paradigm to that of the artist as ethnographer and the assumption that the site of artistic transformation equates to the site of political transformation.[766] I would argue that the impetus of the IWM North to facilitate critical historical consciousness in their visitors is imbued with this transformative intent. It is worth taking a moment here to consider how Foster articulates the significance of the role played by this specific form of artistic practice and its potential to demarcate necessary fields of inside and outside conjunctive with a process of othering or constructing an alterity as a technique of reproducing and reaffirming institutional politics. The role of artist in this situation is central; 'There is the assumption that if the invoked artist is *not* perceived as socially and/or culturally other, he or she has but *limited* access to this transformative alterity, and more, that is she or she is perceived as other, he or she has *automatic* access to it'.[767] This concept is one which is evident both in the visitor responses the artworks on display in the ATM14 exhibition, and in the conceptualisation of their own commissioning and programming strategy as communicated by the IWM North in their exhibition literature. This conceptualisation manifests the notion of the artist as having access to and therefore the ability to articulate a particular form of truth due to their position as being 'outside' of the institution; Claire Robin's later invocation of Foucault's *parrhesia* is here brought to mind as a reiteration of Foster's view of the artist through the lens of the anthropologist as a 'paragon of formal reflexivity, sensitive to difference and open to chance, a self-aware reader of culture understood as text'[768]

The framing of the ATM14 festival is particularly relevant here, in that it is centred specifically on Asian contemporary art, and, at least with respect to this festival, centred on the notion that experiences of Asian contemporary culture in the form of the visual arts can

---

[765] Foster p. 302.
[766] Foster p. 302.
[767] Foster p. 302.
[768] Foster, p. 304.

challenge and change perceptions of Asia. The process of 'othering' an Asian experience of war and conflict, and access to that other via culturally defined artists as gatekeepers is pertinent when unpacking the exhibition of contemporary artworks through the lens of a relational ontology. The ontologically delimited fields of inside and outside are marked along specific cultural, social and geopolitical lines, and the notion that a 'critical historical consciousness' – transformative in that it encourages nuanced thinking with respect to enduring or pervasive narratives, relationships and historical assumptions – constructed by and through artists' innate authentic access to an alterity. This issues has been commented on by James Clifford and the site-specificity of an ethnographic approach to making art, in that both ethnography and site-specificity are ways of 'de-centering established centres of art and cultural production and display'.[769] For Clifford, this form of specificity is always structured as relative to its representation. Taking an artwork by Susan Hiller at the Freud Museum in 1994 as an example, Clifford discussed the work as transforming the space from a shrine to that of a 'contact zone', wherein ensembles were 'sustained through processes of cultural borrowing, appropriation and translation', all taking place in a multidirectional fashion.[770] I suggest that this is also taking place with the ATM14 artworks, particularly those by Shezad Dawood, Alinah Azadeh and Aman Mojadidi, where the works borrow from Eurocentric traditions of display and acts of cultural appropriation, as these artworks make visible the 'structural relations of dominance and resistance, by colonial, national, class and racial hierarchies' that Clifford is referring to within the concept of a 'contact zone'.[771]

Foster complicates assumptions of alterity through the introduction of two critiques which question the quasi-anthropological paradigm of the artist as ethnographer; first from a Marxist position which, according to Foster, critiques the tendency of this paradigm to displace the problematic of class and capitalist exploitation with race and colonial

---

[769] Clifford, James, 'An Ethnographer in the Field', in *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, ed. by Alex Coles (London: Black Dog Publishing, c. 2000), pp. 52-73, (p. 57).
[770] Clifford, p. 63.
[771] Cliford, p. 63.

oppression, and secondly from a poststructuralist perspective concerned with the same problematic not being displaced enough in that political structures tends instead to be preserved.[772] For the poststructuralist (again, in terms of Foster's discussion), the paradigm retains the notion of a *subject* of history and defines this position in terms of *truth*, and thus locates this truth in terms of *alterity*. The concrete notion of the 'other' in these terms is therefore structurally reinforced. For Foster, this results in the paradigm failing to reflect on its realist assumption, that 'the other is in the real not in the ideological, because he or she is socially oppressed, politically transformative and/or materially productive'.[773] I would interpret this as to equating to the concept of the artist as other being taken as a concrete truth based on their perceived oppression, potential to be politically transformative or their practice as materially productive. The latter two ideological fictions are embodied in the conceptualisation of the ATM14 artists and the assumptions embedded in the assumed transformative agency afforded to contemporary intervention artworks.

With respect to these two critiques, Foster draws attention to the precariousness of the paradigm of 'artist as ethnographer' in relation to the nature of contemporary geopolitical landscapes and cultural politics.[774] Foster disputes the 'automatic coding of apparent difference as manifest identity and of otherness as outsideness' which he perceives as enabling a cultural politics of marginality.[775] One of his concerns is that this coding 'may disable a cultural politics of immanence, and this politics may well be more pertinent to a postcolonial situation of multinational capitalism in which geopolitical models of centre and periphery no longer hold'. The ATM14 may be read as an attempt to make visible and propel this sense of immanence in wider public consciousness. The extent to which that can be achieved is questionable within Foster's framing of the problematics. Framing the artworks as artistic comments on and responses to culturally-specific experiences of war and conflict may instead serve to reinforce the ontological distinctions between both the artists

---

[772] Foster, p. 303.
[773] Foster, p. 303.
[774] Foster, p. 303.
[775] Foster, p. 303.

(and their narratives) and the institution, and the distinction between the visitor and 'inside' and artists as 'outside'.

This issue has been explicitly addressed by artist Aman Mojadidi in his essay contribution to the catalogue produced following the ATM14 festival, which included critical discussions around specific artists' responses in the context of the festival's broader thematic concerns.[776] As a cultural anthropologist, Mojadidi's work is explicitly engaged with ethnographic practices and narrative storytelling, and occupied with themes of belonging, identity politics, conflict, artefactual history and migration through site-specific installations which 'intentionally blur the lines between fact and fiction, imagination and documentation'.[777] Commenting on how the war in Afghanistan has become 'cool, artsy and fashionable', Mojadidi constructs a critique of the process articulated by Foster of constructing the artist at the cultural 'Other'.[778] Locating his critique with respect to the 'Other' as an imposed system of differentiation, Mojadidi problematises the enduring Eurocentric models of power and hierarchy rooted in colonial structures that he continues to encounter in his movements through the world of global markets, exhibitions, institutions and festivals.[779] He frames an interest in 'Othered' art demonstrated by the Eurocentric art market with respect to a desire to understand complexities 'from the inside', manifesting the humanitarian burden of 'giving a voice to the voiceless' – echoing the unsubstantiated assumptions evident in The Audience Agency's evaluation report with respect to the festival's 'engagement' with under privileged and marginalised communities.[780] Here, Mojadidi conceptualises the 'Eurocentric curator/dealer/gallerist/institution' with respect to Kipling-era colonial mentalities, defining the 'noble artist' as the artist who can rise above the savagery of war and oppression of conflict that surrounds them'.[781] He problematises

---

[776] Aman Mojadidi, 'The Art of Conflict Chic: Imagined Geographies and the Search for a Post-Orientalist Condition', in *Conflict and Compassion: A paradox of different in contemporary Asian art,* ed. by Bashir Makhoul and Alnoor Mitha (Manchester: HOME, 2016), pp. 75-93.
[777] Aman Mojadidi < http://www.amanmojadidi.com/about.html> [Accessed 25 November 2017]
[778] Mojadidi, p. 75.
[779] Mojadidi, p. 78.
[780] Mojadidi, p. 82.
[781] Mojadidi, p. 82.

this further, in proposing that an effect of this Othering and interest from within the global art market for contemporary art from 'conflicted countries', has resulted in artists fashioning themselves as the spokesperson this audience wants and needs them to be.[782] As a consequence, the identity of these artists become a homogenous 'local' identity that does not represent the complexities of that cultural, geographical and political space. Othered art thus becomes subsumed within a specific institutional and institutionalised rhetoric.

Commenting on the status of practices of institutional critique, Andrea Fraser has pointed to the (somewhat antithetical) recognised historical status of institutional critique and draws attention to the complicity and necessity of the 'commodity status of art' for this position to have been achieved.[783] Fraser argues that there is no longer an 'outside' position from which to position a critique in relation to the global art market. Speaking as an artist, Fraser includes herself as one of those unable to escape or move beyond the discourses which frame both her own artistic practice and her knowledge of art and its institutions. Describing the process as an 'institutionalisation of institutional critique', Fraser outlines her concerns regarding the consequences of this processes and the resulting necessity to re-examine the history and aims of this form of art practice as a means by which the urgent stakes of the present can be restated.[784] Citing artists most commonly known for their work engaging with institutional rhetoric – Michael Asher, Marcel Broothaers, Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke – Fraser locates her own use of the term 'institutional critique' when referencing their works, a term not used by the artists themselves, as stemming from Benjamin Buchloh's 1982 essay 'Allegorical Procedures'.[785] In this essay Buchloh discusses the allegorical potential of what he refers to as the 'situational aesthetics' of the 1960s and 1970s. Fraser laments the reductive nature of the term as a shorthand for 'critique of

[782] Mojadidi, p. 83.
[783] Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum* (2005), 100-106.
[784] Fraser, p. 101.
[785] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: appropriation and montage in contemporary art', *Artforum*, (1982), 43-56.

institutions' wherein the terms 'institution' and 'critique' are rarely fully qualified.[786] For Fraser, the use of 'critique' to refer to processes of 'exposing', 'reflecting' or 'revealing' do not carry the weight or transformative impetus as her framing of a critic as 'a guerrilla fighter engaging in acts of subversion and sabotage, breaking through walls and floors and doors, provoking censorship, bringing down the powers that be'.[787] In her brief historical revisit to the discourses of those earlier works of critique, Fraser challenges the notion of art or the artist as antagonistic to the institution and the institutional framing within which they remained embedded:

> Their rigorously site-specific interventions developed as a means not only to reflect on these and other institutional conditions but also to resist the very forms of appropriation on which they reflect. As transitory, these works further acknowledge the historical specificity of any critical intervention, whose effectiveness will always be limited to a particular time and place.[788]

For Fraser, the nature of this site-specificity constrains the activity of this particular artistic practice to within the bounds of the institution, and to imagine that it ever existed outside of the specific institutions and discourses of art is a fallacy. Fraser does locate a transformative potential connected with these works with respect to the frame, and the discussions which developed around notions of inside and outside, public and private, elitism and populism.[789] Like Foster's previous criticism, however, Fraser identifies a process of shifting dialogues away from the pertinent political issues serving to reproduce and legitimise structures of power, but, 'when these arguments are used to assign political value to substantive conditions, they often fail to account for the underlying distributions of power that are reproduced even as conditions change, and they thus end up serving to legitimate that reproduction'.[790]

This failure to account for the underlying distributions of power has been more recently explored in a keynote address given by Professor Anthony Downey at Art, Justice

---

[786] Fraser, p. 102.
[787] Fraser, p. 102.
[788] Fraser, p. 102.
[789] Fraser, p. 104.
[790] Fraser, p. 104

and Terror, a conference held at the IWM London on 17 June 2017. The keynote, 'Performing Rights: The Subject of Injustice and the Cultural Logic of Late Modernity', questioned the role of contemporary art in processes of cultural production replacing legal accountability, equating to a shift of accountability wherein the responsibility to represent supersedes the responsibility for effective action.[791] Speaking to the concepts of justice and injustice as the themes of the conference, Downey proposed that a politics of exceptionalism situated within the logic of late modernity, creates an urge for a political responsiveness to issues of justice and injustice that has thus far been excused by cultural means.[792] Here, Downey was referring to the instrumentalised use of contemporary art to address issues such as human rights, freedom of movement and freedom of speech by way of art doing the 'work' that should be undertaken by institutions in order to address issues of injustice on concrete social and legal levels.[793] Downey questioned what he framed as a neo-liberal dictate that contemporary arts are superseded by and aestheticized, and therefore depoliticised, debate – tantamount to 'art washing' – and questioned both who actually benefits from this form of contemporary art practice, and what it might to account for the present through the forms of contemporary art practices.[794] These suggestions and points of questioning speak to the positioning of contemporary art interventions within the IWM North as part of the ATM14 and incite a critical interrogation of the employment of contemporary art within the Museum space as a form of transformative affective interpretation. To what extent are these temporary exhibitions expected to do the critical work of engaging with challenging provocations, such as those raised by Aman Mojadidi with respect to the colonial attitudes still prevalent within museum, art and heritage institutions? Here, the artist is positioned as a *parrhesiate*, able to transgress the institutional

---

[791] Anthony Downey, 'Performing Rights: The Subject of Injustice and the Cultural Logic of Late Modernity', Keynote Paper (unpublished), presented at *Art, Justice and Terror*, 17 June 2017, IWM London < http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/art-and-justice> [Accessed 25 November 2017].
[792] The politics of exceptionalism here refers to the political status of migrants and refugees whose position are deemed to be 'exceptional' to regular rules of justice in a legal sense.
[793] Downey, 2017.
[794] Downey, 2017.

rhetoric of the museum and speak a 'truth' of a cultural 'Other', while deeply problematic structural forms of knowledge production remain obscured.

Conclusions

The intention of this research was to explore to possibilities of 'knowing engagement' with contemporary art interventions in museums and heritage sites. My thesis has framed processes of 'knowing engagement' through an analysis of current forms of evaluation developed with respect to the value debate and instrumentalised cultural policy, exploring the ways in which affective encounters with the materiality of artworks in my case study can be understood and articulated as knowledge, while examining notions of intervention and site specificity in art historical and institutional discourse. Rather than producing a 'theory of engagement', this thesis has explored ways of knowing engagement through lived experience – or *erfahrung* – and explored the multiple points of entry when studying contemporary interventions into museums and heritage as cultural objects.

The case study centred on the exhibition of 'Conflict and Compassion' hosted by the IWM North as an element of the city-wide Asia Triennial Manchester 14 festival. The exhibition's curator, Alnoor Mitha, invited a selected group of Asian visual artists to respond to the Museum architecture and display narratives and create new or reimagined artworks exploring the theme of conflict and compassion. While the exhibition was instigated as an element of an external festival, the use of contemporary art within the Museum's displays is a central part of the affective interpretative strategy employed by the Museum, with the intention of constructing a 'critical historical consciousness' in its visitors.[795] The artworks were thus situated within the discourses of the both the Museum's interpretative strategy, which aimed to engender a critical form of thinking enabling visitors

---

[795] Suzanne MacLeod, Jocelyn Dodd and Tom Duncan, *Developing the IWM North* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2014)

to reflect on the past, draw parallels to the present, and 'consider other peoples' stories in relation to one's own',[796] with the aims of the Asia Triennial Manchester 14 which 'aimed to challenge perceptions about Asia' through exploring issues of identity, migration, social and political relationships, memory and trauma.[797] These artworks thus occupied a complex discursive site within the Museum.

This research has responded to a critique offered by Belfiore and Bennett with regards to contemporary forms of evaluation in relation to engagement with the arts, in that a lack of critical knowledge around the mechanisms of 'engagement' resulting from a technical focus on knowledge production within evidence-based policy processes. As such, the problems of contemporary forms of knowledge production have been inherently methodological and related to the challenges of measurement.[798] This focus on measurement is evident in Arts Council England's agenda of 'demonstrating' the value of cultural engagement through 'robust credible research'.[799] Their agenda has restricted the forms knowledge produced in arts evaluations to proxy based measures of 'value' in order to provide 'demonstrable' evidence relating to the value of engagement in order to advocate for continued public subsidy for the arts and culture sector . In framing their research and evaluation agenda to be responsive to cultural policy at a governmental level, the Arts Council have contributed to a deficit in critical knowledge relating to the processes and mechanisms through which people make meaning from, and through, engagement with art.

In order to critically examine the relationships through which 'engagement' is constructed, understood and measured in this context, I undertook an ethnographic study in a broad sense. Undertaking an institutional ethnography, it was possible to account for the

---

[796] MacLeod et al, p. 8.

[797] Alnoor Mitha, 'Asia Triennial Manchester: Conflict and Compassion or Fear and Love in Contemporary Asian Art', in *Conflict and Compassion: A paradox of different in contemporary Asian art,* ed. by Bashir Makhoul and Alnoor Mitha (Manchester: HOME, 2016), pp.11-49

[798] Galloway, Susan, 'Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts', *Cultural Trends*, 18 (2009), 125-148 in Belfiore and Bennett, (2010).

[799] Arts Council England, *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: an evidence review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014), p. 47.

ways 'engagement' is conceptualised in policy and evaluation practices, thus rendering

visible how 'institutional language [of knowledge and engagement] organises ways of

knowing in the world in institutionally accountable ways'.[800] This was done through a

tracing of 'engagement' through policy and through research and literature published by

Arts Council England. As the largest funder of the arts and culture in the UK through the

allocation of public funds, the Arts Council's agenda is intimately shaped by broader public

policy.

Chapter One of 'knowing engagement' through exploring the role of contemporary

art in the Museum space and its role in constructing a 'critical historical consciousness'

through a form of affective interpretation. The intention of the artworks, as articulated by

the Museum, the exhibition curator and the ATM14 artists was to create a dialogue with

visitors and challenge their perceptions of war and conflict of contemporary Asian visual

artists. Chapter One explored the position of contemporary art in the IWM North and,

through including my own encounters with art in the Museum, began to account for the

relations through which these artworks existed as cultural objects. Using Claire Robins'

evocation of the artists as *parrhesita,* this chapter considered the artists' role in 'speaking'

from a position of truth, and how this form of 'speaking' might be conceptualised as a form

of interpretation in the museum. Framing the artists' activity of intervention as 'authorised

transgressions' encouraged a questioning of the extent to which the Museum institution is

made visible within these dialogues between visitors, artist and artwork as a discursive

space of politics and power relations.

Chapter Two unpacked the methodological challenges of 'knowing experience'

with respect to lived, embodied experience and the possibilities of articulating this

experience as evidence. Working through Ann Gray's approach to 'experience as evidence',

this chapter explored the potential of dialogue as a 'way of being' with visitors in order to

---

[800] Liz McCoy, 'Keeping the Institution in View: Working with Interview Accounts of Everyday Experiences', in *Institutional Ethnography*, ed. by Dorothy Smith (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), pp. 109-125, (p. 122).

produce knowledge about how they 'engage' with contemporary art interventions.[801] The chapter explored the potential of a case study approach to address the problematic issue of scaling, a central concern of Arts Council England's agenda of producing a framework within which the value of 'engagement' with arts and culture can be demonstrated. As a way of thinking with the concept of 'engagement', the potential of the case study lies in the possibility of 'mobilising specificities'[802] and interrogating the context which are 'summoned' through this process.[803]

Chapter Three situated the concept of engagement in the context of UK public policy, using Ben Golder's notion of 'false contingency', defined as 'a failure to identify the structural blockages which, whilst not historically necessary, are nevertheless neither arbitrary nor easy to disrupt', to contextualise the emphasis on engagement.[804] Through an interrogation of policy and Arts Council literature, this thesis made visible some of the contingent social and political arrangements which create structural blockages that impede alternative understandings of 'engagement' which focus on processes and mechanisms of meaning-making, as opposed to 'demonstrable, measureable outcomes'. While recognising that these 'measureable outcomes' aligned to style of New Public Management are neither arbitrary or easy to disrupt, it was proposed that in order to respond to the Arts Council's agenda of 'learning to ask the right questions' about value and engagement with arts and culture, alterative constructions of knowledge are necessary.

Chapter Four looked more closely at cultural indicators as a mode of knowledge production. The formal evaluation report for the ATM14, produced by The Audience Agency, provided a working example of knowledge that is both enabled and constrained by

---

[801] Ann Gray, *Research Practices for Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2002), p. 25.
[802] Annemarie Mol and John Law, 'Complexities: An Introduction', in *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, ed. by Annemarie Mol and John Law (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 1-22.
[803] Marylin, Strathern 'On Space and Depth', in *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, ed. by Annemarie Mol and John Law (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 88-115 (p. 89).
[804] Ben Golder, 'Foucault's Critical (Yet Ambivalent) Affirmation: Three Figures of Rights', *Social & Legal Studies* 20 (3) (2011), 283-312, (p. 306).

a mode of evaluation which approached 'engagement' through proxy forms of measurement. In this instance such proxy measures were of the economic value added to the region, and the issues of place-making and cultural perception of the Greater Manchester area. These two proxies related directly to issues articulated in *The Culture White Paper*, published in 2015. This chapter thus interrogated the relationship between governmental policy and the priorities demonstrated in the Arts Council agenda of producing 'robust, credible' research that demonstrated the value of 'engaging' with arts and culture within these instrumental terms. It was made apparent that this approach to evaluation did not produce knowledge of visitors' direct experience with the ATM14 contemporary artworks, or how they might have instigated a 'critical historical consciousness' through visitors encountering them in the Museum. The ontological separation of 'engagement' as an outcome from the lived and embodied processes through which visitors encounter material artworks was thus criticised.

The final chapter explored the dialectic relationship between 'doing and writing'[805] through the production of *fictiō* or 'fictions',[806] constructed through processes of 'textualization' where lived encounters between myself, museum visitors and the contemporary artworks were translated through interpretive process into a narration, anchored by my own position as author.[807] From such accounts, the concept of 'affect' was explored in relation to interpretation and the construction of a sensation that can 'operate as a catalyst for a form of critical inquiry through the forcing of an involuntary engagement', as theorised by Jill Bennett.[808] The chapter brought together the notion of dialogue and the role of the artist as *parrhesiate*, grounded both in theoretical literature and in the dialogues I had with visitors with respect to the artworks, and explored the role of the artist as an authorised transgressor in the context of art historical discourse. It was argued that this

---

[805] Emerson et al, p. 15.
[806] Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)
[807] Emerson et al, drawing on Clifford Geertz (1986) p. 16.
[808] Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: affect, trauma and contemporary art* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005)

move framed the artist as socially and culturally 'Other' to the institution, and that their role as a speaker of truth was dependent upon this process of 'Othering'.[809] As a consequence, it was proposed that this equated to 'a shift of accountability wherein the responsibility to represent supersedes the responsibility for effective action'.[810] Thus, the inclusion of the artist as representative of the 'Other' stands in for the social and political 'work' required to be undertaken by the institution in order to effect any substantial political or cultural change.

This critique opens up a space for possible future works relating to the concept of 'critical historical consciousness' being constructed through contemporary art employed as a form of affective interpretation. A broader discussion around the political and ethical implications of this approach is required, particularly given the challenges of dealing with 'difficult' histories and issues of trauma. A recent example of this is the controversial *Exile* installation at Kingston Lacey as part of the National Trust's *Trust New Art* programme. Installed as a tribute to 51 men who were hanged during the lifetime of William John, the house's previous owner, the artwork has attracted national press coverage and has proven to be divisive in terms of visitor feedback.[811] Connected to this is an issue beyond the scope of this thesis: that of contemporary art interventions being a mode of heritage production. Framed as affective modes of constructing 'critical historical consciousness' – a mode of critical thinking which manifests as a 'reflexive process that is aware of the historical

---

[809] Hal Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer?', in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, ed. by George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, (London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 302-309; Aman Mojadidi, 'The Art of Conflict Chic: Imagined Geographies and the Search for a Post-Orientalist Condition', in *Conflict and Compassion: A paradox of different in contemporary Asian art,* ed. by Bashir Makhoul and Alnoor Mitha (Manchester: HOME, 2016), pp. 75-93.

[810] Anthony Downey, 'Performing Rights: The Subject of Injustice and the Cultural Logic of Late Modernity', Keynote Paper (unpublished), presented at *Art, Justice and Terror*, 17 June 2017, IWM London < http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/art-and-justice> [Accessed 25 November 2017].

[811] Mark Brown, 'William John Bankes, forced into exile after gay liaison, celebrated by National Trust' , *The Guardian*, 18 Spetember 2017 < https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/18/william-john-bankes-forced-into-exile-after-gay-liaison-celebrated-by-national-trust> [Accessed 30 October 2017]; Richard Sandell, 'Enhance relevance through enabling visitors' connections between histories & contemporary issues #lgbtq #equality #prejudiceandpride (1/2)' and 'Stimulate & enrich (robust) debate between visitors on #lgbtq heritage & contemporary issues #prejudiceandpride #equality (2/2)', [Twitter post] (@RSMuseumStudies 28 October 2017).

position from which understandings of historical pasts are constructed'[812] – contemporary

art interventions can be conceptualised as site of heritage production that engages with a

'relationship with the present and the future through a creative engagement with the past'.[813]

Thinking *with* affective interventions as a mode of engaging with the production of

knowledge and memory provides a site for working through heritage production as a

'material-discursive process in which past and future arise out of dialogue and encounter

between multiple embodied subjects in (and with) the present'.[814]

[812] Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'The Problem of Historical Consciousness', *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 5 (1975), 8–52, (pp. 8-9).
[813] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 4.
[814] Harrison (2013), p. 27.

Bibliography

Ahmed, Sara, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000)

Alford, John, and Janine O'Flynn, 'Making Sense of Public Value: Concepts, Critiques and Emergent Meanings', *International Journal of Public Administration*, 32 (2009), 171-191

Arts Council England, *Achieving great art for everyone: a strategic framework for the arts*, November 2013

Arts Council England, *Funding Settlement Letter*, DCMS (2010)

Arts Council England, *Great Art and Culture for Everyone: 10-year strategic framework 2010-2020*, 2nd Edition, Revised October 2013

Arts Council England, *Information Sheet: Self Evaluation and Grants for the Arts* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2016) < http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Self_evaluation_and_Grants_for_the_Arts_Jan2016.pdf> [Accessed 27 October, 2017]

Arts Council England, *Public value and the arts in England: Discussion and conclusions of the arts debate*, November 2007

Arts Council England, *The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society: An Evidence Report*, March 2014

The Audience Agency, *Asia Triennial Manchester 2014: an evaluation of audience engagement & economic impact* (2015)

Bal, Mieke, 'Working with Concepts', *European Journal of English Studies*, 13 (2009), 13-23

Barad, Karen, 'Meeting the Universe Halfway', *Feminism, Science and the Philosophy of Science*, eds. L. H. Nelson and J. Nelson (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996)

Barad, Karen, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs*, 28 (2003), 801-831

Barry, Andrew and Georgina Born, eds., *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences* (Routledge: London and New York, 2013)

Basu, Paul, 'The Labyrinthine Aesthetic in Contemporary Museum Design', in *Exhibition Experiments*, ed. by Paul Basu and and Sharon Madonald (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2007)

Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994)

Belfiore, Eleonora, 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8 (2002), 9-106

Belfiore, Eleonora, 'Auditing culture: the subsidised cultural sector in the New Public Management', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 10 (2004), 183- 202

Belfiore, Eleonora, '"Defensive Instrumentalism" and the legacy of New Labour's cultural

policies', *Cultural Trends*, 21 (2012), 103-11

Belfiore, Eleonora, ''"Impact", "value" and "bad economics": Making sense of the problem of value in the arts and humanities', *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14 (2015), 95-110

Belfiore, Eleonora, and Oliver Bennett, 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach"; Arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14 (2010), 121-142

Belfiore, Eleonora, and Oliver Bennett, 'Rethinking the social impacts of the arts', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13 (2007), 135-151

Bell, David, and Kate Oakley, *Cultural Policy* (London: Routledge, 2015)

Bennett, Jill, *Empathic Vision: affect, trauma and contemporary art* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005)

Bennett, Tony, *Culture: A Reformer's Science* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1998)

Bennett, Tony, *Making Culture, Changing Society* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013)

Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995)

Bennett, Tony, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *New Formations*, 4, (1988), 73-102

Berleant, Arnold, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991)

Berleant, Arnold, *The Aesthetic Field: A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Christchurch: Cybereditions, 2000)

Bevir, Mark, ed. *The Sage Handbook of Governance* (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2011)

Black, Graham, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012)

Blomkamp, Emma, 'A Critical History of Cultural Indicators', in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement*, ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 11-26

Bonnell, Jennifer and Roger I. Simon, '"Difficult" exhibitions and intimate encounters', *Museum and Society*, 5 (2) (2007), 65-85

Bourdieu, Pierre, 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', in *Adult and Continuing Education: Major Themes in Education*, ed. by Peter Jarvis and Colin Griffin (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 173-184

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 2010)

Bourdieu, Pierre and Alain Darbel, *The love of art: European art museums and their public*, trans. by Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990)

Brewer, John D,'The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography: Sectarianism in the RUC', *Sociology,* 28 (1994), 231-244

Bryant, Anthony, 'Grounded theory and pragmatism: The curious case of Anselm Strauss', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10 (3) (2009). <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1358> [accessed 16th October 2015]

Buchloh, Benjamin, H. D., 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', *October*, 55 (1990), 105-143

Bunting, Caroline, *Public value and the arts in England: Discussion and conclusions of the arts debate* (London: Arts Council England, 2007)

Buskirk, Martha, 'Interviews with Sherries Levine, Louise Lawler, and Fred Wilson', *October*, 70 (1994), 109-112

Cass, Nicholas, 'Contemporary Art and Heritage: Intervention at the Brontë Parsonage' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2015)

Carnwaith, John D., and Alan S. Brown, *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experience: a literature review* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014)

Charmaz, Kathy, 'Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods', in *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, Second Edition, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 249-291

Charmez, Kathy, and Richard G. Mitchell, 'Grounded Theory in Ethnography', in *Handbook of Ethnography*, ed. by Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (London: Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 160-174

Christov-Bakargiev, Carolyn, 'Introduction', in *Nalini Malani: In Search of Vanished Blood* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2013), pp. 1-11

Clifford, James, 'An Ethnographer in the Field', in *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, ed. by Alex Coles (London: Black Dog Publishing, c. 2000), pp. 52-73

Clifford, James, 'Partial Truths', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (London: University of California Press Ltd, 1986), pp. 1-26.

Conrad, Diane, and Gail Campbell, 'Participatory Research: An Empowering Methodology with Marginalised Populations', in *Knowing Differently: Arts-Based and Collaborative Research Methods*, ed. by Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2008), pp. 247-63

Crane, Susan, 'Memory, Distortion and History in the Museum', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 2nd edition, ed. by Bettina Messias Carbonell (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012)

Creswell, John W., *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2013)

Crossick, Geoffrey & Patrycja Kaszynska, *Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project* (Wiltshire: Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2016)

Crotty, Michael, *The Foundations of Social Research: meaning and perspective in the research process* (London: Sage Publicationd Ltd, 2003)

Deeth, Jane, 'Engaging Strangeness in the Art Museum: an audience development strategy', *Museum and Society*, 10(1) (2012), 1-14

DeLanda, Manual, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006).

Deleuze, Giles, and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massuni (London: The Althone Press, 1996)

Demos, T.J, 'Zarina Bhimji: Cinemas of Affect', in *Zarina Bhimji*, exhibition catalogue (London: Ridinghouse) pp. 11-32

Department of Culture, Media and Sport <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-national-heritage> [Accessed 13 February 2017]

Department of Culture, Media and Sport, *The Culture White Paper* (London: DCMS, 2016)

Dewey, John, *Art as Experience* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 2005)

Doering, Zahavia D., 'Strangers, Guests, or Clients? Visitor Experiences in Museum', *Curator*, 42 (2) (1999), 74-87

Downey, Anthony 'Performing Rights: The Subject of Injustice and the Cultural Logic of Late Modernity', Keynote Paper (unpublished), presented at *Art, Justice and Terror*, 17 June 2017, IWM London < http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/art-and-justice> [Accessed 25 November 2017]

Duncan, Carol, and Alan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History*, 3 (1980), 448-469

Ellis, Carolyn, and Arthur Bochner, 'Talking Over Ethnography', in *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*, ed. by Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1996)

Emerson, Robert M., and Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011)

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, 'Participant Observation Fieldnotes', in *Handbook of Ethnography*, ed. by Paul Atkinson et. al. (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2007)

Everett, Michelle C., and Margaret S. Barrett, 'Benefits Visitors Derive from Sustained Engagement with a Single Museum', *Curator*, 54 (2011), 431-46

Falk, John H., and Lynn D. Dierking, *The Museum Experience* (Washington: Whalesback Books, 1992)

Fischer, Frank, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Foster, Hal, 'The Artist as Ethnographer?', in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, ed. by George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, (London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 302-309

Foster, Hal, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge; Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 36-37

Foster, Hal, Rosalind Krauss, Yve Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh, '1965: Judd, Morris and Minimalism', in *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), pp. 492-495

Fook, Jan, *Social Work: Critical Theory and Practice* (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2006)

Fraser, Andrea, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum* (2005), 100-106

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 'The Problem of Historical Consciousness', *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 5 (1975), 8–52

Galloway, Susan, 'Theory-based evaluation and the social impact of the arts', *Cultural Trends*, 18 (2009), 125-148

Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)

Geertz, Clifford, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998)

Gibson, Lisanne, 'In Defence of Instrumentality', *Cultural Trends*, 17 (2008), 247-257

Gilmore, Abigail, 'Understanding of the value and impacts of cultural experience – a literature review', *Cultural Trends*, 23 (4), (2014), 312-316

Gintz, Claude, 'Michael Asher and the Transformation of "Situational Aesthetics"', *October*, 66 (1993), 113-131

Glaser, Barney G., *Basics of Grounded Theory: Emergance vs Forcing* (California: Sociology Press, 1992)

Glaser, Barney, G., and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968)

Golder, Ben, 'Foucault's Critical (Yet Ambivalent) Affirmation: Three Figures of Rights', *Social & Legal Studies* 20 (3) (2011), 283-312

Gray, Ann, *Research Practices for Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2002)

Gray, Clive, 'Commodification and Instrumentality in Cultural Policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2 (2007), 203-215.

Gray, Clive, 'Instrumental policies: causes, consequences, museums and galleries', *Cultural Trends*, 17 (4) (2008), 209-222

Gray, Clive, *The Politics of the Arts in Britain* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000)

Guba, Egon G., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 105-107

Harrison, Rodney, 'Beyond "Natural" and "Cultural" Heritage: Toward and Ontological Politics of Heritage in the Age of the Anthropocene', *Heritage & Society* (8) (2015), 24-42

Harrison, Rodney, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013)

Harvey, Adrian, *Funding Arts and Culture in a Time of Austerity* (London: New Local Government Network, 2016)

Hein, George, *Progressive Museum Practice: John Dewey and Democracy* (California: Left Coast Press, Inc, 2012)

Hein, George, 'The Constructivist Museum', in *The Educational Role of the Museum*, ed. by Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (Oxon: Routledge, 1994), pp. 73-78

Heron, John, and Peter Reason, 'A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm', *Qualitative Inquiry* (1997), 274-94

Holden, John, *Capturing Cultural Value: how culture has become a tool of government policy* (London: DEMOS, 2004)

Hood, Christopher, 'The "new public management" in the 1980s: Variations on a theme', *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 20 (1995), 93-109

Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen, 'A New Communication Model for Museums', in *Museum Languages*, ed. by Gaynor Kavanagh (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 49-61

Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen, *Museum and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992)

Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen, *Museums and their Visitors* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

Jarvis, Daryl S., 'State theory and the rise of the regulatory state', in *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy* ed. by. Eduardo Araral et. al. (London: Routledge, 2012) pp. 59-75

Ingold, Tim, 'The Textility of Making', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34 (2010), 91-102

Imperial War Museum, *Annual Report and Account 2011-12* (2012)

Imperial War Museum North, *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War* (Manchester: Imperial War Museums, 2013)

Imperial War Museums, *IWM Corporate Plan 2014-17*

Jowell, Tessa, 'Why Should Government Supports the Arts', *Engage*, 17 (2005)

Judd, Donald, 'Specific Objects', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 824-828

Karlsson, Ove, 'Critical Dialogue: It's Value and Meaning', *Evaluation*, 7(2) (2001), 211-227

Lord Keynes, 'The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes', *The Listener*, July 12, 1945 (Appendix A, 1945 ACE report)

Knell, John, & Matthew Taylor, *Arts funding, austerity and the big society: Remaking the case for the arts* (London: RSA, 2011)

Knell, John, *Manchester Metrics: Final Report of Stage One* (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014)

Krauss, Rosalind, 'The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum, *October*, 54 (1990), 3-17

Kwon, Miwon, 'Experience vs. Interpretation: Traces of Ethnography in the Work of Lan Tuazon and Nikki S. Lee', in *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, ed. by Alex Coles (London: Black Dog Publishing, c. 2000), pp. 74-93

Kwon, Miwon, 'One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity', *October*, 80 (1997), 85-110

Law, John, 'Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics', in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. by Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2009)

Lascoumes, Pierre, and Patrick Le Gales, 'Introduction: Understanding Public Policy through Its Instruments – From the Nature of Instruments to the Sociology of Public Policy Instrumentation', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 20(1) (2007), 1-21

Lee, Jennie, *A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps* (London: HM Secretary Office, 1965)

Liamputtong, Pranee, and Jean Rumbold, 'Knowing Differently: Setting the Scene', in *Knowing Differently: Arts-Based and Collaborative Research Methods*, ed. by

Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2008), pp. 1-23

Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba, 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences', *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2000) in pp. 163-188

Le Galès, Patrick, 'Policy Instruments and Governance', in *The Sage Handbook of Governance,* ed. By Mark Bevir (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2011), pp. 142-159

Mattern, Mark,, 'John Dewey, Art and Public Life', *The Journal of Politics*, 61 (1999), 54-75

McCoy, Liz, 'Keeping the Institution in View: Working with Interview Accounts of Everyday Experiences', in *Institutional Ethnography.* ed. by Dorothy Smith (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), pp. 109-125

MacLeod, Suzanne, Jocelyn Dodd and Tom Duncan, *Developing the IWM North* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2014)

Maimon, Vered, 'The Third Citizen: On Models of Criticality in Contemporary Artistic Practices', *October*, 129 (2009), 85-112

Mason, Jennifer, *Qualitative Researching*, 2ⁿᵈ edition (London: Sage Publications, 2002)

Matthews, Sara, '"The trophies of their wars": affect and encounter at the Canadian War Museum', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28 (2013), 272-287

McCall, Vikki, and Clive Gray, 'Museums and the 'new museology': theory, practice and organisation change', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 29 (2013), 1-17

McGuigan, Jim, *Culture and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1996)

McGuigan, Jim, *Rethinking Cultural Policy* (Open University Press: Berkshire, 2004)

McIntyre, Alice, *Participatory Action Research* (London: Sage Publications Inc., 2008)

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Paul Kegan (London: Routledge, 2002)

Mitha, Alnoor, 'Asia Triennial Manchester: Conflict and Compassion or Fear and Love in Contemporary Asian Art', in *Conflict and Compassion: A paradox of different in contemporary Asian art,* ed. by Bashir Makhoul and Alnoor Mitha (Manchester: HOME, 2016), pp.11-49

Mitha, Alnoor, *Asia Triennial Manchester 2014 Festival Guide* (Manchester: MIRIAD, 2014)

Mojadidi, Aman, 'The Art of Conflict Chic: Imagined Geographies and the Search for a Post-Orientalist Condition', in *Conflict and Compassion: A paradox of different in contemporary Asian art,* ed. by Bashir Makhoul and Alnoor Mitha (Manchester: HOME, 2016), pp. 75-93

Mol, Annemarie and John Law, 'Complexities: An Introduction', in *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, ed. by Annemarie Mol and John Law (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 1-22

Moran, Dermot, 'Edmund Husserl: founder of phenomenology', in *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 60-90

Moran, Dermot, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000)

Morely, Christine, 'Critical Reflection as a Research Methodology', in *Knowing Differently: Arts-Bases Collaborative Research Methods*, ed. by Pranee Laimputtong and Jean Rumbold (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2008) pp. 265-280

Morris, Robert, 'Notes on Scultpure 1-3', in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 828-835

Morris, Robert,' Notes on Sculpture' in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by. Gregory Battcock (London: University of California Press Ltd, 1995) pp. 222-235

Mowlah, Andrew, Vivien Niblett, Jonathon Blackburn and Marie Harris, *The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society: an evidence review*, (Manchester: Arts Council England, 2014)

Mulcahy, Kevin V., 'Cultural Policy: Definitions and Theoretical Approaches, The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society, 35 (4) (2006), 319-330

Munro, Roland, 'Actor-Network Theory', in *The Sage Handbook of Power*, ed. by Stewart R. Clegg and Mark Haugaard (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2009)

Nail, Thomas, 'What is an Assemblage?', *SubStance*, 46 (2017), 21-37

Newman, Andrew, 'Imagining the social impact of museums and galleries: interrogating cultural policy through an empirical study', *International Journal of Cultural Policy,* 19 (2013), 120-137

O'Brien, Dave, 'Cultural value, measurement and policy making', *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 14 (1) (2015), 79-94

O'Brien, Dave, and Kate Oakley, *Cultural Value and Inequality: A Critical Literature Review* (Swindon: Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2005)

O'Flynn, Janine, 'From New Public Management to Pubic Value: Paradigmatic Change and Managerial Implications', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 66 (2007), 353-366

O'Reilly, Karen, *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2009)

Osbourne, Thomas, *The Structure of Modern Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008)

Packer, Jan, 'Beyond Learning: Exploring Visitors' Perceptions of the Value and Benefits of Museum Experiences', *Curator*, 51 (2008), 33-53

Packer, Jan, and Nigel Bond, 'Museums as Restorative Environments', *Curator*, 51 (2010), 421-436

Parliament of Canada, Joseph Jackson, René Lemieux, Political and Social Affairs Division, *The Arts and Canada's Cultural Policy* (Parliament of Canada: Ottawa, 1999)

Park, Peter, 'Knowledge and Participatory Research', in *Handbook of Action Research* ed. by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2006), pp. 83-93

Peirce, Charles S., 'Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs', in *The Sign in Theory and Practice: An Introductory Reader in Semiotics*, ed. Marcel Danesi and Donato Santeramo (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 1999), pp. 71-93

Pekarik, Andrew J., Zahava D. Doering, and David A. Karns, 'Exploring Satisfying Experiences in Museums, *Curator*, 42(2) (1999), 152-172

Phillips, John, 'Agencement/Assemblage', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23 (2006), 108-109

Polanyi, Michael, 'The Logic of Tacit Inference', *Philosophy*, 41 (155), (1966), 1-18

Rancière, Jacques, 'Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics', in *Communities of Sense: rethinking aesthetics and politics*, ed. by Beth Hinderliter (London: Duke University Press, 2009), p.. 31-50.

Redden, Guy, 'Culture, Value and Commensuration: The Knowledge Politics of Indicators', in *Making Culture Count: The Politics of Cultural Measurement*, ed. by Lachaln MacDowall, Marnie Badham, Emma Blomkamp and Kim Dunphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), pp. 27-41

Reason, Peter, *Participation in Human Inquiry* (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 1994)

Reason, Peter, and Hilary Bradbury, 'Introduction: Inquiry and Participation in Search of a World Worthy of Human Aspiration', in *Handbook of Action Research* ed. by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2006), pp. 1-14

Reeves, Michelle, *Measuring the economic and social impact of the arts: a review* (London: Arts Council England, 2002)

Robins, Claire, *Curious Lessons in the Museum: The Pedagogic Potential of Artists' Interventions* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016)

Robins, Claire, 'How did the Reticent Object Become so Obliging? Artists' Interventions as Interpretive Strategies', *Engage 20 Strategic Interpretation*, ed. by Karen Raney (London: Engage, 2007)

Romdenh-Romluc, Komarine, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty', in *The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology*, ed. by Sebastian Luft and Soren Overgaard (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 103-112

Schwant, Thomas A., 'Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 118-137

Schwandt, Thomas A., 'Understanding Dialogue as Practice', *Evaluation*, 7 (2) (2001), 228-237

Seeley, Chris, and Peter Reason, 'Expressions of Energy: An Epistemology of Presentational Knowing', in *Knowing Differently: Arts-Based and Collaborative Research Methods*, ed. by Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2008), pp. 25-46

Selwood, Sara, *The UK Cultural Sector Profile and Policy Issue* (London: Policy Studies Institution, 2001)

Silverman, Lois H., *The Social Work of Museums* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010)

Simons, Helen, 'Interpret in context: Generalizing from the single case in evaluation', *Evaluation*, 2 (2015), 173-188

Simon, Roger I., 'The terrible gift: Museums and the possibility of hope without consolation', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 21 (3) (2006), 187-204

Smith, Laurajane, *Uses of Heritage* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006)

Smith, Simon, Vicky Ward and Allan House, ''Impact' in the proposals for the UK's Research Excellence Framework: Shifting the boundaries of academic autonomy', *Research Policy*, 40 (2011), 1369-1379

Spurling, Laurie, *Phenomenology and the Social World: The Philosophy of Merleu-Ponty and Its Relation to the Social* Sciences (London, Boston: Routledge, 1977)

Stainton, Catherine, 'Voices and Images: Making Connections between Identity and Art', in *Learning Conversations in Museum*, ed. by Kevin Crowley and Kkaren Knutson Gaea Leinhardt (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2002), pp. 213-57

Stewart, Kathleen, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007)

Strathern, Marylin, 'On Space and Depth', in *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*, ed. by Annemarie Mol and John Law (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 88-115

Strathern, Marylin, *Partial Connections*, (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2004)

Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Second Edition (London: Sage Publications, 1998)

Sullivan, Paul, and John McCarthy, 'A Dialogical Approach to Experience-based Inquiry', *Evaluation*, 15(5) (2005), 621-638

Taber, Nancy, 'Institutional Ethnography, Autoethnography and Narrative: an argument for incorporating multiple methodologies', *Qualitative Research,* 10 (2010), 5-25

Thorburn, Kay, and Sarva Hibberd, 'Multimodal Conversations – Methods for Shared Moments of Meaning with Vulnerable Young People', in *Knowing Differently: Arts-Bases Collaborative Research Methods,* ed. by Pranee Laimputtong and Jean Rumbold (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2008), pp. 141-165

Torbet, William R., 'The Practice of Action Inquiry', in *Handbook of Action Research* ed. by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2006), pp. 207-217

Tuval-Mashiach, Rivka, and Tamar Zilber Amia Leiblich, *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis and Interpretation* (London: Sage Publication, 1998)

UNESCO, *Cultural policy: a preliminary study* (Paris: UNESCO, 1969)

UNESCO, *Reshaping Cultural Policies: A Decade Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions for Development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2015)

Vergo, Peter, *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1989, 2006)

The Warwick Commission, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (Coventry: The University of Warwick: 2015)

Weil, quoted in Jan Packer, 'Beyond Learning: Exploring Visitors' Perceptions of the Value and Benefits of Museum Experiences', *Curator*, 51 (2008), 33-53

Whitehead, Christopher, *Interpreting Art in Museum and Galleries* (London: Routledge, 2012)

Whitehead, Christopher, 'Visiting with suspicion: Recent perspectives an art and art museum', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Gerard Corsane (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 89-101

Whybrow, Katherine, Cassandra Scharber and Ruth Thomas, 'A Conceptual Exploration of Participation Section Ii: Participation as Engagement in Experience - an Aesthetic Perspective ', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44 (2012), 746-59

Williams, Joanne, 'Contemporary Art Interventions: An Investigation into the Status of the Art Object and the Facilitation of Visitor Engagements' (unpublished masters dissertation, University of Leeds, 2012)

Williams, Raymond, 'The Analysis of Culture', in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (Second Edition), ed. by John Story (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1998)

Wilson, Fred, and Howard Halle, 'Mining the Museum', *Grand Street*, 44 (1993), 151-172

Witcomb, Andrea, 'Remembering the Dead by Affecting the Living: The case of a miniature model of Treblinka', in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagement, Interpretations*, ed. by Sandra H. Dudley (Oxon: Routledge, 2010) pp. 39-52

Witcomb, Andrea, 'Understanding the role of affect in producing a critical pedagogy for history museums', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28 (3) (2013), 255-271

Online Sources

Arts & Heritage <http://www.artsandheritage.org.uk/about-us/> [accessed 25th May 2014]

Arts Council England, <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/who-we-are/> [accessed 29th January 2014]

Asia Triennial Manchester 14 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM7sYLHmY1hmuRRa8d2IABg> [Accessed 2 July 2017].

The Audience Agency <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/about> [Accessed 15 May 2017]

Danny Birchall, *Ropes, tropes & bots (or: What the Museum Finds Hard to Say)* in reference to a talk given by Mark Dion at the National History Museum <https://museumcultures.wordpress.com/> [Accessed 19 May 2017]

DCMS, <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-culture-media-sport> [accessed 15th January 2014]

DCMS and Ed Vaizey Arts Council publishes funding plans <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/arts-council-publishes-funding-plans> [Accessed 5 December 2015]

Freud Museum <https://www.freud.org.uk/events/74796/contemporary-art-inside-the-freud-museum/> [Accessed 10 May 2017]

Gerry Judah, < http://audioboo.fm/boos/221859-gerry-judah-discusses-why-buildings-are-so-central-to-the- crusader-with-dan-feeney?playlist_direction=forward> [Accessed 22 August 2012]

Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/mar/12/iraq.art> [Accessed 15 September 2017]

Harewood House Trust <http://harewood.org/explore/art/> [Accessed 10 May 2017]

Hill, Liz, <http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/exclusive-arts-schools-plummets-new-figures-show> [Accessed 5 February 2017]

Imperial War Museums, Queen and Country <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/18675> [Accessed 25 October

2017]

IPUP <http://www.york.ac.uk/ipup/events/seminars/ntp-art-heritage-report.html> [accessed 20th January 2014]

Jermyn, Helen, *The Arts and Social Exclusion: a review prepared for the Arts Council of England* (2001) < https://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/arts_social_exclusion_uk.pdf> [Accessed 24 Sept 2017]

Meadow Arts <http://www.meadowarts.org/> [Accessed 10 May 2017]

Mid Pennine Art <http://midpenninearts.org.uk/> [Accessed 10 May 2017]

Miller, Maria, Keynote Arts Speech (2013) <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/testing-times-fighting-cultures-corner-in-an-age-of-austerity> Accessed [4 September 2017]

National Trust < https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/trust-new-art-contemporary-arts-inspired-by-our-places> [Accessed 5 May 2017]

Oxford Dictionaries < http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/engage?q=engage> [accessed 26 November 2013]

Jowel, Tessa, 'Tackling the 'poverty of aspiration' through rebuilding the Public Realm', DEMOS <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/tessajowell> [accessed 25 April 2012]

Parliament of Canada, Joseph Jackson, René Lemieux, Political and Social Affairs Division, *The Arts and Canada's Cultural Policy* (Parliament of Canada: Ottawa, 1999) <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/933-e.htm#ISSUE-t> [Accessed 3 February 2017]

UNESCO, Cultural Diversity <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/cultural-diversity/> [Accessed 4 February 2017]

Wilson, Fred, *A Change of Heart* (2010) <https://vimeo.com/11838838> [Accessed 28 Sept 2017]

Appendix One

Asia Triennial Manchester 14 Information

Asia Triennial Manchester 14
27 September – 23 November 2014

ATM14 is a vibrant and stimulating showcase of the foremost contemporary visual artists who live in, work in or address issues surrounding Asia. As host for this exhibition, IWM North presents work from nine internationally renowned artists that explore the ATM14 theme, *Conflict and Compassion:*

Shamsia Hassani ❶
Selected works

Hassani's distinctive graffiti provides hope and challenges discrimination on the streets of Kabul, Afghanistan. Her dreamy Burka wearing figures give strength to the female voice in an area rife with conflict and discrimination and breathe life into areas of destruction. Often applied to abandoned buildings, here they are shown in large format outside IWM North and in the museum's AirShard.

Bashir Makhoul with **Ray Yang ❷**
Enter Ghost Exist Ghost, The Genie

This installation in IWM North's AirShard looks at how conflict displaces communities. Reminiscent of dwellings, encampments or military training grounds the cardboard boxes reflect an ordinary village or the temporary life of refugees on the move. Makhoul is a Palestinian artist based in the UK.

Aman Mojadidi ❸
Commodified

Mojadidi explores the economies of war through the lens of 'war souvenirs'. An American artist of Afghan descent, Mojadidi is known for his bold, often humorous yet thought-provoking artwork where he explores subjects from jihad to gangsterism, consumerism and corruption in modern Afghanistan.

Alinah Azadeh ❹
Child's Play / Book of Debts

Azadeh's sculptural installation represents innocence and violence. Children's toys used to 'play at war' are suspended and ceremonially wrapped in a move to both remember and separate from past experience. Azadeh's *Book of Debts* will collect personal comments on debt, conflict and resolution.

Sophie Ernst ❺
The Vanquished

Dutch video artist Sophie Ernst animates classical casts with Urdu poems to ask the question *what is a conflict?* Ernst works in the realms of political turmoil and through her installation reinterprets IWM North's Commonwealth and War Silo.

Zarina Bhimji ❻
Here was Uganda, as if in the vastness of India

Zarina Bhimji is a Ugandan Asian photographer and film maker who was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2007. This photograph looks at the traces of war in Uganda following President Idi Amin's expulsion of Asian communities. As an Asian ethnic, Bhimji fled Uganda for the UK in 1974.

Shezad Dawood ❼
Babalon Rising

Combining vintage killim, neon and ancient Mesopotamian pottery, *Babalon Rising* is a site-specific response to the museum, its architecture and modes of display. Dawood takes imagery related to ancient magical systems and more contemporary references to start a trans-cultural debate informed by his joint British and Pakistani heritage.

Nalini Malani ❽
In Search of Vanished Blood

A critically acclaimed Indian artist, Malani's installation interrogates feminist issues through symbols of Hindu and Greek mythology. Cassandra acts as a mythical figure used to comment on the status of women in Indian society and the artists own experience of the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947.
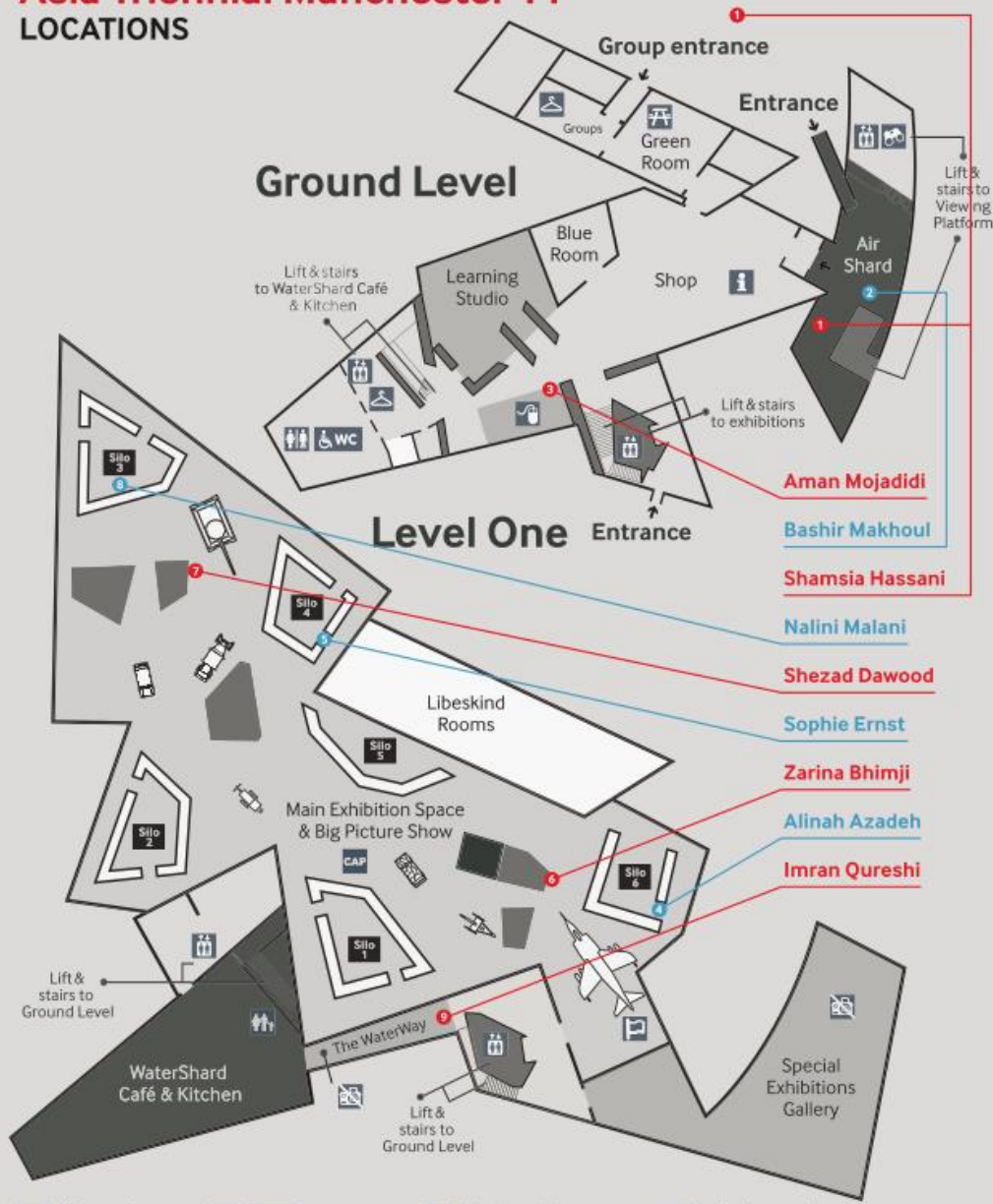
Imran Qureshi ❾
Selected works

Qureshi's work often addresses the reality of life in Pakistan and wider cultural issues. On display, *This Leprous Brightness* is a series of watercolours produced in response to Qureshi's experience of a terrorist explosion in Lahore. Using miniature painting techniques, Qureshi's bloody footprints on closer inspection depict plant life hinting at the possibility of life emerging out of devastation.

Exhibition Panels

The following texts were taken directly from the text panels accompanying the ATM1
artworks in the Museum spaces.

'Alinah Azadeh, *Child's Play/ The Book of Debts, VIII*

Alinah Azadeh is a British artist of Iranian heritage whose installations comment on loss,
longing and human experience. Her work often involves live interaction with audiences,
rooted in communal ritual and processes of gift and exchange.

Child's Play comments on the parallel worlds of innocence and violence which dwell in the
human psyche. Most of the displayed objects are children's toys used to 'play at war', from
weapons and soldiers to sticks and stones. The objects are wrapped in cloth as a ritual
gesture to express the often conflicting desire to both remember and separate from the past.

Also on display is Azadeha's *The Book of Debts, VIII*. Visitors are invited to add personal
comment in debt, conflict and resolution. The book is then recited and burned in a
ceremonial event. Burning the Book VIII will take place at IWM North on 20 November at
5.30pm.'

'Zarina Bhimji, *Here was Uganda, as if in the vastness of India*

Zarina Bhimji is a Ugandan Asian photographer and film maker whose work was nominated
for the Turner Prize in 2007. In 1974, Bhimji and her family fled Uganda for Britain,
following President Idi Amin's expulsion of Asian communities from the country. Her work
is heavily influenced by the loss and grief of this life changing moment.

This primal scene of loss and violence in **Here was Uganada as if in the vastness of India**
invites the viewer to give pause for thought and provokes questions rather than providing

answers. Scarred walls and abandoned buildings are a recurring motif in Bhimiji's work, representing the traces left from peoples' lives. Through capturing these human traces in both architecture and landscape Bhimji conveys universal human emotions from grief to longing, love and hope.'

'Shezad Dawood, *Babalon Rising*

Shezad Dawood, born in London 1974, is an artist of Indian and Pakistani descent whose multi-media works explore the complexities of cultural identity.

Combining vintage kilim, neom and ancient Mesopotamian pottery, *Babalon Rising* is a site-specific response to the museum, its architecture and displays. Dawood often works with contemporary and historical materials to create a dialogue across time and space.

The pottery resembles feminine decorative traces of the ancient civilizations of Babylonia and Iraq commenting on how recent wars have devastated ancient site and the symbolic act of warfare as a male manifestation of power. These feminine forms juxtapose with the angular and imposing design of the IWM North.'

'Sophie Ernst, *The Vanquished/Victory*

Sophie Ernst is a Dutch born video artist who explores themes of memory and displacement, often reflecting on the cultural dialogue between East and West. Her practice takes the form of sculptural projections, collaborations, dialogic performances, edited books, and short films.

Victory is a reflection on the themes of liberty, victory and defeat. In 2003, President Bush gave an address from on board the USS Abraham Lincoln that combat operations in Iraq had ended. American fought for the cause of liberty and supposedly won. *Victory* questions the notion of this problematic term and what it means to different global societies. Using a

3D copy of the 2nd Century BC marble sculpture of the goddess of victory *Nike* Ernst projects images of cock fights from countries across the world.

The Vanquished forms the second part of this installation, looking at the clichés attributed to Islamic ways of life as projected by the media in Western society. A series of conversations with Madrassa student from Lahore around the stereotypes of death, paradise and hell in Islamic culture are projected on statues of dying Galatians who were Celtic fighters from Asia Minor with roots in Northern Europe.

The installation invites the viewer into an abstract dialogue within projection and space over the complex concepts of victory, death, liberty and paradise inherent in our thoughts of war and conflict across the ages.'

'Shamsia Hassani

27 September – 23 November 2014

Asia Triennial Manchester (ATM) is the only Asian Art Triennial outside the Asia Pacific region. The festival showcases artists who live in, work in or address issues surrounding Asia.

ATM14 works with artists to challenge perceptions about Asian identity through installations, performances, symposia and events. The theme of the festival for 2014 is *Conflict and Compassion*, making IWM North a relevant host venue for artists to explore the ethical and political implications or war and conflict from an Asian perspective.

Shamsia Hassani is a street artist born in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 1987 during the closing stages of the bitter Soviet war which would later become the stronghold of the Taliban fundamentalist movement. A teacher of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Kabul University, she is one of very few street artists who paint on the dangerous streets of this devastated city. Through her defiant interventions on war torn buildings or discrete signatures in the fabric

of the market she restores hope while her dreamy Burqa wearing figures strength to the female voice in an area rife with discrimination.

You can see more examples of Hassani's street art in the museum AirShard.'

'Nalini Malani, *In Search of Vanished Blood/Listening to the Shades*

Nalini Malani is one of India's leading contemporary artists. Born in Karachi the year before the partition of India, Malani's practice is deeply informed by her personal experiences of displacement.

In Search of Vanished Blood is an installation that comments on lives destroyed or altered by partition and interrogates feminist issues through symbols of Hindu and Greek mythology. It takes its title from the 1965 Urdu poem Lahu Ka Surag and references the novel Cassandra, 1984, by Christa Wolf. Cassandra, the Greek mythological prophetess who is condemned to see the future but never be believed, is embodied in a young woman whose face sign-language symbols flicker like warnings. Cassandra represents the repressed female voice and the artist's own attempts to be heard.

The projection is accompanied by a series of prints from Malini's *Listening to the Shades* that retell the story of Cassandra's tragedy depicting rage, war and destruction in illustrations that forms part of the museum displays.'

'Aman Mojadidi, *Commodified*

Aman Mojadidi is an American artist of Afghan descent who has referred to himself as "Afghan by blood, redneck by the grace of god". He is known for his bold public art projects exploring politics and cross cultural identity. Mojadidi's practice disturbs identity and challenges authority. Exploring subjects from jihad to gangsterism, consumerism and

corruption in modern day Afghanistan his practice has been crucial in the resurgence of Kabul's art scene.

Commodified explores the complexities of economies of war through the lens of 'war souvenirs'. One undeniable facet of war and conflict is the economy it promotes and generates. Commodification is about how non saleable things become saleable, for example military weaponry used to inspire children's toys and camouflage used by fashion labels.

Mojadidi's work provokes questions around what we are 'selling' when we produce these items – is it history, loyalty or empathy, what are the messages conveyed and what drives people to buy these things? Does the commodification of conflict make people more or less aware of the consequences of war and conflict?

Mojadidi has exhibited at contemporary art exhibitions across the world including Documenta (13) and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in 2012.'

'Imran Quereshi

27 September – 14 February 2015

Asia Triennial Manchester (ATM) is the only Asian Art Triennial outside the Asia Pacific region. The festival showcases artists who live in, work in or address issues surrounding Asia.

ATM14 works with artists to challenge perceptions about Asian identity through installations, performances, symposia and events. The theme of the festival for 2014 is *Conflict and Compassion*, making IWM North a relevant host venue for artists to explore the ethical and political implications or war and conflict from an Asian perspective.

Imran Quereshi is a world renowned artist whose practice comments on the reality of life in Pakistan and wider global issues such as the relationship between Western and Muslim cultures, religion, terrorism and the politics of war. He trained in the ancient art of miniature

painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore and his work combines traditional motifs and symbolism from the Mughal tradition with contemporary abstract painting.

This Leprous Brightness is a recent series of watercolours on wasli paper, produced in response to Quereshi's experience of a terrorist explosion in Lahore. Quereshi's bloody footprints on closer inspection depict plant life hinting at the possibility of life emerging out of the devastation using miniature painting techniques. His other selected works comment on common cultural experiences in Pakistan often using humour as, *How to cut at artillery pantaloon*, where a common daily pursuit of getting ones clothes made to measure is given sinister military overtones.

Quereshi is a distinguished international artist who was awarded the Deutsche Bank Artist of the Year in 2013 and the Sharjah Biennial Prize in 2011.'

Appendix Two

Visitor Study Information Sheet

Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces: How can we Know 'Engagement'?

You are being invited to take part in a research project carried out by a PhD student at the University of Leeds at the Imperial War Museum North.

What do I have to do?

You will visit the Asia Triennial Manchester 14 exhibition in Imperial War Museum North on a one-to-one basis with the PhD researcher.

You will be invited to freely discuss your responses to the art works and the Museum space. It will not be a formal interview.

The visit can last as long as you would like, although 1 hour would be anticipated. With your consent the visit will be recorded and then transcribed.

The material collected will be used in a PhD report, as well as in the Imperial War Museum North's evaluation of the Asia Triennial Manchester 14 exhibition.

You will only be referred to by your first name in these reports.

The time you take to participate in the study will be very much appreciated, and we would like to offer you a £5 voucher to redeem in the IWMN café as compensation and thanks.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to gain a better understand of how individuals experience contemporary art in the Imperial War Museum North, and how their experiences of art in this space might have a lasting impact.

No prior knowledge of war and conflict or art is needed to take part in this study.

If you do decide to take part you will be given a detailed information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdraw from the interview at any time.
If you wish to take part, please speak to Joanne in the Entrance foyer.

Appendix Three

Natalie Walton, Freelance Arts Project Manager

Dialogue 29 March, 2016

I approached Walton wanting to widen by knowledge scope in relation arts evaluation, particularly with respect to the issues and challenges experiences most prominently by arts professionals. At the time of our dialogue, Walton was working as the National Coordinator for the British Art Show, and for the same touring exhibition working as the City Coordinator for Leeds. As a Freelance Arts Project Manager Natalie has a range of experience in arts learning and engagement both with multiple arts organisations and funding bodies.

Walton spoke about the challenges she has encountered working with Arts Council England and the lack of accountability she had experienced in relation to organisations' focus on engagement beyond collecting the required statistics, or 'returns' (i.e. returns of investment). In her experience there has not been enough contact between Arts Council evaluators and project/organisation learning and engagement officers; it is often in the moments facilitated by these professionals that a feeling of 'engagement' develops with audiences and participants through artworks as mediators as dialogues and experiences, and these stories are lost in the types of data required by the Arts Council as 'evaluation'. Walton stressed the importance of shared language, and understanding how – as an organisation and as professionals working within a project – particular words are defined in relation to objectives; collective applications are a way of achieving this so that goals are shared and everyone has knowledge and commitment to the project, as well as realistic expectations of can and will be achieved.

With respect to the term 'engagement', Walton defined this in relation to both participant ownership over their own activity (connected to the work of learning and engagement officers) or involvement as well as the nature and extent of an organisation's engagement with both its audiences and with its own objectives. One of the challenges she

identified here was in evaluating 'engagement' in the everyday – moments where learning is identified and problem-solving – and that due to the pressures of work load and limited resources these moments tend not to be recorded. A frustration rooted in the notion of engagement evaluation also stemmed from a lack of respect for 'engagement' research *as 'real' research*; in order to combat this Walton consciously develops relationships with academic partners in order to distribute research and evaluation and to build a form of legacy into projects which it is not possible to do through otherwise.

In terms of moving forward and having more productive dialogues around engagement and evaluation, Walton suggested involving funder in the evaluation process more directly and inviting them to share in experiences during projects with audiences and participants, rather than just feeding back information to them once the work has been completed. She also suggested developing ten questions that the Arts Council could ask an organisation as part of the formal evaluation in addition to their standard 'returns' in order to understand *how engagement is happening* in their projects.

Belton House; Kate Stoddart, Lucy Chard and David Fitzer

In relation to *Rehearsing Memory* at Belton House

Dialogue 14 April, 2016

I approached Belton House, a National Trust property, as they had launched a contemporary arts project examining the history of the house and its grounds as the location of a Machine Gun Corps training camp during the First World War. I had initially hoped to carry out some visitor research in relation to the project but due to time constraints this was not possible. Belton and the consulting curator Kate Stoddart who had supported them on behalf of the Trust New Arts programme were, however, very open to dialogue and sharing their experience of the project, *Rehearsing Memory* being the first contemporary art project hosted at the site.

No formal evaluation was undertaken in terms of feedback from visitors; Belton Hall is in a unique position in that it does not receive a subsidy from the Trust and as such

funds activity at the house and grounds from the site's own revenue. As such, formal evaluation such as that required by the Arts Council is not always undertaken – when this work is done, it is in the form of surveys. With respect to *Rehearsing Memory* evaluation was undertaken in relation to managing the project and discussing the organisational learning curve.

A broad view of engagement was taken which encompassed the involvement of staff and volunteers as well as local communities, individuals and stories: this approach was evident in one of the artworks which included the stories and voices of individuals from the community and people who worked at the House. The project was undertaken with respect to the history of the House and estate in that it was understood by the staff as a continuation of the commissioning of art embedded in the history of the site, and as such there was a concern that contemporary work was very specifically about a new way of interpreting Belton that connected to its history and identity; I understood this also to be a form of engagement between the contemporary approach taken to interpretation and a consideration for the identity of the House, wherein art was a form of continuation rather than the instruction of tension. Art was framed as a new way of telling stories connected with the Estate and to 'nurture' particular audience groups rather than attracting new visitors – Belton attracts approximately 400,000 visitors every year.

Through taking with Lucy Chard and David Fitzer, I appreciated their concern for the art to not be intentionally abrasive and how they made communication a priority with regards to visitors, staff and volunteers – they were not asking everyone to necessarily like the project, but to understand why it was there: 'You're aims are to make someone feel something, learn something, or to go away and do something' (Fitzer). As such, for Chard and Fitzer the role of front-of-house volunteers was vital to this project as a means of communicating with visitors.

Gillian Greaves, Relationship Manager for museums covering Yorkshire and

Humberside, Arts Council England

Dialogue 5 July, 2016

My dialogue with Gillian Greaves was focused on the role of the Arts Council England in facilitating evaluation undertaken by arts and culture organisations as a funding requirement and the role of the Arts Council in advocating for arts and culture. Greaves described her role as that of a critical friend who can advocate for an organisation, and also support them to be advocates themselves.

One of the challenges that emerged in the dialogue was the need to encourage advocacy linked to issues of future sustainability and resilience of museums and the arts, thinking practically and pragmatically. As such, evaluation is a core aspect of project and programmes to ensure that organisations are meeting their own development targets and achieving goals set in relation to their audiences and participants: that of providing opportunities for as many people as possible to participate and be directly involved. The Arts Council thus encourage evaluation to be embedded in working practices to ensure that organisational learning is part of wider strategic business and audience development planning.

Oliver Mantell, Area Director North for The Audience Agency

Dialogue 2 June, 2016

I approached Oliver Mantell on the recommendation of Judith King from Arts & Heritage and he has been a point of contact for their organisation when The Audience Agency undertook evaluation work for their recent projects. I was hoping to discuss the role of The Audience Agency in relation to data collection and evaluation work, much of which is undertaken in various forms of partnership with Arts Council England. The dialogue centred on the possibilities of knowledge production using predominantly qualitative methods (although the organisation does also undertake some quantitative work), the working relationships the organisation has with arts and culture organisations, and the critical

thinking taking place within the organisation around the work undertaken.

Mantell described the organisation as occupying a space between and triangulating core research, engagement/audience development and marketing, and as such their working definition of 'engagement' tends to borrow from all three of these registers. He spoke on the challenges of interpreting what can sometimes be unreliable data when responses given to surveys are contradictory, and the challenges of interpreting data according to the questions being asked and how the framing of questions can shape the outcome. It was acknowledged quite openly that the statistics produced are not objective and that there will always be theoretical vulnerabilities when working with that form of data. One of the main tasks of evaluation undertaken by the organisation can often be producing evidence which proves an obvious point, but one which it is necessary to state and to justify before then moving on to more detailed information.

Given his own educational background in cultural policy, Mantell was acutely aware of the pressures faced by cultural organisations, and the notion that the cultural work that is undertaken and its driving ideology are not always concretely attached to policy. He drew attention to the nuances between explicit and implicit policy, and that implicit policy can be under-acknowledged when discussing actual working processes within cultural organisations.