**RESEARCH IMPACT FUND (RIF) REPORT 2015/16**

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**Project Title:** ‘Another Eden’, Understanding the audience experience of the use of contemporary visual arts to explore the unique post-industrial landscapes of Cornish Mining World Heritage sites.

The focus on historic mining sites as heritage assets with potential for cultural, economic and social benefit is increasing both in the UK and internationally.

Randall’s work contributes new insights and perspectives and alternative ways of presenting information and interpreting industrial heritage to audiences.

Through the research project, ‘Another Eden’, Randall is using contemporary visual arts to explore the unique post-industrial ecology of Cornish Mining World Heritage sites and as a different way of telling their story, utilizing the insights and knowledge gained to develop exhibitions, arts events, workshops and publications. It will explore the ways in which the visual arts can be a catalyst for regeneration and reappraisal of industrial legacy and heritage, and bring new knowledge and understanding to these sites. This project demonstrates the refinement of a process begun 8 years ago, and is one of several outputs suitable for REF 2020, generating material for an Impact Case Study.

**Summary of activities undertaken.**

Activities took place mainly onsite in the gallery at Geevor Tin Mine World Heritage Museum, Pendeen, Cornwall, where the visual art exhibition of work by Randall, “Aftermath” is taking place Feb-Oct 2016.

There were 2 intensive x 5 day periods June 26th-30th and July 23rd-27th 2016. In the latter period Randall worked in partnership with Bagnall who contributed expertise and experience in the area of audience and heritage and museum impact capture.

*Creative Engagement.*

Practical art workshops with schoolchildren, tour of exhibition and discussion. Interaction with teaching staff. Staff were interested in how they might develop their own artworks for the school in response to visiting the exhibition.

**‘***Observing the Gallery’.*

Randall and Bagnall collected data on how visitors navigated the space, moved around the gallery, how long they spent there, which pieces of art/object attracted the most attention, etc. Initial findings suggest that, for example, certain objects (‘toxic garden’) hold more appeal than others, and generate more social interaction, visual attention and commentary. This was also confirmed by response to the questionnaire.

*Visitor questionnaires in Gallery*.

Specific focussed questionnaires, with open and closed questions were devised by Randall and Bagnall and distributed personally to visitors during a 3-day period. 55 were completed and returned and have been briefly analysed by Bagnall.

Feedback from questionnaires was generally positive, 96% of visitors had enjoyed the exhibition, and most (80%) would have recommended the exhibition to family and friends.

Visitors were keen to engage with the artwork, and to acknowledge the role such work might have in offering an alternative and different perspective to visiting an industrial museum and industrial heritage more generally. For example, qualitative comments included *‘was surprised how interesting it was’*, ‘*it is very unique, enlightening pieces’,* ‘*lovely to see different perspectives through art’, ‘not expected different,’ adds a different dimension to the subject, ‘it gives another angle to it’, and ‘art can give additional insight into industrial heritage by bringing a visual element’.*

Visitors also commented on how that art had added to their learning about mining and the area, the textures, scale, size, colours, form and detail of the artwork all contributed to the impact it had on visitors. Others noted how having art in an industrial museum is a good idea because it changes the visitor experience, it ‘*breaks it up’.* Whilst others reported that because the art was about the place it was located in, that this added to their enjoyment of it.

Significantly, in terms of impact, most (65%) of the visitors did not visit art galleries on a regular basis, so this exhibition provided a unique opportunity to encounter this type of art.

A Visitor Comments Book was also designed and left in gallery.

*Direct interaction with visitors*

A ‘Meet the Artist’ event, informal discussions in the gallery, and walking interviews were conducted over the course of the second 5 day period by Randall and Bagnall, as means of analysing impact potential through creative engagement. A key finding here was how the presence of and interaction with the artist, (or other expert) transformed the creative engagement and potential impact of it.

*Meetings with partners*

Randall held a series of meetings with Museum staff, for example, the Museum Curator, Museum Education Team, Marketing Manager, to discuss and develop impact activities.

*Research into other venues*

Randall undertook visits to arts centres in Cornwall area for future exhibition/touring exhibition possibilities.

**Summary of possible Impact:**

See findings above; a key aspect of impact identified is that of people seeing contemporary art in non-art Museum venue, and also of visitors who may not normally encounter contemporary visual art being confronted with it, and enjoying it as part of an industrial Museum visitor experience.

Potential to influence and change perceptions, behaviour and outlook, as evidenced by visitors’ appreciation of how the art work offered a different visitor experience and an alternative perspective on industrial heritage more generally.

Personal development, working with Gaynor Bagnall/Jill Randall allowed for both parties to encounter alternative perspectives on the presentation and display of different forms of art, and how this impacts on the audience and visitor experience. For example, the way visitors navigate the gallery space, need for more visible signage, young people’s response to some works, the differentness of contemplative activity, and how it is not about just informing.

It is intended that this will lead to a joint academic paper and a more practice based publication which will explore these different methodologies of practice. These publications will be useful for and have an impact on the wider cultural sector, particularly in terms of audience evaluation methods and practices.

Additionally, based on the findings from the different forms of data collection, an article on the audience experience of ‘Aftermath’ will be produced.

Embedding the ideas in the exhibition through a range of creative public engagement activities, will lead to wider dissemination and impact.

**Role of the project within future plans.**

Develop emerging theme in Randall’s practice-based research of placing contemporary visual art in unusual places.

Generated data for possible joint journal articles which would be REF- returnable.

Joint article in non-academic journal e.g. art magazine.

October 2016: Adult Art Workshop activities. Pendeen and Boscaswell Art Groups, University of the 3rd Age St Just, to be conducted by Randall in the gallery, and to be followed up by Focus Groups conducted by Bagnall.

Oct 2016: Dissemination and Future Focus Group Day. Opportunity to feed back to partners on key findings and results of questionnaires/ interviews/ workshops, and to build on activities undertaken in June and July. Exploration and identification of possibilities for Knowledge Exchange – obtaining partners opinions and building networks, Randall & Bagnall.

Future exhibitions and engagement workshops, ’Telling the story’ of Cornish mining heritage through Randall’s distinctive approach, including touring the exhibition to other the other 9 sites of Cornish Mining World Heritage.

Impact on Randall’s future practice.

Jan-April 2017. Development of project’s global scaling, investigating the

Cornish Mining Diaspora and academic and twinning links in Pachuca and Real de Monte Mexico, and Bendigo, Australia.