

DISPLAY, INTERPELLATION AND INTERPRETATION – ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ARTISTIC  
GOSSIP PRACTICE, IN THE CONTEXT OF AUDIENCE INTERACTIVITY WITH NOTTINGHAM'S  
LACE HERITAGE

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## **Abstract**

This thesis raises concerns about current heritage practice regarding notions of inclusivity, the agency of audiences and the authority of heritage institutions, such as museums. Experts including Tony Bennet (1998), Graham Black (2005), and Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (1994) claim that recent developments in heritage practice have directed museums towards offering experiences that invite active, participatory viewing, rather than that which is passive, or merely receptive. Similarly, in the field of contemporary art practice Grant Kester and Claire Bishop argue the importance of audiences' participation, inclusivity and agency to current approaches. Evidently, certain standpoints within the literature concerned with each of these fields, state an attitude of sensitivity to imbalances of power between audiences and either artistic or heritage practices. However, this thesis recognizes and demonstrates that authoritative, or hierarchical approaches to audiences exist within each field, and guided by poststructurally informed theoretical perspectives, it confronts these approaches. Moreover, this thesis claims to establish a unique, interactive and practical autoethnographic approach to artistic research, which supported by its theoretical perspectives, generates non-authoritative and democratic methods. In particular, this thesis establishes that, dialogical engagement prompted by audiences' responses to artistic situations and aesthetic objects, results in non-authoritative, or democratic encounters with heritage and contemporary art. Consequently, the contributions to knowledge that this thesis makes foreground a new dialogical art practice identified as 'gossip practice', whereby interactive co-authorship of new oral artifacts is generated through informal and empathic relating. Additionally, through the thesis' theoretical framing of this study's newly identified 'gossip practice' within the concepts of performativity and everyday social acting, it makes a new contribution to the established literature on 'heritage performance' (see Jackson & Kidd 2011) and 'intangible heritage' (see Smith 2006, 2008). This thesis also contributes a new model for approaches to Nottingham's lace heritage, whereby audiences' encounters with combined material objects and sensory experience facilitate open ended, participant directed interactivity. As well, the thesis contributes a new model for exhibition preview events that, through consultation with diverse communities, offers a democratic and inclusive approach to audiences. Finally, with regard to Nottingham lace in particular, this thesis contributes new models for the public display of heritage artifacts, and in doing so presents alternatives to conventional, authoritative approaches that, conceptually and physically separate audiences from artifacts.

## **Introduction**

This thesis is about the establishment of a claim that audiences will respond to artistic, participative and interactive situations. To achieve this, the study on which the thesis is based, theoretically and practically explored relationships between audiences and contemporary art. Moreover, informed by the concept of interpellation the study used its artistic research activity to observe ways in which audiences' responses might be drawn, and therefore discover what is relevant, and meaningful to them. The study's explorations regarding audiences and contemporary art were situated in the context of heritage, and Nottingham's industrial lace heritage in particular. Therefore, the study also addressed relationships between heritage, heritage institutions such as museums, and audiences. Although the thesis observes developments in the study's approach to its own art practice, this is not a project about art practice itself rather it is about the relevance of contemporary art to audiences, and the processes which the study implemented in its consideration of this concern.

Furthermore, the study's concern regarding the usefulness, meaningfulness, or relevance of contemporary art to audiences of heritage steered the thesis towards examining the function of authority, or dominant perspectives within the fields of both contemporary art and heritage. Consequently, this thesis is overarched by a theme of 'authority' and its argument is partially structured around three themes that address authority in relation to, audiences, contemporary art, and heritage. These three themes form the chapters in which the thesis' argument takes place and are interleaved with Chapter Four, in which a discussion of 'gossip practice' takes place. 'Gossip practice' emerged as a new artistic methodology over the course of this study and developed as a result of exploring 'authority' in the contexts of contemporary art and heritage. Thus, the main body, or argument of the thesis consists of four chapters that follow a brief chapter that explains the thesis' autoethnographic, methodological approach. Since a background to the study's philosophical approach now follows these opening words, the four chapters of the thesis' argument, along with the chapter on methodology are introduced briefly in later paragraphs. Therefore, the coming paragraphs address the consequences of the study's attention to its overarching theme of authority.

These paragraphs explain and justify the study's philosophical approach and thus its reasons for striving to establish the thesis' claims. The study's philosophical approach developed as a result of addressing notions of authority, which led to its engagement with further notions regarding inequality, democracy and egalitarianism. Moreover, these issues had prior to the

study, been concerns of which I was aware and had addressed to some extent in my art practice. However, what is new to this study is a thorough questioning of the hierarchical relationships that might be said to exist between audiences and museums, and of power relationship between artists and audiences. In its discussions of authority in contemporary art and heritage this thesis deals not only with hierarchical relationships between each field and its audiences but also hierarchical relationships within each field.

Throughout, the thesis strives to maintain a democratic and egalitarian position informed by theoretical perspectives that acknowledge the existence of structural hierarchies but which resist their implementation (see for example, Baxter 2003 Gardiner 1992, 2002, Williams 2005). Such perspectives are set within poststructuralist literature and although the thesis draws heavily on aspects of this literature, it does not presume the identity of a poststructural analysis, it is rather a practice led project, supported by a collection of poststructural, and psychoanalytical, theoretical models.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the attraction of poststructural approaches to the study's theoretical collection include the disruption of fixed truths or beliefs, such as, that some forms of heritage, for instance grand architecture possess greater cultural value than the life narratives of those who keep such architecture clean. Instead a postructurally informed approach perceives the cultural value of both versions of heritage as different but equal, therefore it seeks not to replace or exclude but to incorporate and make room for other perspectives and points of view.

Therefore an approach such as this study took, which was influenced by aspects of poststructural theory, could be understood as premised on plurality, polyphonism, multi-perspectives and ideas of flexible, negotiated power (Giddens, 1994 in Schwartzmantel, 2008:21). The study considered that in practice, such an approach demands constant critical self-reflexivity, hence every judgment of self and others required scrutiny, and combing for evidence of authority, the seeking of dominance or a dominant position, rejecting or dismissing other's knowledge, or recognizing only a personal perspective. Therefore, throughout its course, the study aimed to observe but resist engagement with hierarchies and to recognize the value of each individual's knowledge as equal to that of any other's. However, the study noted that such poststructurally influenced approaches are often misunderstood as being 'value-free' and as pandering to the 'rule of the mob'. Nevertheless, the thesis considers that from an egalitarian and therefore postructurally influenced perspective, domination by any quarter is unacceptable, including mob rule.

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<sup>1</sup> Ambivalently rooted in Kantian humanistic thought and heavily influenced by the work of Nietzsche and Freud, the philosophical movement known as post structuralism emerged in the 1960's to become an aspect of the more general concept of postmodernism.

Furthermore such an approach is not value-free rather it recognizes that although different people might perceive values differently, one set of values should not dominate any other. Moreover, supported and informed by the egalitarian<sup>2</sup>, theoretical perspectives set within poststructural literature, the study developed a dialogical practice, which through the study's artistic research activities, aimed to challenge authority in contemporary art and heritage. The study's practice of dialogism followed 'allosensual' principles, whereby a process of argumentation acknowledges differences and does not seek to assert a dominant point of view. Thus, allosensual argument reaches consensus through a process of perceiving and understanding another's point of view, which if it is to be successful, requires reflection on the self in its dealings with the other in dialogue (Bauer & McKinsky 1991, Vandeveld 2006). Accordingly, this study sought not to obliterate nor replace any authoritative, or dominant aspect of contemporary art and heritage.

Instead the study aimed towards the recognition of all aspects of contemporary art and heritage as equal in value. The study's approach to challenging authority through the recognition of all perspectives as equally valid, corresponded with some methodological aspects of autoethnography, whereby the researcher observes her or himself as a participant in society. Thus, the study implemented autoethnography as the means by which it made the research discoveries that informed, guided and justified the thesis' argument. Moreover, the study's rigorous approach to autoethnographic self-reflexivity propelled the study's artistic research activity towards developing its challenges to authority in contemporary art and heritage. Hence, the study's participative and interactive situations emerged as a series of artistic research activities that included installations, performances and the presentation of an exhibition launch event.

Informed by the concept of 'interpellation' a term used by the philosopher Louis Althusser (1977) to describe the subject's position in hierarchical, social structures, the study considered the ways in which audiences are considered in relation to contemporary art and heritage. The thesis analyses, critiques and compares attitudes to audiences, including the study's own changing attitude, and in so doing, offers insight as to how authoritative attitudes might be adjusted, thereby enabling a democratic relationship between artists, heritage professionals and audiences. In the following paragraphs, this introductory section

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of egalitarianism in political philosophy is concerned with the need for equality and egalitarians value equality for its own sake, believing it to be a fundamental right of every individual (see Holtung & Lippert-Rasmussen 2007). Although it is recognized that a school of egalitarian thought concerns itself with equality of outcome such as those proscribed in communist ideology (see Brustein, 2000), here the emphasis is on egalitarian thinking that is concerned with equal opportunity, particularly that of having one's point of view or knowledge recognised and valued (Vandeveld 2006: 3, Rawls 1971: 62).

briefly outlines firstly, the chapter that explains the thesis' methodology and the reasons for selecting autoethnography as the appropriate approach. Subsequently outlined is each of the four chapters that form the structure of the thesis and which argue its claims.

*Chapter One – An autoethnographic methodology.*

The thesis' opening chapter explains autoethnography as a reflexive and relational methodology that is situated within the field of ethnography. The chapter offers a contextualizing discussion that traces autoethnography's genealogy from its roots in Victorian anthropology, and demonstrates its emergence from objective ethnographic practice. This discussion explores, through analysis and assessment, the merits or otherwise of conflicting versions of autoethnography. Consequently, the discussion concludes that the study's version of autoethnography was a viable and appropriate research method to use.

*Chapter 2 – Interpellation and audiences.*

Chapter Two of this thesis sets out to discuss how the study hailed, called, or attracted audiences to its artistic situations, whereby engagement with Nottingham's lace heritage could take place. The chapter explains that the study's approach to this process was developed from a concept of 'interpellation' originally proposed by the philosopher, Louis Althusser (1977). Although the thesis notes that Althusser's concept is thought of by some to be outmoded, it nevertheless offered ways to analyse the subject's social position and subjectivity, in relation to contemporary art and heritage. The chapter's discussion observes how theorists reinterpret interpellation to fit contemporary concerns, and that the study developed an adjusted model of interpellation to fit its purposes. Also explained in this chapter is the study's reassessment of contemporary art and heritage from monolithic, hierarchical structures to levelled and democratic platforms of interacting micro-ideologies. Moreover, this reassessment is traced and related, through observations and analysis of the study's series of artistic research activities<sup>3</sup>.

*Chapter Three – The concept of authority in contemporary art.*

In chapter three the thesis addresses the belief in and practice of authority in contemporary art, which the study sought to challenge. Hence, the thesis' discussion takes Arthur Danto's model of the 'art-world' as a departure point for arguing the validity of non-hierarchical versions of contemporary art that include socially engaged, or community practice and

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<sup>3</sup> A number of practical, artistic research activities took place which, although significant were eventually deemed to be beyond the premise of this thesis and were consequently not included. They are however documented in appendix 2

participative practice. Moreover, the chapter's discussion explores the study's democratic intent in relation to the various contexts and environments in which the study delivered its artistic encounters. Informed by established literature, the thesis analyses and evaluates aspects of audiences' responses to the study's artistic research activities. Consequently the thesis proposes these responses as equally valuable but different types of knowledge.

#### *Chapter Four – A New Artistic Methodology: Gossip Practice*

Chapter Four opens with a discussion of historical and cultural perspectives on a sub-category of dialogue understood as gossip. In this discussion the thesis nominates the particular aspects of gossip that are useful to the study's dialogical practice and draws on established literature to justify these decisions (see Little 1996, Rogoff 2003, Wolf 1997). The chapter proceeds by explaining how the study developed 'gossip practice' as a new artistic methodology and how it might be meaningfully applied to further projects. In keeping with the thesis's philosophical perspective it evaluates and justifies 'gossip practice' according to a position in which authority, or ownership of data, such as making electronic recordings is resisted. However, the thesis also considers that for 'gossip practice' to be a methodology that has potential for use in the wider artistic community quantifiable evaluation is also necessary. Hence this chapter offers a model for the application and evaluation of 'gossip practice' focussed projects.

#### *Chapter Five - The concept of authority in heritage.*

In chapter four the thesis discusses the study's aim to offer democratised experiences of Nottingham's lace heritage through encounters with its artistic research activities. To explain the role of authority in relation to heritage, this chapter opens with a contextualising and historical background that explains the emergence of heritage institutions, such as museums. Moreover, the thesis also offers a brief historical perspective of the relationship between artists and museums. Through its discussions of theoretical and practical processes, the thesis demonstrates how the study dealt with authoritative approaches to, and within heritage, and how its own approach offered new, democratic ways of encountering heritage.

Following on from these five chapters the thesis concludes with a final chapter that revisits the themes and discussions that have taken place. The conclusion justifies the claims that the thesis makes throughout its argument and to close, the thesis states its contributions to the field of knowledge in which it is situated. The thesis now commences with its first chapter, which is an introduction to, and discussion of this study's methodological approach.

## **Chapter One: An autoethnographic methodology.**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to explain the emergence of the type of ethnography identified within the last fifteen years as autoethnography, and why it was an appropriate methodology for this study. Although this chapter explains that autoethnography might be thought of as a contentious area of ethnographic practice, its processes can often be similar to those of art practice, and are particularly relevant to my own artistic activity. Throughout a career as an artist I have aimed to use practice as a vehicle to understand the society of which I am a part, and this chapter demonstrates that, in this study autoethnography proved to be an invaluable means of approaching the artistic research activities, or field research. Additionally, this chapter notes further similarities between art and autoethnography in its discussion of the work of the late Jo Spence, which is compared with other autoethnographies that are considered to be self-absorbed and indicative of a tendency to 'expressive individualism'. This tendency is discussed in the context of the debates concerning autoethnography and also addressed are some of the difficulties that occur between practitioners within its field. However to begin with, this chapter sets out to contextualise autoethnography within ethnographic practice, which is also a preparation for the study's approach to authority in relation to heritage, the theme of Chapter Five. Therefore this chapter traces the genealogy of autoethnography from the ethnology and ethnography that emerged from Victorian Anglo-American anthropology, through the urban fieldwork of 'Chicago Schools', to the current debates within ethnography regarding autoethnography.

### **A background to autoethnography.**

Autoethnography is a relatively new practice that emerged in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and due to its socially sensitive and relational aspects, the study observed it as bearing similarities to some forms of art practice. Autoethnography is situated within the field of ethnography, which is a research method that emerged during the early 1900's in the wake of colonial, anthropological activities conducted by significant collectors such as General Pitt Rivers, founder of the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford (Petch, 2009). Since the focus of Victorian anthropologists such as Pitt Rivers was on the material forms that were produced by cultures, rather than the cultures themselves, fieldwork was considered unnecessary and collectors simply bought artifacts, or commissioned others to find them (Brown et al 2000: 259, 263, Duncan 2004, Stocking 1983). In his essay on Arnoldian ethnology, Vincent Pecora explains that the methods undertaken by Pitt Rivers and his fellow 'armchair anthropologists' emerged from the Hellenic, post enlightenment approach to non Western cultures as 'other' that is to say, feminised, and thus passive, poetic,

intellectually inferior, and weak (Pecora, 1998, Said 2003). Moreover, Pecora identifies Matthew Arnold along with his contemporary Edward Tylor, as the source of this anthropological approach, which he argues created a culture whereby making generalities about race was not only acceptable but expected (Pecora, 1998: 358, Said 2003: 227).

Pecora does note however, that in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the anthropologist George Stocking recognised Arnold's ethnological approach in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century as "...modern, relativist anthropology, which at least strives to detach itself from racism and ethnocentrism..." (Pecora 1998 :358). Although this might have been the case from a Victorian perspective, Said (2003) insists that Arnold was by no means immune to the belief that people thought of as 'oriental others' were 'primitive' or 'backward', and like Marx he held the view that these people were incapable of representing themselves and therefore must be represented by 'civilised' superiors (Said 2003). Yet, Arnold was unique in his enthusiasm to engage in lengthy episodes of embedded fieldwork and he remained so until Alfred Haddon's trip to the Torres Strait Islands in 1898, and Bronislaw Malinowski's lengthy immersion in New Guinea (Schneider & Wright 2006, Van Maanen 1988). Change though, was taking place in America where the founder of 'cultural relativism' Franz Boas was engaged in a zealous mission to demolish the dominant paradigm of anthropology based on race and orthogenic evolution (Barfield 2000: 44). Boas, along with Malinowski urged students to break with spurious anthropological practices and to set about collecting first hand data for themselves, and Boas's influence in particular set new methods and standards for ethnographic field research that still guide its practice (Van Maanen 1988, Barfield 2000: 44).

By the 1920's Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, Nels Anderson and William Thomas from the University of Chicago were developing the concept of 'urban ethnography' within frameworks of empirical sociology (Bulmer 1984). Park, a former news reporter was particularly concerned with 'mining' for information in the field and unambiguously reporting 'real' stories about the downtrodden whose lives were subject to the authority of dominant social forces (Van Maanen 1988: 44). Furthermore, under Helen Hughes's and Martin Bulmer's later influence at Chicago in the post-war period, this approach known as symbolic interactionism was maintained but also began to look beyond the dispossessed to the professional classes as subjects for study (Rock, in Atkinson et al 2001: 27). However, Park and his colleagues had set in place a practical and descriptive tradition that prioritised a scientific approach, whereby the ethnographer observed and reported but did not reflect on their findings, let alone their own situation, or perspective (Gusfield 1995: xxi).

In his critical analysis of the Chicago School Joseph Gusfield observes that ethnographic fieldwork at that time had yet to develop a text beyond report or description that would open ethnography to a more artistic, creative, reflexive and subjective form than that which was in place. (ibid 1995: xiii). Furthermore, speaking of his methodological divergence from Chicago School ethnographers, Norman Denzin (2006) claimed that they were unlikely to develop any further or do anything other than describe the world with their few key, classic methods (2006: 422). Denzin argues that the Chicago School's insistence upon its traditions of descriptive symbolic interactionism had ignored, or overlooked poststructural discourse that he claims had been "swirling around for at least a quarter of a century" (ibid: 421). What is more, changes to the Chicago School approach clearly concerned Leon Anderson and he observed that postmodern or poststructuralist sensitivities apparent in a developing ethnographic practice of self-reflexivity, undermine the discipline (Anderson 2006: 373). Nevertheless, Denzin and a core group possessed of the sensitivities that worry Anderson, combined forces to form the identity of that which has become known as 'evocative' autoethnography.

### **Identifying autoethnography.**

In a rejection of the ethnographer's authoritative subjectivity, established by his or her position as an outsider observer, this core group instead practiced the observation of the self, inside society (see Bochner, A. & Ellis, C. 2001, C. Denzin & Lincoln 2003, Ellis 2004, Reed- Danahay 1997, Sparkes 2002, Spry, 2001). Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis are especially known for refusing to employ impersonal and emotionally detached methodologies of social science, and instead use autobiographical and narrative form to present their inquiry in literary style. Ellis in particular focuses on evocative stories that place the reader in the writer's experience and her emphasis is on "heartfelt autoethnography", whereby the researcher must be prepared to include their "emotions, body and spirit" (Ellis 1999: 210). Moreover, along with Tami Spry and Susanne Gannon, Ellis seeks to promote polyvocality through co-participative dialogues and other creative practices that allow others to speak for themselves, and which are aspects that drew this study to an autoethnographic methodology (Spry, 2001, Gannon 2006). Thus, autoethnography's advocates perceive it as supporting experimental writing and challenging thinking in the social sciences.

However, autoethnography has been severely criticized for being a mandate for self-absorption, self-indulgence, narcissism, intellectual laziness, and for abandoning theory (see Van Maanen 1988, Delamont, 2007, Coffey 1999, Gannon, 2006). When faced with such

criticism Ellis has, apparently in the spirit of alternative academicisms, refused to write defensively or to refute the claims of others. Instead she argued that her aim is to write her 'stories' well and to support them theoretically (Ellis 2004). On the other hand, Gannon (2006) forcefully defended her autoethnographic position with evidence of early autoethnography identified by Foucault and Rabinow, to which she also added the theoretical writings of Barthes, Derrida and Cixous (Gannon 2004: 478 -480, Rabinow 1997). Even so, Leon Anderson (2006), Nicholas Holt (2003), and Margot Duncan (2004) have all called for analytic rigour in autoethnography and Anderson in particular seems to be consistently pressurising the evocative ethnographers to conform to "existing traditions of social enquiry" and to fit his model of 'analytic' autoethnography (Anderson 2006: 374, Bochner & Ellis 2006, Denzin, 2006).

### **Autoethnography's problems.**

Evidently a clash of perspectives exists and Anderson's point of view seems to be shaped by a hierarchical, or authoritative understanding of epistemology, and thus he is unable to accept non- hierarchical 'evocative' autoethnographies as legitimate social science knowledge. In turn the 'evocatives' continue to refuse Anderson's pleas for standardisation and reserve the right to keep autoethnography as an open and evolving discipline. However, there appears to be a protective clique-ness within the Bochner/Ellis/Denzin et al group and a survey of the back issues of Qualitative Inquiry reveals a celebratory, uncritical approach to autoethnography that perhaps justifies some of the criticism it receives. Apparently the field of autoethnography suffers from a lack of articulation regarding its intentions, which perhaps confuses its practitioners. Moreover, in spite of the claim that autoethnography grew from the emergence of poststructural philosophy, both parties, that is to say, evocatives and analytics seem to have difficulty with the poststructural approach of including, recognising and accepting the views of others as equally valid to their own (Denzin 2006).

It is maybe the case that the 'rigour' sought by both sets of autoethnographers, is to be found in the practice of reflexivity, therefore in the following passages the discussion turns to an interrogation of some autoethnographic practice to establish the degree to which reflexivity is employed. Indeed, from the available literature it is apparent that 'evocative' autoethnography is often concerned only with the perspective of its writer, speaker or performer, and although others may be included in the author's perspective, the other's perspectives are not. A case in point is Mary Gergen and Kenneth Gergen's approach to performing theory, a practice that for them involves the production of confessional texts

intended to be read aloud, along with live performance. Gergen and Gergen claim that they are keen to challenge the relationship “between rhetor and reader, researcher and audience” but it seems that they authorise how those relationships are shaped according to their own point of view as the dominant voice (2001: 13). Gergen and Gergen appear to perceive autoethnography as autobiographical and being about the self, however according to Ellis this is not the case and autoethnography is instead a use of the self to access understandings of culture and society (Ellis 2005).

Moreover, Carolyn Ellis describes autoethnography as “research, writing and method that connect the personal to the cultural and social,” and Sarah Wall argues the importance of being aware of the ways in which the self is used in autoethnography if it is to be recognised as a valuable methodology (Ellis 2005: 765, Wall 2006: 5). Indeed, in his critique of autoethnography Paul Atkinson observes that autoethnography is in danger of collapsing the external, social world into an introspective, internal and personal lifeworld, and as a consequence serious social issues are vulnerable to trivialization (Atkinson 2004: 110). Some of Atkinson’s concerns became apparent in certain autoethnographies that appeared after the terrorist attacks on New York in 2001. For example, in her post 9/11 autoethnography professor of sociology Laurel Richardson asks the question ‘What will we tell the children?’ (Richardson in Denzin 2002: 217). Indeed, it is understandable that as an American Richardson had perhaps been feeling afraid and uncertain in the days after the attacks.

However her autoethnography focussed, without irony, on the worries she had about seeming unpatriotic to her children if she turned off the constant stream of televised images and mediated information that followed the attack. Moreover, Richardson seemed greatly concerned that the children would be affected by her shutting off President Bush’s talking head, yet apparently did not consider explaining to her children the reasons why America might have been attacked. Since Richardson’s autoethnography lacks reflexivity or analysis it consequently delivers a single, self-absorbed perspective that, aside from what might be inferred by Richardson’s attitude, offers the reader little in the way of clues about the society within which she is embedded. Consequently, Richardson’s insular approach to autoethnography could be understood as an ‘expressive individualism’ that prevails among middle-class Americans and is described by Bellah et al as “cancerous” for its privileging of ‘individual goals, desires and happiness’ over social obligation (1985 in Jensen 1995: 71). Moreover, Bellah and his colleagues argue that Americans are identified by their wholehearted adoption of a language of individualism, along with a “soft despotism”

characterised by a “withdrawing into the self “and an “unawareness of the fate of others” (Toqueville in Bellah 2008: ix).

### **In defence of autoethnography.**

Thus, this perhaps explains that, along with a non-reflexive habit inherited from the Chicago school, the ground has been prepared for the more self-absorbed autoethnographies to flourish. On the other hand the artist Jo Spence took a reflexive approach, whereby she used her self to discuss and raise questions about the society of which we are a part, and thus used the self to access knowledge beyond the self in culture and society. Spence wrote and drew on the social and political battleground of her terminally diseased body, to disrupt assumptions that disease is a private matter to be hidden away (Kuhn 1995:10). Through her work Spence spoke about power and powerlessness, her images resonated not only through the strength of their execution but because they referred to and were relevant to wider society, that is to say, they were not about an individual Spence but about the social we. Unlike Richardson’s autoethnography, which perhaps unintentionally indicated the issues that might be beyond her immediate, personal concerns, Spence explicitly addressed class, gender, disease and social responsibility.

It is apparent that there is much of great value to be taken from autoethnography including the similarities it shares with art practice and therefore it offers many exciting possibilities for creatively and theoretically rigorous work. Therefore this study elected to pursue an autoethnographic method whereby the self is observed critically and reflexively in culture. Moreover, the study’s approach was not that of focussing on the self, or creating an autobiographical account, instead it was to develop understandings of culture and society by using the self as a conduit to knowledge, that is to say, as a research tool. The study’s approach was also to perceive autoethnography as a dialogical process, whereby one illuminates their particular landscape of knowledge, so that it is knowable to the other and vice versa. Thus according to the autoethnographic method employed in this study, the autoethnographer’s point of view is developed from the recognition of other’s points of view.

Furthermore, autoethnography is understood in the context of this study as co-operative social interaction that, recognises a fluid claiming and surrender of agency, that is to say, an appreciation of multiple perspectives (see Kester, 2011:15). Although it seems that discussions of agency, along with dialogism are missing from much ‘evocative’ autoethnographic literature, these discussions do exist in ‘analytical’ autoethnographic

texts. Since matters of agency and dialogism were key to the study and are addressed in the thesis, the study's methodological approach was to pull together that which it believed to be the strengths of 'analytical' and 'evocative' autoethnography. Thus, the thesis conducts rigorous analysis of the study's intent and purpose regarding dialogic encounters with others. In taking this approach to autoethnography I aimed to develop and carry out an artistic, co-creative, reflexive, and intellectually rigorous study.

### **Conclusion to Chapter One.**

From the chapter's initial brief historical tour, it is possible to understand that autoethnography has emerged from a tradition that sees others as perhaps interesting, or exotic but ultimately inferior, and that this perhaps still sometimes affects its practice, as in the case of some introspective 'evocative' autoethnographies that limit study to within the boundaries of the self. Moreover, dissatisfaction with what is termed 'evocative' autoethnographic practice seems to be rooted in a suspicion that it is not properly theorised or intellectually grounded in the ways of the academy. Therefore, the discussion concluded that this problem is caused by a tendency of some evocative autoethnographers to neglect analysis and self-reflexivity, which the study nevertheless considered to be the foundation of autoethnography. Furthermore, the discussion challenged that which it identified as celebratory and uncritical approaches to evocative autoethnography, however it also set the work of artist Jo Spence as an example of effective 'evocative' autoethnography. Closing this brief chapter was a discussion of how dialogical practice and concerns regarding agency are, as the study approached them, intertwined with autoethnographic method. Although from here on autoethnography is mentioned on very few occasions, it is because the study's approach was to consider the practice of autoethnography as embedded in the study's research process. The following chapter opens the thesis and begins with a discussion that explores the concept of 'interpellation' and how this was implemented by the study.

## **Chapter Two: Interpellation and audiences.**

### **Introduction.**

This study set out to hail, call, or attract audiences to artistic situations where, engagement with Nottingham's lace heritage could take place and this chapter explains the study's approach to understanding how a variety of audiences might be hailed, called or attracted

to the study's artistic situations. The study identified the concept of 'interpellation' as a theoretical means to support and guide its aim, and as the source of this concept is located with the philosopher Louis Althusser (1977), it is a discussion of his version that opens this chapter. However, Althusser's version of 'interpellation' was formed by a what is now often thought of as an outmoded structuralist perspective, whereby the subject has little or no control of their socio-economic position, or identity within a hierarchical ideological structure (Gearhart 1992: 181). Nevertheless, Althusser's concept provides a useful model for understanding why people are called, hailed or attracted to certain things in certain ways, and thus this study took Althusser's model as a departure point from which it explored non-hierarchical approaches to audiences' engagement with heritage and contemporary art. By drawing on other theorist's perspectives of interpellation, the study adjusted and re-viewed Althusser's original model to better suit its democratic, egalitarian, intentions. Moreover this chapter explains the study's position regarding its re- interpretation of Althusser's version of interpellation from a monolithic, hierarchical structure, to a levelled platform of micro-ideologies, or versions of society that individuals choose to join. Through a series of artistic research activities this chapter traces the development of the study's emerging position regarding interpellation, which continues from Althusser's and other's ideological perspectives, to a reassessment of the study's approach to audiences that is informed by Judith Butler's concept of performativity (Butler 1977, Gill Jagger 2008, Moya Lloyd 2007, Celia Rothenberg 2010). Along with Butler's treatment of performativity, Erving Goffman's theoretical approach to social acting and everyday performance is employed to support the study's analysis of audiences responses to, and participation with its artistic research activities, in particular some subcultural Goth themed, market stall installations (Gregson & Rose 1999, Goffman 2004).

Moreover the theme of everyday theatre as identified by Paul Woodruff (2008) is also discussed as a version of spontaneous or unrehearsed performance, which this chapter relates to perceptual aspects concerning the concept of interpellation. A further aspect of performance, which Marco de Marenis (2004) and Marvin Carlson (2004) define as popular presentational performance, is discussed in the context of the study's artistic research activities as means by which audiences might be interpellated subjectively, aesthetically and also via the senses. This version of rehearsed, non – spontaneous and skilled performance is also related to the study's presentation of entertainments, which it identifies as possessing aspects of the carnivalesque. The study observes that audiences' engagement with aesthetic objects might be identified as an aesthetic interpellation. This definition is formed by

drawing on the work of Susan Pearce, who argues that art in museums is for the “benefit of a particular social class” (Pearce 1995:136), Mieke Bal who observes the ways in which audiences are interpellated through national stereotypes to the visual language of images (Bal 2001: 86-89) and James Putnam (2001: 8-9), who argued that to be interpellated by aesthetic language in museums is to be called to a shared, and somewhat exclusive linguistic culture.

Although the study accepted that ‘aesthetic interpellation’ might perhaps be aligned with notions of hierarchy and exclusivity, it considered this to be a useful means to describe relationships between audiences and aesthetic objects. Therefore from existing versions of the term, ‘aesthetic interpellation’, such as that offered by Terry Eagleton (2000) the study develops its own democratic version. The study’s approach is supported through discussions of sensory and perceptual interpellation (Steven Brown 2005, Leslie Fielder 1967, Jeff Jensen 2001, Deborah Perry 2012), along with the relevance of undervalued, or modest art objects to audiences who are unfamiliar with contemporary art (Emily West 2010). Thus, this chapter brings together the study’s thoughts regarding interpellation as it is conceived in terms of aesthetic relationships, subjectivity, multi- aspectual ideology, performativity, performance, and physicality, that is to say, sensory and perceptual interpellation. Chapter Two now commences with an introductory discussion of Althusser’s seminal concept and from which this study’s version of interpellation was developed.

### **Identifying Althusser’s concept of interpellation.**

Writing in 1969 Althusser observed the subject, or individual as framed and formed by social systems of control and power that he identified as ideological state apparatuses such as for example, education, the law, media, organised religion and the family (Althusser, 1971: 141-148). Moreover, according to Althusser ideological state apparatuses form the subject, or individual according to the desires of an external power, which from his perspective is represented by the state, and serves those individuals at the very top of a monolithic and hierarchical socio-economic structure. For Althusser the subject, or individual cannot escape or step beyond the bounds of ideology, or the structure imposed by the ideological state apparatus, because there is no alternative socio-economic framework. Therefore, subjects, or individuals are unavoidably trapped within ideology (ibid: 163-164). Thus, since Althusser claims that there is no alternative structure, for him the existing structure can only be changed by revolution, that is to say, if the upper levels, or rulers of the socio-economic hierarchy are toppled.

In the hierarchical socio-economic structure of Althusser's concept, the subject, or individual is 'hailed', 'called' or 'interpellated' within the ideological structure according to how he or she has been formed by ideological state apparatuses, (ibid: 162-163). Thus, the subject, or individual understands his or her place in the socio-economic structure, which for instance might be exemplified by the notion that currently, most citizens in the United Kingdom recognise that their name will not be on the guest list of a royal wedding, and that their place instead is to be among the celebratory throng lining the streets. Althusser's classic example of the subject, or individual experiencing interpellation is given in his account of a policeman, shouting out "Hey, you there" (ibid: 163). In this example the subject, or individual recognises that it is "really him" who is called because for whatever reasons he is, according to the ideological state apparatus' legal framework, guilty of some misdemeanour. Therefore he knows his place and identity as a guilty subject, and he responds to the policeman's call (ibid: 163).

However, Althusser argued his version of interpellation almost half a century ago and Suzanne Gearhart observes that in contemporary, neo liberal societies, such as those in the West, individuals are regarded as having the power to make free choices about their social identity. This power of choice can be understood as the subject having agency of his or her own subjectivity, which renders Althusser's original concept of interpellation as irrelevant, because to be interpellated is to be "subjugated to the authority of an exterior system" (Gearhart 1992:181). Furthermore, Gearhart argues that to imply individuals are merely subjects of an over-arching, or external power does not sit well with contemporary, neo-liberal ideas of individuality and freedom (ibid). Also, social mobility allows individuals the potential to escape inherited socio-economic positions, or class membership and to explore alternatives. Thus, Althusser's insistence that socio-economic structures are based on class, and only draw power to the top levels has, according to Robert Resch to some extent become obsolete (Resch 1992: 3).

However, as the philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Zizek observes, society might not be as free as Gearheart and Resch claim it is; Zizek argues that consumerism has replaced the state as the external power and that individuals are still subjects, even though they might believe that they are agents of their own desires. In a discussion of Zizek's thoughts on contemporary notions of 'interpellation', Matthew Sharpe and Geoff Boucher present Zizek's concept that, while individuals enjoy the 'freedoms' of consumption, they are in fact merely unconsciously conforming to and identifying themselves within the current (neo liberal) over-arching, external power (Sharpe and Boucher, 2010: 98-99). Sharpe and

Boucher argue that individuals identify with brands, seek comfort in the familiarity and reassurance of 'the logo', shop where they feel at ease, and earn to spend, thereby maintaining a consumerist structure. Moreover they argue that consumerist, neo-liberalist society is mistaken in its belief that it enjoys free choice, and instead it suffers a condition described by Herbert Marcuse as 'false consciousness' (Marcuse 1991: 149). Therefore, as noted by Todd McGowan (2007) and John Schwarzmantel (2008), it may well be the case that the closed, ideological model identified by Althusser, is still very much in place as 'neo-liberalist capitalism'.

### **Contesting and developing Althusser's concept.**

On the other hand however, Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter (2004) re -interpret ideologies as linguistic rather than political structures and the exhibition curator James Putnam (2001), along with Museum Studies expert Susan Pearce (1995) reflect this view in their assertions that aesthetic language 'interpellates' the non-subjugated subject, that is to say, the individual with agency, through familiarity or affiliation with that language. Moreover, this study exploited conventional notions that individuals will be drawn to aesthetic objects with which they can relate but rejected the assumption that only certain types of privileged, educated knowledge allow access to aesthetic language. Putnam, Pearce's and Bal's (2001) approach to aesthetic objects and language reveals a tendency to believe in the objects' exclusivity, which Terry Eagleton argues is useful for establishing and reinforcing middle-class elitism (Eagleton 2000: 2-3). Furthermore, this study used Eagleton's observation to identify conventional approaches to aesthetic objects and aesthetic language as hierarchical and monolithic because they appear to recognise just a single version of aesthetic language, to which only particular individuals will be interpellated.

This study however, in accordance with Bryan Turner & Chris Rojek (2001), developed a perspective of multiple, equally valued versions of aesthetic objects and language that exist on an even level rather than in an ascendant, hierarchical structure. This perception can be imagined by conceptually flipping hierarchical structures to the horizontal and reviewing the results as de-centralised, plural and multi directional micro -structures. By perceiving society and culture in this way it is then possible to understand that individuals can be interpellated to a discourse, or micro – ideology, that might for example represent an interest, activity, or lifestyle, rather than a socio-economical position. The study came to rely on this perception of interpellation but also referred to Althusser's model as a means to assess hierarchical structures in the practices of heritage and contemporary art. Although the study argued for

a non- hierarchical version of interpellation, this was a position arrived at over time through both practical and theoretical investigations.

In the following paragraphs the study explains how some of this process took place by discussing an episode of my own artistic practice that occurred before the study's version of interpellation had crystallised. The episode demonstrates how the study began to transform its approach to interpellation from that of hierarchy within a single discourse to one of equality among multiple discourses. Supporting the analysis of this episode is Judith Butler's work on performance and performativity, which introduces a further aspect to this chapter's discussion of interpellation.

### **Spike Island Open Studios 2010, Bristol.**

During 'Spike Island Open Studios 2010' I displayed a series of six works collectively titled "Cryptocephalus."<sup>4</sup> Based on research conducted at Bletchley Park Museum, Buckinghamshire<sup>5</sup> the work brings together interpretations of narratives from World War Two and hand lace making culture. The images feature lace motifs cut from their net background along with found objects such as deconstructed World War Two gas masks, bird wings, scalpel blades and a stuffed leather figure. The images are bristled with masses of heat coloured and rusted pins that fix these components to black latex painted panels. Box framed in reference to Renaissance 'cabinets of curiosity', these images generated from films and photographs of nuclear blasts, along with first hand observations of smoke clouds, are at the same time both decorative and 'dark'. At the time of the open studios event I was busy with PhD studies and preferred to concentrate on them, rather than explain my work and practice to the visiting public. Therefore, to create distance between visitors and myself I built a barricade using the metre high, freestanding "Cryptocephalus" series of panels, thereby establishing a private, or exclusive space.

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<sup>4</sup> See "Cryptocephalus" catalogue ISBN 978-0-9557737-6-1

<sup>5</sup> See [www.bletchleypark.org.uk](http://www.bletchleypark.org.uk)



**Figure 1, "Blast" from the 'Cryptocephalus' series.**

However, what actually happened was that visitors wanted to tell me about their stories relating to lace, the World Wars, pin manufacture and taxidermy, as well as their responses to the images as artworks. During these encounters visitors offered their perspectives, or versions of what the artworks meant for them, along with what the study came to understand as visitor's own particular knowledge and experience. Certainly visitors asked questions on aspects of the work, and indeed for my own perspective but what occurred over that weekend was dialogue, rather than anticipated looped, authoritative monologue that I had expected to provide. Therefore, I realized that the "Cryptocephalus" images had performed as catalytic props and prompts to visitors' own memories and narratives, and that it was a privilege to be offered access to this knowledge. To understand what had occurred regarding the disruption of a hierarchical structure during the encounters at the open studio event, the study turned to the philosopher Judith Butler's texts regarding subjectification and performativity.

### **Calling on Judith Butler.**

Although much of Butler's earlier, well known work focuses on performatives of gender and (hetero)sexuality<sup>6</sup> which are not discussed here, the study has, with the help of texts by scholars of Butler's work such as Gill Jagger (2008), Moya Lloyd (2007), and Celia Rothenberg (2010), used her theories as a framework within which to understand the 'mechanics' of what I observed and experienced taking place during the open studios event. Furthermore, the study took from Butler an understanding that a socially subjective performativity was enacted during that open weekend, which was initially demonstrated by, as Butler explains using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the 'habitus', the subject's embodied and unconscious social conformity (see Butler 1997, Resch 1992, Rothenberg 2010). Butler's theoretical position contemporises Althusser's structuralist theory of interpellation, in which the subject 'knows their place' and so performs a 'knowing practice' of an interpellated position, by breaking open his structural model but retaining the theoretical principle (Althusser, 1977). Thus, Butler challenges Althusser's notion of the interpellated subject as subjugated, or dominated within a fixed hierarchical social mechanism.

Instead she argues that the individual is a subject with agency who within the social context is a negotiable work in progress. Furthermore, Butler uses Althusser's model of the structure as a measuring system to analyse embedded beliefs and behaviours that are constructed by hierarchical social systems. Butler also examines why individuals, or subjects are interpellated into particular subjectivities within hierarchical structures and how, through speech and gesture that is maintained. Thus Butler's approach is to disrupt the maintenance of fixed social subjectivities and to question the acceptance of norms. Consequently, the study understood that when, in keeping with my interpellated position, I created a barricade at the 'Open Studio', I reinforced, in the Althusserian sense, the subjectively differentiated positions of artist and audience, and in that context, conformed to conventions of 'performed authority' or 'normativity' (Butler, 1993: 1-14).

Drawing on Jacques Derrida, Butler explains the means by which 'normativity' operates as 'iterability' or 'citational practice' whereby social subjectivity is interpellated, or in Butler's terminology, 'constituted' through the repetition of 'utterances' and 'acts' (ibid: 187-189). Therefore, according to Butler, my 'Open Studio', was in the first instance, modelled on the authoritative art gallery and thus reiterated a regulating and constraining discourse, in which the subjectivities of visitors and myself were constituted via social interpellation (see Danto

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<sup>6</sup> See for example *Gender Trouble*, 1990, Routledge: London & New York

1964, Butler 1997). Therefore, my 'enacted' 'ritualized practices' such as physical and "psychic" separation from visitors, repeated a conventional performative in which I was interpellated to a subjective position of apparent authority, as the artist, who expected that visitors would be subject to that authority (Bourdieu in Butler *ibid*, Butler 1997: 2). However, at the open studio event, my plan to force a separation between artist and audience failed because I was not fully hidden by the wall of artworks and soon found that some visitors ignored or rejected this as a barrier between us, in effect disrupting the 'normativity' of our social subjectivities. Moreover, the disruption continued as visitors overthrew my self-appointed legitimacy as the authoritative subject by performatively 'breaking through' the specialized, (embodied) language of this iterative 'gallery' context.

Thus, in effect they ignored the conventions of the gallery context (Derrida in Butler 1997: 143). Accordingly, the study concluded that during encounters with the artwork and myself the artist, visitors to my opened studio claimed agency by resisting subjective norms through acts of resistance, such as rejecting my imposition of our separation and insisting on talking to me. I had though, become intrigued by the unexpected dynamics at work in my opened studio, and in response remodelled the space into an inviting and intimate boutique style environment, complete with baskets of smaller, modestly priced artworks, coffee machine and floor cushions. This new, inviting approach exploited the public's ease with retail environments, which Sharpe and Boucher claim is an aspect of subjugation within a neo-liberal order (Sharpe & Boucher 2010:98-99). However the aim of the study's new approach was to offer accessibility to a range of aesthetic objects and aesthetic language by making the gallery environment familiar and inclusive.

Therefore although the study recognised that consumerism might indeed be the driving power of Western contemporary society, it elected to make use of it as an interpellative tool with the aim of disrupting conventional or normative approaches to the gallery environment<sup>7</sup> Unlike exclusive, hierarchical, or authoritative approaches to aesthetic interpellation, the study now perceived many equally valued models, or versions of aesthetic language and aesthetic objects to which individuals might be interpellated. Moreover, the study accepted the disruption of re-iterated social subjectivities within the conventional gallery space, which it observed during the open studio event and used to guide its practical, artistic research. Having established that the study had surveyed,

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<sup>7</sup> The management team at Spike Island Studios, Bristol disapproved of the new retail environment modelling of my space and issued a warning that it should be restored as a suitable 'artists's workspace'.

assessed and re-viewed theoretical perspectives of interpellation, it then proceeded to apply these theoretical perspectives to practical situations. This chapter now moves forward with a discussion of how the concept of interpellation was understood and implemented in the first of a series of artistic research activities, and what happened as a result.

### **Street markets and other public places.**

#### **The German Christmas Market, December 15<sup>th</sup> 2010.**

The study learned from the open studio event that audiences seem to feel at ease in the familiarity of retail environments and so it organized for a 'pop-up' open studio market stall installation to be present at the German Christmas Market in Nottingham's city centre. Although designated artist studios within city art-spaces were offered for the study's use, the 'pop-up' market-stall installation was to be in an environment where visitors other than those already initiated in viewing contemporary art might be. The study's aim in doing this was to create casual, or incidental access to an encounter with Nottingham lace and contemporary art in an unthreatening, unspecialised, and familiar, environment. Titled with a banner scripted from Nottingham lace, "Lacepoint's" 'pop-up' market stall installation received healthy forward local press coverage that drew interested people to the stall<sup>8</sup>. Since the study aimed to call attention to "Lacepoint" and to hail or interpellate visitors, the study had liaised with a PR company associated with the German Christmas Market to enable this press interest. For visual emphasis and to re-state the installation's theme of Nottingham lace, one of the "Cryptocephalus" panels was positioned to face outwards onto the street.

"Lacepoint" represented a minimized version of my studio, as it was when I would work in it privately, rather than as it was eventually presented for the open studio event. Hence there were no items for sale, or other familiar retail signifiers. Instead the study was guided by Graham Black's observation that the eye is drawn to activity, thus I worked with pieces of Nottingham lace in full view to catch people's attention, and to encourage them to engage with the study's pop-up market stall installation through conversation (Black, 2005). The local newspaper publicity<sup>9</sup> brought former lace workers to "Lacepoint" who were very keen to speak at some length about their experiences, and other people passing by stopped to

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<sup>8</sup> A detailed autoethnographic account of these encounters is included as appendix 1.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.nottinghampost.com/Bygones-Lace-heritage-Christmas-Market/story-12250059-detail/story.html>

comment and talk. However, there were people who were confused by the stall's lack of merchandise and who seemed ill at ease with the strange-ness of what seemed to be a market stall that had nothing to sell. The study noted this as a failure to interpellate those who might be considered as uninitiated audiences, that is to say, those individuals who do not have experience of contemporary art practices and would thus be excluded by "Lacepoint". Therefore subsequent artistic research activities, which will be discussed later in this chapter, were adjusted to take this failure into consideration.

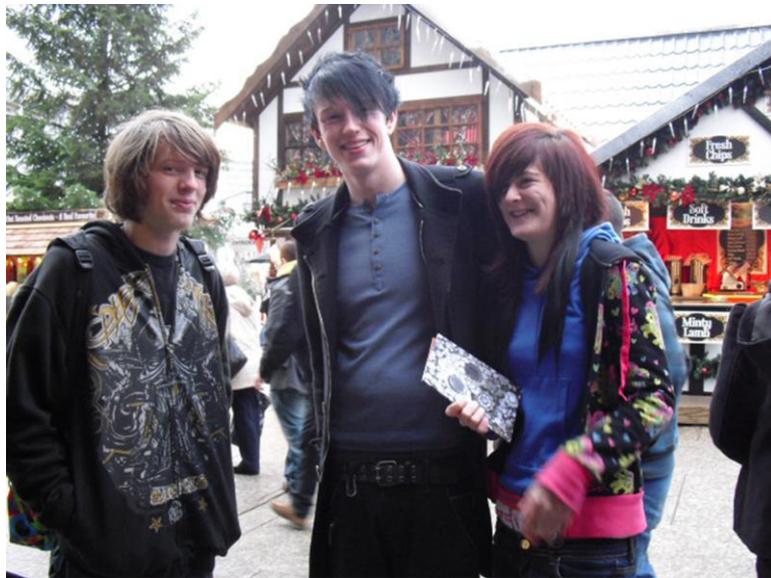


***Figure 2, The 'Lacepoint' market stall installation.***

The study noted that although the lace itself seemed not to interest young adults and teenagers, the "Cryptocephalus" panel did. Few members of this age group actually passed by "Lacepoint" but the market stall itself apparently occupied a corner of Market Square usually claimed by a group of young people as their social territory. Initially relations were quite tense, which was demonstrated by such remarks as "get yer f\*\*\*\*ing box outta ma corner". After a time, they tired of their attempts at intimidation and instead began to peek at, and prod the displayed "Cryptocephalus" panel. Offering a friendly smile to these young people as they did this seemed to break the tension and some of them began to ask questions and in turn, speak about themselves.



**Figure 3, “Cherub,” from the ‘Cryptocephalus’ series.**



**Figure 4, influential visitors to ‘Lacepoint.’**

They were interested in the masses of pins puncturing the surface of the “Cryptocephalus” panel, the black latex paint used, and the World War 2 child’s gas mask, pinned out like a dissected frog. The study noted that saying little and standing my ground but being prepared to give plenty of space for the youngsters to speak, encouraged them to initiate and guide

dialogue themselves<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, what became apparent was that they were drawn to the “Cryptocephalus” panel by our common interest in aspects of ‘phantasmagoria’ and ‘Gothicism’ (see Evans 2003, Gavin 2008, Punter 2005, Spooner 2006, Baddley 2010, Brill 2008). The study recognized that although I do not necessarily fit the stereotype, there is an evident affinity with some aspects of alternative ‘Goth’ culture identified by Gavin Baddely (2010), such as aesthetic preferences, an enthusiasm for Gothic literature, and generally being at ease with the outwardly odd, marginal, or unconventional. Consequently the study observed that this affinity might usefully serve to interpellate sub-cultural Goth audiences to Nottingham’s lace heritage.

Moreover, this notion found support in Eileen Hooper-Greenhill’s work on how museums might reach diverse communities, and in which she notes that a person situated within a community will have expert knowledge of its needs, values and interests, therefore that person is in a position to establish what is relevant to their community (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994). The study viewed this turn to be a significant breakthrough, in which connections to ideas of the Gothic gave form to what might be articulated about the ‘dark side’ or ‘profound silences’<sup>11</sup> of Nottingham’s lace industry. Subsequently the study developed plans for installation, performance, and participatory artistic research activities that aimed to include and thus interpellate those from Goth subcultures. However, the study’s intention was not to direct its research activity exclusively towards Goth subcultures and therefore it presented a second, sonic installation that did not embody the very direct and dramatic aesthetic preferred in Goth culture (Royle, 2003: 1). The second of the study’s artistic research activities, entitled “Lacework” did however aim to induce aspects of ghostly uncanniness that are attractive to more general, rather than subcultural gothic tastes.

In the following paragraphs this chapter describes the study’s approach to the second artistic research activity, “Lacework” and, using some aspects of that which might be understood as conventional aesthetic interpellation, discusses the study’s consideration of sensory interpellation.

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<sup>10</sup> This position was influenced by a statement that the ‘Goth-Rock’ entertainer and social commentator Marilyn Manson made when he became a scapegoat in some sections of the American media for the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 (see Shuker, 2001: 230). When asked by the film-maker Michael Moor what he would say to the allegedly bullied teenage perpetrators of the violence he replied, “I wouldn’t say a single word, I would listen to what they have to say” because “that’s what no one did” (Moore 2002, in Strom & Strom, 2009: 490).

<sup>11</sup> During a conversation with Graham Black, he described overlooked and hidden narratives of social inequality in Nottingham’s lace industry as ‘profound silences’.

**“Lacework” 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2011.**

To provide a contrast in the location and context of artistic research activities, the study selected an environment that is closely associated with art galleries and museums rather than retail situations. Hence, the disused bandstand that is set within the grounds of Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery became the location of the study’s second artistic research activity. In accordance with Heritage Studies expert, Graham Black the study expected that the entrance fee to the castle’s grounds would have an affect on the type of visitor who might attend and how they might respond to the study’s installation (Black 2005: 190). This expectation was supported by arguments in museum studies literature that claim entrance fees reinforce the elitist and exclusive reputation that museums have had since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Moreover entrance fees cause museums to become economically as well as culturally inaccessible to low-income groups, and thus the problem of attracting these groups to museums becomes more difficult (see Yung-Neng 2011: 213, Genoways & Ireland 2003: 151, Hooper-Greenhill 2011: 369-370).



***Figure 5, looking into the site of ‘Lacework’.***

Furthermore, in reference to Bourdieu's study of museum visitors in the 1960's, Hooper-Greenhill notes that through schooling and family activities, higher, educated social classes expect to take advantage of cultural opportunities, that is to say, to visit museums (2011: 369). From an Althusserian perspective this can be understood as the interpellation of subjects to a place within the hierarchical structure, and from Butler's perspective as the re-iteration, or performance of normatives. Certainly, since Bourdieu's study museums have made immense efforts to expand public access to museums but as Yung-Neng Lin argues, entrance charges lead to a significant fall in attendance among lower social-economic groups. The study was aware that the second installation, "Lacework" was directed at the type of culturally initiated visitors that were expected to attend. However, the study also considered that many visitors might not necessarily be familiar with contemporary installation art.

Thus, the study aimed to present a sonic artwork that would interpellate audiences through a combination of mechanical sound, familiar architecture and historical context. Moreover, the study's perception of the bandstand as an architectural memory of bygone entertainment was used to indicate the bandstand's previous life as a building where music had once been performed. To produce the mechanical sound the study collaborated with film-maker, Tom Watts to produce a layered recording of working lace machinery at Cluny Lace Co. Ltd., one of the few remaining Leavers lace factories in the UK. "Lacework" was presented over Easter weekend when the Castle grounds would be busy, with the intention that the heavy, mechanical sound of lace machinery would alert the curiosity of visitors, who might then engage in conversations about Nottingham's lace heritage. The pathos of the bandstand's context as a redundant musical stage seemed perfectly suited to hosting a sonic work derived from the sounds of an almost redundant textile industry, and I imagined the bandstand to have a ghostly and uncanny aspect that could be emphasised by 'leaking' the amplified sound from the under-croft beneath its wooden floor.

The bandstand itself was emptied, aside from some books left open at images of lace machines, and an evocative explanation of the work in a simple, poetic form was situated near the bandstand's entrance.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See appendix 3



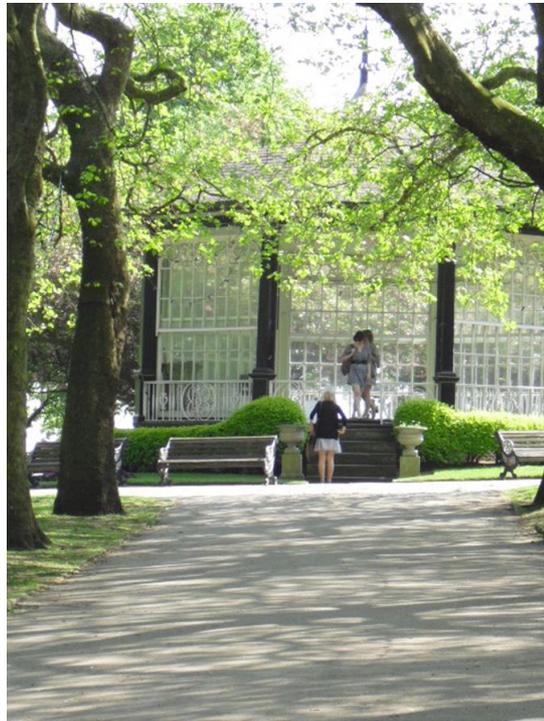
**Figure 6, visitors to 'Lacework' at Nottingham Castle Museum's disused bandstand.**

### **Perceptual and Cognitive Curiosity.**

As the study had expected, visitors to "Lacework" seemed to be confident in the Castle grounds environment and tended to more or less politely ignore me. They seemed comfortable enough to explore the floor of the bandstand looking for clues to the sound and some, when they were ready, would ask questions or make observations. From observing visitors to "Lacework" and supported by the theoretical perspective of Deborah Perry, the study also considered the notion of sensory interpellation. Perry argues that curiosity is stimulated physiologically via perception, and that perception is a combination of the five senses (2012:98-105). She explains that we understand our environment through perception and will be alert to changes detected via the senses, so the sound of lace machinery emanating from the bandstand could be expected to catch audiences' attention.

Furthermore, since that which might be understood as a conventional version of aesthetic interpellation relies on the senses to recognise via perception, it is apparent that a correlation exists between that and this study's proposed version of sensory interpellation (Bal 2001, Pearce 1995, Putnam 2001). However, the study accepted Susan Crane's observation that perceptual curiosity is limited and if it is to function as interpellation, it should be followed by intellectual or cognitive curiosity, such as dialogue (2000: 64-68). Guided by Crane's observation, the study found that "Lacework's" sonic installation demonstrated an extension of curiosity from the perceptual to the cognitive. This was

illustrated by the ways in which visitors explored the bandstand's floor, searching for the source of the installation's sound, along with the dialogues that took place between visitors and myself.



***Figure 7, visitors investigating the sound of 'Lacework'.***

Significantly absent from "Lacework's" audience though, was the group identified by Black (2005) as the most under represented of museum visitors, that is to say, the teens to under thirty fives, and particularly in this case, local pre- twenties. The study noted that although there are some museological explanations for this absence, which are discussed in Chapter Three, the main reasons for their absence is that the Castle grounds and "Lacework" were in all probability, simply not relevant to them, or interesting enough for them to bother with. To understand why "Lacework" failed to interpellate young adults the study drew on Adams' and Karpf's observations that museums in the 21st Century focus on young families and the 'fun centred' engagement of primary school age children, and that this concentration on pre teen audiences alienates other visitors. (Adams 2007, Karpf 2002). In this case it is clear that museums might not interpellate teenagers and young adults and since they are subjectively indisposed to museums, they will have little interest in visiting them (Black 2005, Hooper-Greenhill 1994). Moreover, in his study of adolescent development, Jeff Jensen (2001) identifies young adults as generally preferring their own social groups to solitude, and so they will not usually venture beyond 'comfort zones' alone.

Therefore, to attract a group of young adults to a museum, it would need to become interesting to them. Jensen also observes that teenagers and young adults are highly sensitive to condescension and will reject anything bearing its trace, along with that which reminds them of 'family values' (Jensen *ibid*). Furthermore, Jensen notes that according to developmental theory, intellectual curiosity remains underdeveloped into early adulthood while physical development accelerates (Jensen *ibid*). Thus, noting Brown's discussion of the term 'eye-catching' in relation to marketing, the study considered how aspects of its artistic research could be developed with a juvenile audience in mind (2005). The study had established that the first market stall installation "Lacepoint" had drawn young people to Gothic aspects of the artwork and from the group identity expressed in the dress and appearance of these young people, concluded that they might be identified as 'Emo' (see figure 4). Ryan Gilbey (1997) and Gretchen Reevy (2010) explain 'Emo' as a youth oriented sub-cultural style that Dunja Brill describes as sheltering beneath the "black umbrella" of alternative Goth culture (Brill, 2010:5).

Moreover, Leslie Fiedler (1967) notes an excessive and immediate aesthetic of the Gothic canon that has informed this genre from its early literary roots, via Twentieth Century film, to its current cultural complexity (Baddeley 2010, Brown, 2010, Punter 2005). Certainly, only a brief survey of Goth imagery is required to reveal a prevailing preference for a dramatic, arresting and graphic palette of blacks, reds, violets, pewter and silver with highlights of white. Goth imagery tends also to have a strong erotic and/or bloodthirsty aspect, therefore given Jensen's (2001) theory of juvenile development, it might well attract young adults whose physical and hormonal changes are at a stage of over- reaching those of intellectual growth. The study noted Fiedler's observation that, "nothing succeeds like excess", and also that Goth imagery and the culture from which it emerges can superficially at least, seem overstated, or obvious (1967: 134, in Brown & Jensen 2008: 143). Thus influenced by Brown, Jensen, and Fiedler, the study approached its next artistic research activity with the intention of interpellating young audiences from the broad range of Goth's subculture.



**Figure 8, Goth imagery.**

The study proceeded by approaching Goth social networks, Goth communities and individuals, and in doing so discovered a thriving Goth community existing in Nottingham. Accordingly, the study drew on my affinity with Goth to make use of a host of new contacts with the aim of interpellating Nottingham's young Goths, via contemporary art practice.

**Marketplaces as discursive space.**

To establish some understanding regarding the activities and interests of Goth culture, the study made visits to a number of relevant festivals where it observed that the shopping areas were populated by browsers with shared interests in the goods on offer. Furthermore, the study noted that shopping areas in particular clearly provided a social space in which browsers and sellers would engage with each other over the merchandise. Although Sharpe and Boucher (2110) are mentioned earlier in this chapter as perceiving the activities associated with consumerism in a negative light, Soren Askegaard and Jeppe Troll Linnet tend to look positively on the social benefits of shopping (2011: 383). Along with Mark Moss, they argue that the familiarity of shopping environments, whereby individuals identify with

others, provides a relatively easy way to socially interact and join, or form communities (2002: 28). Moreover, the study interpreted Askegaard and Linnet's description of such communities as small-scale unions among which browsers, shoppers, and sellers seek identity, as the interpellation of individuals to micro-ideologies (ibid: 383).

Thus, informed by these theorist's observations and the study's interpretation of them, the third artistic research activity entitled "Lovelace" was located in the context of a particular marketplace. The following paragraphs discuss the study's approach to the "Lovelace" research activity, whereby aspects of aesthetic interpellation were considered according to Turner and Rojek's perspective of society and culture as formed by micro-ideologies.

**"Lovelace" at 35The Alternative Village Fete October 17<sup>th</sup> 2010.**



***Figure 9, the 'Lovelace' market stall installation.***

The study took a stall at the 'Alternative Village Fete', an event that was part of a curatorial project external to the study but which suited the study's aim to reach subcultural audiences. The 'fete' was marketed by its organizers to those who might be considered as living lifestyles that are alternative to mainstream, or conventional versions, such as 'bikers' and Goths. Therefore, to interpellate those audiences to its market stall installation, the study presented a range of items that were intended to attract their attention. Dressed and arranged in a mix of boutique and emporium merchandising styles to reflect the range of artifacts available for visitors to view, handle, and consider, the study aimed via "Lovelace", to provide a relaxed and enjoyable retail experience (see Danziger, 2006:191, Turngate, 2012: 62). For the installation's merchandise I produced artifacts using Nottingham lace, which ranged from wall-based pieces such as a "Cryptocephalus" panel, freestanding sculptural pieces and some wearable items such as lace boas and gilded bird-skull corsages.

However, the study recognised that these artifacts might be attractive but also that the expensive prices could alienate and intimidate some audiences.



**Figure 10, Nottingham lace dressed skeleton doll.**

Therefore, in keeping with an emporium style and to provide inexpensive, accessible artifacts I also created light-hearted items such as, toy plastic skeletons dressed in Nottingham lace outfits, brooches made with plastic skeleton hands that were cuffed with Nottingham lace and others fashioned from bloodshot, plastic eyeballs set into lace rosettes. The study established earlier in this chapter that interest is stimulated physiologically through perception and that movement, or activity will attract attention (see Black 2005, Perry 2012). Therefore the study reasoned that through my making of articles for the stall in full public view, audiences might be attracted, or perceptually interpellated to the “Lovelace” market stall installation. Moreover, the study considered that creative activities performed in public could be understood as theatrical events whereby members of the public are interpellated to an audiences’ subjectivity (Woodruff 2008). Furthermore, supported by Erving Goffman’s theory of ‘front-stage social acting’ the study examined the theatrical context of “Lovelace” within its alternative marketplace location.



**Figure 11, the 'Lovelace' market stall installation.**



**Figures 12, the 'Lovelace' market stall installation.**

In a discussion of field work undertaken at car boot sales by Cultural Geographers Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose, Goffman's concept of the social acting and theatre of everyday life is used to demonstrate how sellers and browsers adapt their behaviour to 'fit' the roles that society expects to be played out in that context (Gregson and Rose 1999). Accordingly, the study observed that individuals, including myself, performed certain 'roles' within the social and cultural space of the marketplace to which we were subjectively interpellated.

Furthermore, although the 'Alternative Village Fete' set out to subvert idealized notions of the traditional village fete, the study observed that individual's social acting, or 'front stage' performances as browsers, buyers and sellers remained shaped by conventional, socially and culturally constructed ideas of these roles (Goffman, 2004:59). Thus, for example the character portrayed by the 'Alternative Village Fete's' Master of Ceremonies wore a costume that, in reference to tradition indicated his role, and he announced the event's programme in a masterful and authoritative style that demonstrated his control of the day's proceedings. However, by drawing on Butler's theory of performativity, the study observed that individual's subjectivities were iterated by the betrayal of the 'facts' of his or her self, such as those of gender, sexuality and age, through gesture and utterance (Butler 1993:187-189).

Thus, although the Master of Ceremonies convincingly performed his traditional, paternalistic, hetero-normative role, the gestures and utterances of his 'off-stage' self betrayed his subjectivity, revealing him as a gay man. The study noted however, that the Master of Ceremonies openly betrayed his subjectivity and thus considered that his playful inversion of normal social codes might be understood as an aspect of 'carnavalesque'. Observed by the study in the context of subcultural activities, 'carnavalesque' is perceived as a humorous and populist critical challenge to officialdom and hierarchies (Stallybrass and White 1997: 298). Furthermore, as James Zappen explains in his essay on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, carnivalesque performance, with its particular forms of banter and gesture based on those of the marketplace are characterized as insubordinate and having a general tone of laughter (Zappen 2000:5). Thus the study concluded that subcultural, or non-mainstream groups could be interpellated to carnivalesque aspects of its artistic research activities.



**Figure 13, 'The Alternative Village Fete's' Master of Ceremonies at 'Lovelace'.**

Moreover, these aspects were demonstrated during "Lovelace" at the 'Alternative Village Fete,' as a humorous approach to my own and also visitor's 'front stage' performances, which were facilitated by the stall's playful artifacts. In addition to this, the marketplace banter and gesture at "Lovelace" developed beyond a one-way, theatrical separation of performer from the audience, and instead became the participatory interactions of visitors and myself. Furthermore these participatory interactions demonstrated a fluidity of subjectivities, that is to say, participants, including me, responded to others utterances and gestures, beyond our social roles as sellers, browsers, and buyers. Consequently, the study observed that through participatory interaction, individuals were interpellated to, or to use Butler's terminology, constituted by, multiple subjectivities and performatives (Butler 1999). This observation was demonstrated for example, by a male visitor to the stall who placed lace frilled eyeball hair ornaments over his 'breasts', and another male visitor, apparently unknown to the first, 'looking' at the 'breasts' with more of the eyeball hair ornaments in place of his eyes.

Hence, in the context of Woodruff's notion of theatrical space and time, both became entertainers/performers, or 'the watched' and I became the audience, or watcher (2008:187-189). Furthermore, by striking an exaggerated 'feminine pose' to accompany his 'breasts', the 'breasts' man performed the normatives of a male performing the gestures of

a female. Correspondingly, the 'eyes' man performed normatives, or conventions of masculinity in his ogling of 'female' 'breasts'. Encouraged by mine and other's amused responses, the 'performers' began a similar skit using the study's frilled skeleton hand brooches. When they had finished their impromptu performance they shook hands with their 'audience' using the plastic skeleton hands and went their separate ways. The study concluded that this spontaneous buffoonery might also have occurred as a result of those individuals' interpellation to carnivalesque aspects of "Lovelace" and the 'alternative' context in which it was situated.

Moreover, the 'Alternative Village Fete' was directed at, and thus brought together non-mainstream communities that share common views, therefore the study considered that because the two, 'watched' individuals were in familiar company, they might have felt sufficiently at ease to respond as they did to "Lovelace". What is more, the study acknowledged that the 'Alternative Village Fete' was a particular and specialized environment and that "Lovelace" was created with a specific audience in mind, that is to say, alternative, or subcultural Goths. However, since the study aimed to be inclusive rather than exclusive, a further market stall installation took place at an ordinary street market, though on this occasion the artistic research activity was adjusted to interpellate a general audience. In the following paragraphs the thesis discusses these adjustments and why the study considered it necessary to make them.

**"Lace is Ace" Sneinton Market, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2011.**



***Figure 14, the 'Lace is Ace' market stall installation.***

The location of the study's "Lace is Ace" market stall installation was at Sneinton Market, where cheap fruit and vegetables, textiles, household consumables and groceries are sold in a less than affluent area of Nottingham's city environs. The study considered that, given the everyday character of Sneinton Market, some visitors might be either un-initiated in contemporary art, or choose not to engage with it in that particular, everyday context. Therefore the study sought means by which its artistic research activity might fit into this particular market environment and appeal to its visitors. Since "Lace is Ace" was to be presented during the festive winter season the study considered it an opportunity to prepare the market stall installation accordingly through its artifacts, or merchandise, along with its overall, dressed appearance. Thus the study reasoned that by drawing and building upon conventional versions of aesthetic interpellation, Sneinton market's visitors could be interpellated to "Lace is Ace" (Bal 2001, Pearce 1995, Putnam 2001).

Consequently, although Eagleton claims that the versions of aesthetic interpellation such as those which Putnam might suggest, excludes audiences who are uninitiated in contemporary art, this study considered that such excluded audiences might instead be interpellated to other art forms. (Eagleton 2000: 2-3, Putnam 2001). Therefore the study aimed to produce accessible but attractive merchandise, that is to say, familiar and recognizable artifacts that could be relevant to Sneinton market's shopping community. Moreover, since Nottingham's lace industry developed from commercial, stocking production and Christmas was approaching, the study selected 'stockings' as a seasonally contextualised visual theme, or motif for the installation (Mason, 1994)<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, the study noted that visitors to the market seemed at ease with the familiar environment of this retail setting, and showed interest in the festoons of red Nottingham lace lengths, Nottingham lace Christmas stockings and hand made greeting cards that comprised the "Lace is Ace" market stall installation. As noted earlier in this chapter, the study had learned from its artistic research that my making activities at the site of installations could be understood as ways in which audiences were perceptually interpellated.

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<sup>13</sup> The study acknowledged that other cultural and religious festivities occur at this time of year but for the sake of simplicity used a stocking motif that is associated with 'traditional' Christmas festivities. The use of the stocking motif appeared not to deter visitors, who could be identified from their dress as belonging to other cultures and faiths.



**Figure 15, Sewing lace stockings at 'Lace is Ace'.**

So, at "Lace is Ace" I sewed together Nottingham lace Christmas stockings using a hand operated sewing machine. Moreover, this activity along with a welcoming but low-key 'Hi' was also intended to put visitors at ease by indicating that as I was occupied but attentive, they were free to browse at their leisure. The study also considered that clear pricing in line with other sellers at the market would provide information regarding the low price point and therefore the socio-economic accessibility of the installations' merchandise. Furthermore, the study observed that although visitor's amusement at the Nottingham lace Christmas stockings pegged in lines across the stall apparently drew them to "Lace is Ace", it was the lace stocking greetings cards that caught and held their attention. Thus, the study perceived these visitor's responses as a version of aesthetic interpellation.



**Figure 16, visitors to 'Lace is Ace'.**

### **A Denigrated Art Form.**

Emily West, in reference to Bordieu writes of a lack of cultural legitimacy that some greeting cards suffer, which the study understood as perception of such objects as possessing low aesthetic value (Bordieu1984: 28 in West 2010: 363). West identifies these low value cards as the mass-produced and sentimental greetings cards typically offered by the ‘Hallmark’ brand. Moreover, focusing primarily on issues of taste and social status, West compares the ‘Hallmark’ branded low-value versions of greetings cards to that of ‘legitimate’, blank, non sentimental ‘art’ cards that might be found in boutiques, galleries and museum shops. From West’s discussion the study considered that the versions of greetings cards found in boutiques, galleries, and museum shops would certainly aesthetically interpellate some initiated contemporary art audiences. However, the study sought also to aesthetically interpellate un-initiated contemporary art audiences and though the greetings cards produced for “Lace is Ace” were blank and handmade by an artist, they called on aspects of mass produced greetings cards that might appeal to such audiences.



***Figure 17, Nottingham lace decorated greetings card.***

Hence the imagery used on the cards was simple, traditional, decorative, easily interpreted as festive but also meaningful to Sneinton market’s visitors because it was made with Nottingham lace, an industrial product of the area’s past. Since the greetings cards on offer at the “Lace is Ace” market stall installation proved to be popular enough to sell out <sup>14</sup> the study concluded that a version of aesthetic interpellation had occurred during this artistic research activity. Furthermore, this version attracted audiences through perception, that is

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<sup>14</sup> Forty two greetings cards were sold at two pounds each.

to say, the cards with their lace motifs could be seen and handled, yet the study observed that audiences' also identified with Nottingham lace and its industry's heritage. Therefore, the study considered that since a number of visitors to "Lace is Ace" had knowledge, or experience of Nottingham's lace industry, they had experienced aesthetic interpellation, via socially and culturally accessible greetings cards, to versions, or micro-ideologies of Nottingham's lace heritage. Although "Lace is Ace" brought the study's series of market stall installations to a close, a further artistic research activity took place in Nottingham's city centre.

This activity, entitled "Nottingham Chocelace" aimed, through a version of socially and culturally accessible contemporary art practice, to aesthetically interpellate audiences to Nottingham's lace heritage. In the following paragraphs this chapter discusses the study's development regarding the concept of interpellation in the context of "Nottingham Chocelace".

**"Nottingham Chocelace" 10<sup>th</sup> February 2012.**



***Figure 18, visitors to 'Nottingham Chocelace'.***

The study aimed to draw audiences to its artistic research situations whereby they might engage with Nottingham's lace heritage, and the study now sought to test an approach that

would draw a broad, general audience. The study considered that chocolate, a product associated with sensory pleasure and which is popular with both adults and children, would be a suitable material to employ as a means to interpellate audiences. Moreover, the study considered that by artistically using a common product in a familiar retail environment, its “Nottingham Chocolate” research activity might interpellate audiences via a range of aesthetic and social languages. The study regarded “Nottingham Chocolate” to be artistically related both to installation and performance art, and through its carefully determined artistic approach, it aimed to address both those audiences already initiated in contemporary art, and those which were not. Hence, situated in the retail area and window of the city’s Tourist Information Office, “Nottingham Chocolate” emerged as a feature of ‘Nottingham Light Night’, a well-publicised, citywide, civically supported arts event<sup>15</sup>.



**Figure 19, visitors to “Nottingham Chocolate”.**

Aided by two volunteer artists<sup>16</sup>, the study sought, through “Nottingham Chocolate” to attract audiences by publicly and visibly creating Nottingham lace drawings with chocolate that was melted on site. To emphasise the relevance of lace to “Nottingham Chocolate”, the volunteers and I dressed in Nottingham lace aprons along with oversized, matching

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<sup>15</sup> 2012 “Nottingham Light Night” Friday 10 February 6.00pm until late.

<sup>16</sup> Nottingham Trent University Fine Art undergraduates, Sophie Shields and Emma Brown.

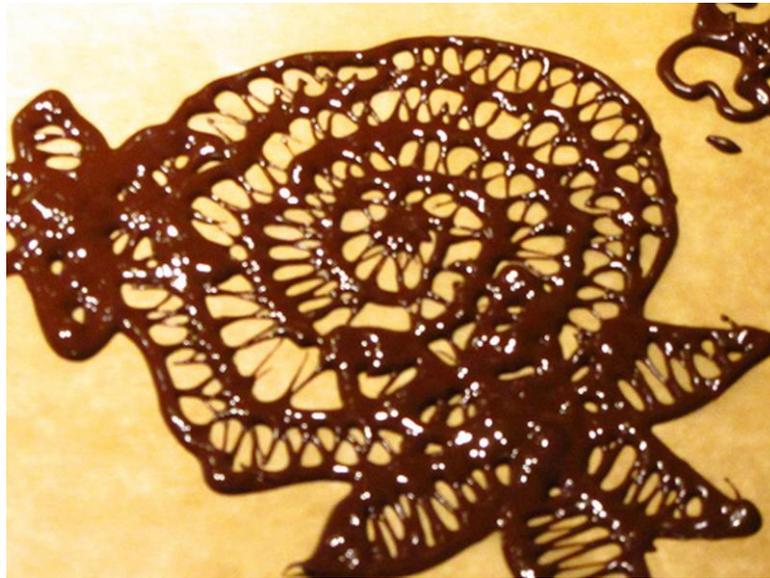
chocolatier/artist berets made especially for the event. Thus, the artistic research activity drew on the study's conclusions regarding aesthetic interpellation, which it developed from views proposed by Pearce (1995) Bal (2001) and Putnam (2001) to include non-art initiated audiences, as well as those who are initiated, or educated to understand contemporary art in a certain way. Therefore, along with the activity's overall artistic composition, "Nottingham Chocolate" demonstrated the study's inclusive approach to aesthetic interpellation through its presentation of decorative Nottingham lace fabric and skillfully made, attractive chocolate drawings,. "Nottingham Chocolate" also demonstrated the study's approach to perceptual interpellation, which was demonstrated by the attraction of audiences to artist's visible creative activity and also the artist's public interaction with audiences.



**Figure 20, "Nottingham Chocolate".**

Thus, audiences perceived activity, both in the window display area of the Tourist Information Office, and also outside where the artists offered finished chocolate drawings to the public. Furthermore, Perry's theoretical position regarding sensory perception supported the study's observation that its activity attracted audiences to "Nottingham Chocolate" (2012:98-105). Nevertheless, the study also observed that audiences' initial perceptual curiosity was followed by cognitive curiosity, which was demonstrated by their engagement with "Nottingham Chocolate". Thus, the study met with Crane's assertion that

to function as interpellation, perceptual curiosity must be followed by intellectual or cognitive curiosity (2000: 64-68). Also significant to the study in the context of “Nottingham Chocolate”, were its conclusions regarding sensory interpellation, which it claims were demonstrated particularly by the apparent appeal to visiting audiences of the melted chocolate’s aroma and luscious appearance.



***Figure 21, blog image of a fresh drawing at “Nottingham Chocolate”.***

Moreover, the study observed that audiences issued non- verbal utterances that indicated actual, or anticipated sensory pleasure in response to the melted chocolate, yet audiences also cognitively followed these responses with interactions between “Nottingham Chocolate” and other audience participants. Therefore the study concluded that it had, according to Crane’s requirements, established occurrences of interpellation during the presentation of “Nottingham Chocolate”. The study exercised its final trial regarding interpellation, in the organization and delivery of an event that launched the exhibition, “Lace Works, Nottingham Lace & Contemporary Art”, at Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Galleries. This event brought together aspects learned from the study’s previous artistic research activities, and aimed to address un-initiated, or reluctant museum visitors, along with those who might be familiar to museum environments. In the following paragraphs this chapter introduces the study’s use of entertainment at the launch event, “Warped – Nottingham Lace Shadowside”. Proceeding from there is a discussion of entertainment as an approach that, along with others discussed in this chapter so far, the study employed to interpellate audiences.

**“Warped – Nottingham Lace Shadowside” 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013.**

### **Performing Presentationally.**

Earlier in this chapter the study considered the concept of interpellation with regard to Goffman's theory of everyday social performance, Butler's theory of performativity, and Woodruff's notion of theatre as bounded space and time. Furthermore, the study believed that performance as entertainment, could also implement a means by which audiences, especially un-initiated museum audiences could be interpellated. Therefore this chapter now continues with a discussion that addresses the study's application of that which might be understood as popular "presentational" performance (Carlson 2004, de Marenis 2004: 234). The study sought to offer entertainment that would appeal to audiences beyond those familiar with museum and art gallery preview events, therefore along with DJs from Nottingham's local Goth community, it commissioned a 'Bedlam' Morris dancing troupe to perform at "Warped, Nottingham Lace Shadowside". Furthermore, the study's commissioned 'Bedlam' Morris troupe, "Boggart's Breakfast" offered an alternative version of Morris dancing and costume that is aligned with Goth subculture.



***Figure 22, 'Boggarts Breakfast' performing at "Warped - Nottingham Lace Shadowside."***



**Figure 23, DJs Glitterhawk and Heathen.**

Supporting the study's approach is De Marenis' argument that performed entertainment, such as for example, a choreographed 'Bedlam' Morris dance, is understood as a dynamic of senders communicating with a collective of addressees, that is to say, active performers directing their performance to a receptive audience (ibid: 235). In addition to de Marenis' argument, Carlson also explains that "presentational" performances of entertainments are defined as rehearsed and repeated actions in a designated time and space, which publicly demonstrate particular skills (Carlson, 1996: 5, 2004: 71). Therefore the study considered that audiences could not only be interpellated to the Goth theme of the event's entertainments but also through the particular performance skills of the 'Bedlam' Morris dancers and the Goth DJs. Furthermore, the study connected its concern with presentationally performed entertainment at Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery, with popular entertainments, such as travelling shows, fairgrounds and sideshows that were commonplace prior to the emergence of 'rational entertainment' during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In her discussion of the legacy of the Great Exhibition of 1851 Anne Clendinning (2004: 51-52) describes 'rational entertainment' as the embodiment of "lofty ideals" in the form of educational leisure, which was supposed to be more appropriate for the 'improved' and better educated Victorian public.

However, Paul Greenhalgh (1989: 74) observes that a significant proportion of the Victorian public would only be drawn to sites of rational entertainment if popular entertainments such as variety acts, sideshows and stalls were also present. Thus to attract visitors to the Great Exhibition and a host of similar exhibitions during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, popular entertainments were offered alongside the educational leisure that

exemplified a Victorian “discourse of cultivation” (Thomas 2004: 446). Moreover, David Thomas further identifies this cultural ideal as a paternalistic Toryism, intent on creating an upright, industrious, respectable and conservatively cultured society (Thomas. 2004: 3-5). The study considered that with the emergence of rational entertainment, a perception developed, which for adults at least, identified museums and art galleries as sites of “cultural labour” (Macdonald 2011: 38). Moreover the study recognised that, regarding Jensen’s observations, which were discussed earlier in this chapter, the paternalistic attitude that some museums are yet to overcome might, to some audiences, indicate condescension and therefore be off-putting.



**Figure 24, ‘Boggarts Breakfast’ performing at “Warped - Nottingham Lace Shadowside”**



***Figure 25, chocolate lace drawing sideshow at “Warped – Nottingham Lace Shadowside.”***

**A carnivalesque approach.**

Thus the study reasoned that a pre-Victorian approach to “Warped, Nottingham Lace Shadowside” was a justifiable means by which to interpellate audiences. Furthermore, the study learned from its “Lovelace” artistic research activity that aspects of carnivalesque, which pre Victorian travelling shows are associated with, are familiar to and popular within Goth subculture (see Willson, 2008, Brill 2008). Therefore, the study aimed to present “Warped, Nottingham Lace Shadowside” as an entertaining, carnivalesque flavoured social event, as well as an opportunity for seasoned museum and art gallery audiences to visit the launched exhibition. Thus with its closing artistic research activity, the study brought together opportunities for interpellation by means of entertainment, aesthetic language and objects, along with sensory and perceptual experience. In the following paragraphs this chapter reviews and discusses the conclusions reached by the study’s exploration of interpellation.



***Figure 26, the audience watching ‘Boggarts Breakfast’ at “Warped – Nottingham Lace Shadowside”.***

**Conclusion to Chapter Two**

This chapter discussed the development of the study’s unique approach to the concept of interpellation through its artistic research activity’s process of trial, discovery, reflection and action. Moreover, this approach was informed theoretically by relating the study’s practical, artistic research to established literature that is concerned the concept of interpellation.

Thus the chapter opened with a brief introduction to the ideological basis of Louis Althusser's perspective of interpellation as a means by which a controlling state manages its citizens, or subjects within a hierarchical socio-economic order (Althusser 1969, 1977). This opening introduction proceeded to discuss more recent theoretical perspectives of interpellation that resulted in the study's re-interpretation of Althusser's original concept. Consequently the study took a position, supported by Judith Butler's (1997) interpretation, along with that of Bryan Turner and Chris Rojek (2001), whereby society is perceived as formed by individuals who select their own subjectivities and are thus freely called, that is to say interpellated to micro-ideologies, or versions of society.

Thus the study agreed that these versions might for example, be represented by gender, sexuality, age, cultural interests, social activity and so on. Furthermore, through its discussion of practice and theory this chapter established the key to the study's perception or understanding of micro-ideologies, which is that none has any greater or lesser power than another, thus all perspectives, points of view, experiences or knowledge are valued equally. Furthermore the study's understanding of interpellation as a democratic, or egalitarian social function enabled it to build on useful but limited and hierarchical views of aesthetic interpellation. Thus the study is noted in this chapter as having developed an artistic approach to aesthetic interpellation in which the perspectives of those audiences that are not initiated in contemporary art are considered to be equal in value as those who are.

This chapter also discussed an embedded and focused approach to the interpellation of particular individuals in contexts with which they might be familiar, as demonstrated by the participation of subcultural Goth audiences at the "Lovelace" market stall installation, along with initiated museum and art audiences at the "Laceworks" sonic installation. Moreover, the study recognised that since these artistic activities targeted specific audiences the study might then, according to Erving Goffman's theory of social acting and authoritative, or exclusive approaches to aesthetic interpellation, anticipate some expected responses from participating audiences. However, in this chapter the study, informed by Deborah Perry (2012) and Paul Woodruff (2008), also observed spontaneous responses, which it theorized as perceptually initiated occurrences of embedded everyday theatre. Moreover, these spontaneous moments of theatre were taken by the study to be that which Susan Crane (2000) identifies as cognitive, or intellectual activity, which signifies that interpellation occurs following initial, perceptual interest. This chapter also discussed the study's aim to

interpellate general audiences through its adjusted version of aesthetic interpellation by creating familiar and accessible aesthetic objects.

The study's decision to present these aesthetic objects was discussed in accordance with Emily West's theoretical perspective of 'denigrated art forms', and in so doing this chapter justified the study's artistic position regarding familiar, decorative and easily understood aesthetic objects. Along with its justification of generally appealing aesthetic objects, this chapter also discussed the role of chocolate as a sensory means to interpellate wide-ranging audiences, which it considered would include those who might be familiar with contemporary art along with others who might not. The study also observed occurrences of visual, perceptual interpellation regarding the artistic activity associated with creating chocolate drawings at the "Nottingham Chocolate" research event. Moreover, this was justified as interpellation according to Crane's assertion that intellectual curiosity should follow perceptual interest (Crane 2000). This chapter closed with a discussion of an event whereby the study brought together aspects related to the concept of interpellation that had influenced its own approach.

The event, titled "Warped - Nottingham Lace Shadowside", launched an exhibition on the theme of Nottingham lace and offered a programme of entertainment that took inspiration from pre industrial and pre Victorian travelling shows. Moreover, this chapter presented the argument that, since the study aimed to interpellate audiences from Nottingham's Goth community, and had observed a carnivalesque aspect to Goth culture, a carnivalesque approach to the exhibition preview event was therefore appropriate. The event's inclusion of 'Bedlam' Morris dancers was discussed as the study's opportunity to interpellate audiences via popular 'presentational' performance. Furthermore, the study drew on Marvin Carlson's identification of 'presentational' performance as a public demonstration of skill, to argue that audiences could be interpellated by such skill (Carlson 2004:71). The study also recognised Marco de Marenis' model of 'presentational' performance whereby active performers send, or direct their performance to a receptive audience, thus audiences are interpellated to a subjectivity that anticipates the performance of skill from others (de Marenis (2004: 234).

Furthermore, the introduction of presentational performance as a means to interpellate audiences added another aspect to the study's approach regarding its final artistic research activity. Through its carnivalesque approach the study interpellated individuals to a subcultural, Goth version of society, and the event's aesthetic and sensory entertainments attracted some non-initiated museum visitors. Moreover, the study found that visitors to

the event were interpellated to an 'audience's' subjectivity through the entertainment's aesthetic, sensory and performative aspects. Since the event sought to be inclusive and encourage a range of experienced and inexperienced audiences, features of conventional exhibition previews, such as open galleries and opportunities to socialise were also provided. In conclusion, this chapter traced and established the study's development of its position regarding the concept of interpellation. This was carried out through discussion and analysis of the study's artistic research, whereby practical activity was theorized with support from relevant literature.

In the next chapter, the thesis examines its overarching theme of 'authority' in the context of contemporary art, whereby issues of audience's agency and subjectivity are addressed accordingly.

## **Chapter Three: The concept of authority in contemporary art practice.**

### **Introduction to Chapter Three.**

Chapter Two introduced and discussed how the study perceived micro- ideologies as equally valued versions of society, or discourses, to which subjects, or individuals choose to be interpellated. Thus, the previous chapter explained that for example, Goth communities were aesthetically and ideologically interpellated to the study's "Lovelace" market stall installation, along with the event "Warped - Nottingham Lace Shadowside". Likewise, inexperienced, or un-initiated contemporary art audiences were also aesthetically and ideologically interpellated to the "Lace is Ace" market- stall installation. In addition to these audiences, experienced, or initiated art audiences were aesthetically and ideologically interpellated to the study's sonic installation "Lacework". All three sets of audiences, along with an infinity of others, are perceived by the study as different but of the same value, that is to say, the experiences, knowledge, and point of view of one is considered to be of no greater or lesser value than another. Thus the study took an egalitarian position that seeks to challenge dominance, or authority regarding contemporary art and recognizes that different versions of contemporary art are relevant to different audiences, in different ways.

This chapter therefore begins its discussion by examining an approach to contemporary art that is anomalous to the study's own but is nevertheless is from which its current view of contemporary art as comprised of micro-ideologies, or versions, developed. The approach under examination is that which Arthur Danto, a philosopher of aesthetics identified as the 'art-world'. However, the study perceived the 'art-world' as one of many versions, micro-ideologies or discourses of contemporary art, and in this chapter the thesis draws on its earlier critiques of monolithic, hierarchical structures to justify this point of view. Thus, while the existence of dominating forces in contemporary art is acknowledged, this chapter's brief analysis of Danto's 'art-world' takes apart his view of a one and only, authoritative model of contemporary art.

This dissembling of Danto's 'art-world', or dominant version of contemporary art paves the way for the chapter's discussion of community, or socially engaged art, a version of which the study had developed through its artistic research activities. The ensuing discussion addresses contemporary art's prejudice regarding community, or socially engaged art and drawing on relevant literature identifies the source of this bias. To demonstrate a dominant, hierarchical or authorised contemporary art approach to community art, the chapter covers an analysis of two community artworks that were situated in close proximity. This analysis discloses that one artwork sought to facilitate audience empowerment and the other seemed not to, which leads the discussion to issues concerned with the democratization of audiences access, that is to say, ease of understanding, with regards to contemporary art.

The themes of democratization and access are continued with a discussion of multi-sensory responses to observed, aesthetic objects, whereby the thesis explains that the study's artistic activities aimed to enable audiences' access through synaesthetic perception and haptic experience. The chapter also introduces the thesis' argument that audiences who might not be familiar with contemporary art could nevertheless understand the study's artistic work through responses identified in psychoanalytic theory as 'abject' (Kristeva 1982). Linking the 'abject' theoretically through morbid curiosity to the concepts of the 'uncanny' and the 'death drive', the thesis proposes that responses to artworks expressing morbidity, that is to say, the universal endpoint, in some form, provide routes for audiences to understand contemporary art.

The chapter's closing discussion concerns the study's aim to address dominant attitudes to exhibition previews in art galleries and museums. The thesis notes that certain conventions are reiterated at preview events whereby those who are unfamiliar with contemporary art, or new to it, are often, quite subtly, caused to feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. Since the study was responsible for curating the preview of an exhibition of contemporary artworks and historic artifacts on the theme of Nottingham lace, it sought means by which hierarchical approaches to 'the preview' might be disrupted. Therefore, in this chapter the thesis discusses the study's carnivalesque approach to democratizing an exhibition preview, which manifested as a launch event titled "Warped - Nottingham Lace Shadowside".

Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Bakhtin (1984), Zappen (2000), and through analysis of a Bedlam Morris dancing performance, the thesis notes the role of antagonism in carnivalesque and relates this to frustrations borne of social inequality.

### **The Art world according to Arthur Danto.**

This chapter commences with a discussion of hierarchical and authoritative approaches within contemporary art, and how the philosopher of aesthetics, Arthur Danto, perceives this. Moreover, the chapter's discussion explains that the study used Danto's position on the issue of power as a point of departure for its own developing position.

Danto describes contemporary art as an entity or "art-system", which he identifies as formed by dominant social conventions and power structures (Groys, 2008:12, Danto 1964). Moreover, Danto explains this art-system privileges art that sits within its prevailing tastes and trends<sup>17</sup> and that it excludes art that does not. Danto names this entity, or art-system as the 'art-world' and argues that in the Western canon of art history, which the 'art-world' represents as its current incarnation, dominant art maintains its position by sanctioning, or authorising new art tastes and trends through theoretical and critical revision (Danto 1964). Furthermore, Danto sees the transformation of one dominant art trend into another as a Modernist, or revolutionary function, that is to say, that the new replaces the old, and maybe brings along a few proven elements from the previous 'regime' (ibid).

For example, Danto explains that the contemporary 'art-world's' current distaste for what are perhaps pre- Modernist ideals of beauty or as he terms it 'kalliphobia', has its genesis in the Dada philosophies of artists traumatised by their experiences during the First World War. According to Danto, these artists politicized a traditional version of beauty by withholding it from a society that threw them into the battlefields of a brutal and pointless conflict, so they instead offered art that demonstrated their view of reality. Moreover, following shortly behind that Dadaist rebellion was Hitler's vehement antipathy towards avant-garde art, which along with the idealized and patriotic imagery of American Regionalist art, secured the association of pre- Modernist beauty in art with conservative, establishment values (Danto 2004).

The study considered Danto's definition of the 'art-world' as useful because it is apparent that a dominant version of contemporary art is recognised within culture and society as authoritative and powerful. However, the study also observed that this dominant version maintains its authority through being perceived as the only recognised version, or discourse of contemporary art and therefore it functions as a monolithic, hierarchical structure. Moreover, Danto recognises only this singular version of contemporary art, which he perceives to have the power to exclude his 'kalliphillia', or love of beauty, therefore according to Danto's view beauty has suffered an ejection from the 'art-worlds's' monolithic

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<sup>17</sup> Although the study recognizes that market influences affect tastes and trends within the art-world, there is not the space for a discussion of it in this study.

and hierarchical structure because it is simply not fashionable. Furthermore, the study noted that when Danto worried in the closing years of the last century that a traditional approach to artistic merit was about to disappear, it was because he believed that a new approach devoid of “stylistic or philosophical restraints” had come to replace the old (Danto, 1997: 47).

However, this study notes that the new approach did have stylistic and philosophical restraints because as Danto himself observes, the new dominant version of contemporary art only remains dominant for as long as its style and philosophy are fashionable (Danto 2004). Therefore, Danto’s view that contemporary art is characterized by an, ‘anything goes’ approach illustrates that its current style and philosophy is contained by a certain set of ideals represented by that approach, and which are reached through theoretical and critical modification (Danto 1997:46). Thus, Danto interprets a prevailing and dominant trend within the ‘art-world’ version of contemporary art as a universal authority because he understands the ‘art-world’ version as monolithic, exclusive and hierarchical. Moreover, Danto laments that ‘beauty in art’ has been rejected and supplanted, and that since it is disempowered, it cannot supersede the currently favoured Duchampian generated “anaesthetic”, or ‘grunge’ aesthetic of the ordinary (Danto 2004: 29).

Nevertheless, the study considered that if Danto were to imagine the ‘art-world’ as just a version, or discourse, among many other versions of art, ‘beauty in art’ need not supersede or overthrow any other to be recognised, instead it is included as an equally valued discourse of contemporary art. Although the study recognised that a particular, authorised version of contemporary art is certainly represented as dominant in certain, powerful contexts, such as the media (see for example Stallabrass, 2006), the study argued that there are equally valid but unauthorized versions of contemporary art, such as community, or socially engaged art, that exist alongside it. Moreover, from the open studio experience discussed in Chapter Two, the study learned that I had subjectivised my artistic practice within the dominant, or authorised version of contemporary art but had, on realizing that this was the case, elected to resist that subjectivity and instead view my practice as one of a multiplicity of equally valued versions.

This realization influenced the study’s development of a participatory, socially engaged art practice, which aimed to establish a democratic and non-authorative approach. To achieve this, the study resisted seeking recognition, or authorisation for its artistic practice from dominant perspectives of contemporary art, and instead was guided by reflection on its encounters with audiences. However, the study recognised that although it had come to a

point whereby it considered that all versions of contemporary art were equally valid, this perspective had developed over time and had required a good deal of literary exploration concerning the subject of authority. Moreover, prior to the study reaching this position I had worried that even though I was keen to engage with visitors and audiences, to do so might identify my artistic practice as 'community' or 'educational', which would undermine its standing within the dominant version of contemporary art. Therefore, to provide a contextualizing framework for the study's developing artistic activity the following paragraphs present this chapter's discussion regarding versions of contemporary art in the context of community, or socially engaged art practice.

### **Socially engaged art practices.**

The museum director David Henry emphasizes the reality of a bias against community and/or educational artists and quoting Ernesto Pujol, writes that,

***The art world has a prejudice in acknowledging and evaluating art work that has an educational, or community concern. The artwork is assumed to be compromised, of less quality, and not even to be acknowledged.***

(Henry 2004:2)

Moreover, the socially engaged artist Grant Kester argues that a lack of understanding determines the belief that community art as a whole is unskilled, dull and patronizing, which Henry explains is reinforced by the results of underfunded museum projects that lead to working with less accomplished or "second rate" artists. (Cleveland 2000: 6, Henry *ibid*, Kester 2011: 138). Furthermore, Cleveland observes that some community artists, such as Beth Krensky and Seana Lowe Steffen, aim to provide people with artistic, creative and positive experiences, rather than 'high quality' aesthetic products. Like other socially engaged artists their practice often involves working with under-represented communities, or those with social problems and is therefore engaged with a different, though equally valid, discourse to that of commercial, or perhaps celebrated versions of contemporary art.

Also, there is often a tendency for these artists to prioritize the audiences' experience or educational goals over artistic goals, which feeds the belief that projects with a social or 'worthy' emphasis are irrelevant to critics, curators and contemporary art audiences (Black 2005: 145, Cleveland *ibid*). However, this study considered that community, or socially engaged art might also represent a dynamic and legitimate means by which many perspectives, purposes and voices could participate in artistic social engagement. For example Beth Krensky and Seana Lowe-Steffen believe that their practice as community artists can be seen as a model for an egalitarian society and that community art could be

employed as a useful vehicle for political activism, rather than the pursuit of artistic standards (see Cleveland 2000). Moreover, Krensky and Lowe Steffen defend the 'feel good' aspect of social art projects and seem unconcerned by validation from contemporary art's authoritative version, arguing that community and educational art is a "manifestation of an ideology" that is founded on the principles of "empowerment through participation in the creative process" (Krensky & Lowe Steffen, 2009: 12).

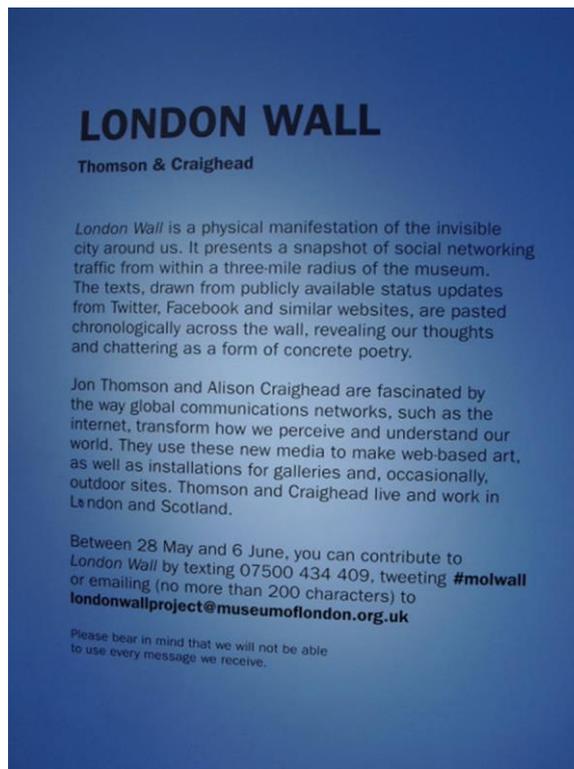
Conversely Tara Jane Herbert, Artistic Director of the co-creative company Dance United believes that artistic work made with communities "should be good because it is good" (Herbert 2010) and that participation alone is not enough. Herbert works primarily with young offenders and reasons that, empowerment comes through striving for excellent standards in educational and artistic endeavour, which she argues, should be common practice in community work whatever the background that participants come from (Govier 2009, Herbert *ibid*). What is apparent from these contrary views is that although they might have differing intentions and engage in a variety of discourses concerning 'educational and community' art, they have a shared aim of participant 'empowerment'. Moreover, the study considered that Herbert aimed to empower participants and audiences through the inclusion of aspects that are relevant, and therefore meaningful to 'beginner' audiences in the early stages of aesthetic development (see De Santis & Housen 2007). As a result of offering 'entry points' to her artistic practice such as evidence of skill, or even beauty in the guise of the 'aesthetically pleasing', Herbert invites the 'beginner' to engage with and begin thinking about what they are viewing.

Furthermore, as noted in Chapter Two, it is the relevance of each version of contemporary art to its audience and practitioners that initiates engagement with that version. Thus although this study perceives all versions of contemporary art as being of equal value, it acknowledges that the degree of their relevance and capacity to engage will vary.

### **Harvesting content from communities.**

To support the development of its participatory, socially engaged artistic practice the study visited two examples of artworks that claimed community participation in their execution. In the case of artists Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead, the community was used to provide content for an apparently participatory artwork at the Museum of London. Their piece, "London Wall" (16/05/2010 – 01/12/2010) was comprised of selected texts, facebook posts and tweets gathered from within a three mile radius of the Museum of London, which over the period of a week, were typeset and printed onto A3 sheets of paper. The sheets were





**Figure 28, Information panel for “London Wall”.**

The study considered that since Thomson and Craighead claimed personal material from communities without consultation, or their knowledge of that contribution, the artists demonstrated that theirs was a non-democratic approach to audiences and participants. Moreover, the artists also sought to authorise, or take power of the collected material by editing and presenting their view of what they described in the radio interview as “instantaneous social history” (ibid). What is more, when they were challenged by the interviewer on their collection methods, the artists responded by stating that since these digital social network messages are in the public domain they are available to use as the artists wish, and if people are not aware of this then that is not “their problem” (ibid). Thus, the study considered that, unlike Herbert’s and Krensky and Lowe-Steffen’s approach, Thomson and Craighead displayed no intention to empower audiences through their participation, instead they intended only to use audiences to provide material for their artwork.

Nevertheless, Thomson and Craighead succeeded in passing off the “London Wall” project as “art that involves and includes community” because although it was in reality art that exploits community, it was on the surface at least, expressed in contemporary art language that relates to the dominant, or authorised version’s prevailing trends and tastes (Danto

2004, Museum of London 2010, Stallabrass 2006 ). The study considered though, that “London Wall” missed an opportunity to democratically open out the Museum of London to potential visitors and that it also reinforced that which Stallabrass, in reference to Thomson and Craighead, identifies as contemporary art’s typically supercilious and disdainfully amused, condescension towards ‘ordinary’ people’s behaviour (Stallabrass 2005:36). The study concluded that Stallabrass regards Thomson and Craighead’s approach to contemporary art practice as one that conforms to an authoritative model, whereby the artist presumes their own knowledge, or point of view to be of greater value than that of the general public, or ‘ordinary’ audiences. Therefore, artists such as Thomson and Craighead deem their authoritative perspective, along with others such as those of critics and experts, to be elevated within a powerful, social and cultural hierarchy that is represented by the currently dominant, or authorised version of contemporary art.

#### **Inviting interaction with communities.**

On the other hand, just outside the Museum of London the study encountered a further example of community artwork that seemed to offer genuine opportunities for audiences’ involvement. The artwork, conceived by Luke Jerram was entitled “Play Me, I’m Yours” and consisted of twenty-one pianos scattered throughout the City of London for anyone to play or engage with (City of London Festival, 2010). The study observed a demonstration of community involvement in the actions of an adult who, clearly an early beginner settled with her music book to practice playing at the piano located outside the museum.



***Figure 29, a member of the public participating with “Play Me, I’m Yours”.***

Moreover, in addition to the pianos themselves a website was set up for communities to post pictures, videos and stories about the pianos, and the site is now a community authored legacy of the artwork. Also, in keeping with a socially engaged attitude, the project's pianos were refurbished and donated to local schools and community groups.

Thus the study concluded that "London Wall" was intended to be a text closed to influence, or authorship beyond that of Thomson and Craighead, whereas "Play Me, I'm Yours" invited communities to participate in the creation of open-ended and co-created texts. In support of this conclusion the study referred to Kim Charnley, who in a discussion of community art practice draws on Kester's proposition for ideal types of artwork. Charnley notes that in collaborative community works such as "Play Me I'm Yours", dialogues with the work extend beyond the normatives of those who are affiliated to authorised contemporary art discourse, such as Thomson and Craighead (Charnley, 2011). Furthermore, Kester's emphasis is on a 'dialogical aesthetics' that is in effect an ethical practice of engagement with an/other, that seeks to recognise potential imbalances of power between artists and non-art participants or collaborators (Kester, 2004: 29). Thus "Play Me I'm Yours" offered space for the knowing and willing collaborator to author a new text, which although unpredictable may be demonstrated by for instance, a cursory glance, a full-blown concerto, a learner practicing, or even the instrument's destruction (see Cover 2006).

Therefore, the study concluded that open-ended dialogue and participatory text building, such as that demonstrated by "Play Me, I'm Yours," addresses a rebalancing of power relationships between artists and non-artist collaborators or participants. On the other hand, the masquerading of "London Wall" as an openly collaborative community artwork concealed what the study considered to be its real intention, which was to be a closed and authoritatively authored text. Moreover, the study considered that Thomson and Craighead's approach to "London Wall" exemplified a cynical, socially pornographic attitude whereby 'ordinary' audiences are perceived as exotic but inferior (Charnley, 2011: 40). Furthermore, the study's analysis of these two community artworks reinforced its intention to conceptualise power not as a dominating force but instead as one that is ever present yet mobile, or elastic, and constantly negotiated in every encounter between subjects, individuals, or indeed artworks (Foucault 1981: 92, Weedon, 1997: 107).

In the following paragraphs the study relates its conceptualisation of power, or authority to sensory and conceptual encounters between audiences and artworks. This discussion takes place in the context of the study's artistic research activities and relates aspects of the

study's finding to the psychoanalytical, theoretical positions taken by Julia Kristeva and Nicholas Royle.

### **Multi Sensory Responses to Exhibited Artifacts.**

The study observed that protective cordon ropes, secure glass cases and notices instructing 'do not touch' authoritatively inform gallery and museum audiences that convention requires them to rely on the culturally dominant sense of sight (Verrips 2008: 210). Richard Sandell (2006: 68-69) writes of this convention as one that generates a 'simple' audience experience, during which the viewer is passive and receptive. Moreover this is exemplified by museum or gallery visits whereby audiences view an exhibit and read a textual interpretation panel, which Jennifer Garton-Smith argues is an authoritative, one-way communication that diminishes visitors' own interpretive resources (Garton-Smith 1999: 135). The study considered that both Garton-Smith and Verrips argue (Western) occularcentrism as normative, that is to say, dominant and thus as discussed in chapter interpellation, audiences are primed to privilege sight. However, Annamma Joy and John Sherry, drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty discuss multi-sensory responses to observed artifacts which they describe as 'haptic viewing', whereby a synaesthetic experience results from the combination of physical memory, imagination, and tactile perception (Joy & Sherry 1999). Therefore the study reasoned that audiences' encounters with artworks could offer a means by which the apparent democracy of synaesthetic perception might be explored (see Driscoll 2011, Verrips 2008).

This idea was explored in the study through the presentation of participatory artworks that sought to offer opportunities for sensory and synaesthetic perception, thereby disrupting the dominance of sight in a hierarchy of the senses (Verrips *ibid.*). Thus, the study's artistic research activity "Nottingham Chocolate" for example was, in part presented visually through the plate glass display window where it was situated, and also through live online images.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, "Nottingham Chocolate" was intended to be accessible to a broad range of audiences via a blend of multisensory and conceptual knowledge. Moreover the study reasoned that audiences would find "Nottingham Chocolate" to be an accessible artwork because it was composed of a luscious and familiar material, that is to say chocolate, and it referred to familiar knowledge, such as, that either, it tastes and smells

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<sup>18</sup> Tweets and Facebook updates were made during the event on the Tourist Information Office pages and pictures of "chocolate" appeared on blogs almost immediately, see for example [www.travelfibreadthread.com](http://www.travelfibreadthread.com).

good, or is sickly, is regarded as a treat, has certain effects on the body, and in this case, it resembles Nottingham lace. Therefore the study reasoned that “Nottingham Chocolate” could elicit haptic responses comprising a blend of bodily, tactile memory, that is to say, the taste and aroma of chocolate, along with an imagined sensation of the material in the mouth, and the conceptual, or cognitive knowledge of chocolate as a customarily restricted foodstuff (Sandell *ibid*). Consequently, the study considered that since this artwork could be interpreted via multisensory and conceptually blended responses, it did not rely only on the audiences’ knowledge of contemporary art to be understood or accessed, and thus it could be perceived as democratic, or egalitarian.

Moreover, the study reasoned that “Nottingham Chocolate”, along with the sonic installation “Lacework” resisted, or disrupted the dominance of the occularcentric norm by inviting other sensory responses. In the case of “Nottingham Chocolate” this invitation was issued both directly, through sight, smell and taste, and also indirectly through haptic functions. Furthermore, Sandell describes the audiences’ viewing experience in relation to haptic responses as a ‘diffuse’ experience, which occurs when the separation between the audience and exhibit dissolves (Sandell, *ibid*). The study considered that ‘diffuse’ experiences had occurred at “Nottingham Chocolate” and “Laceworks” for example, because audiences had actively responded to these events in ways that were relevant to them, rather than how the study might have otherwise anticipated. The study also considered that artworks which elicit disgust and revulsion, such as for some audiences, the melted chocolate of “Nottingham Chocolate”, or the plastic, bloodshot eyeball brooches that were found to be amusing at the “Lovelace” Goth themed market stall installation, might also offer democratised access to contemporary art.

### **Abject and morbid responses to exhibited artifacts.**

Supported by Tom Beardsworth (2004: 82-83), Winnifried Menninghaus (2003: 374), and Le’a Kent (2010: 367-372) the study theorized audiences’ responses to that which they seemed to perceive as disgusting or repulsive, as ‘abject’. This concept of the ‘abject’ is explained by the psychoanalytic theorist Julia Kristeva in her seminal publication ‘The Powers of Horror’, as an unstable boundary between non differentiation and self-differentiation that emerges in the messy crisis of exiting the mother’s body at birth (Kristeva 1982). Moreover, Kristeva claims that because the abject is identified by feelings of revulsion, fear of contamination and also because it is associated with deathly aspects of the body, it is repeatedly expelled to a ‘safe’ place beyond the boundaries of the differentiated, or identified self. Thus, the differentiated self is, through disgust and repulsion, defended

against the repressed memory of pre-natal oblivion and the state of un-differentiation. Hence, the sticky, liquefied mess of melted chocolate encountered by visitors to “Nottingham Chocolate” could, for some, have alerted abject responses generated from anxieties related to having once been part of an undifferentiated, material mass.

However, the study considered that interest might also be excited by the melted chocolate’s similarity to aspects of the body that are usually hidden or considered as grotesque, such as its interior or effluence<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, from proximity to that which represents the undifferentiated mass that every differentiated self must eventually re-join, morbid curiosity emerges. Furthermore, the study reasoned that, having long been an aspect of popular entertainment morbid curiosity, exemplified by a fascination with bodily otherness including the otherness of death, provides a means by which audiences might easily access contemporary art (see Henning, 2006). Moreover, Richard Sharpley and Philip Stone (2009) argue that an encounter with morbid curiosity, such as might occur when viewing grotesque contemporary artworks by Damien Hirst for example, or Gunther Von Hagens ‘plastinated’, preserved human corpse sculptures, provides a safe encounter with death because viewers are reassured that they are in the ‘normal’ state of being alive. Thus, the study considered that abject responses to items such as the eyeball brooches displayed at “Lovelace,” could be perceived as an instance of the grotesque and morbid enabling democratized access to contemporary art (Spooner 2006: 67).

The study also considered that a nuanced morbidity was evident in other aspects of its artistic research activities, which it perceived as an additional means whereby audiences’ access to contemporary art might be enabled. The study observed that, audiences’ responses to its obviously morbid artifacts, such as the eyeball and skeleton hand brooches, lace dressed skeleton dolls and sheep skulls, included the humorous and abject. However it also noted that audiences responded to the nuanced morbidity expressed in “Lacework’s” sonic aspect and the discarded lace motifs used to make greetings cards for “Lace is Ace”. Furthermore, responses to the greetings cards included those characterized by loss and in the case of “Lacework,” audiences noted qualities that they referred to as ‘spectral’ or ‘ghostly’. The study theorized these responses as ‘uncanny’ and referred to Royle’s analysis and interpretation of the concept, which connects the compulsion to repeat with the concept identified by Freud as the ‘death drive’ (Royle 1988: 85).

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<sup>19</sup> See also “Cacao” by Helen Chadwick, an oversized chocolate fountain that was exhibited in her ‘Effluvia’ show at London’s Serpentine Gallery in 1994.

According to Royle, Freud claimed that the ultimate aim of life is death, and that the journey is measured by a rhythm of constant recurrences, both in real and fictionalized life (ibid: 89). Thus, the recurrence of a sound once commonly heard in and around Nottingham, that is to say, noise created by lace machinery, is a repetition of a past occurrence and, because it marks out temporal distance it is, according to Royle death driven and therefore uncanny. What is more, this repetition occurred as a result of sound transmitted for an audience to hear, in a building that had once been a functioning bandstand, therefore “Lacework” caused a recurrence of the bandstand’s past context. Likewise, the greetings cards that populated the study’s “Lace is Ace” market stall installation caused obsolete Nottingham lace motifs to reappear in public, thus marking a temporal relationship between the past and what was at that moment, the present. Furthermore, the study noted that the theorization of the uncanny aspects of its artistic research activities might effect audiences’ access to its versions of contemporary art because since temporal relationships are established between past and present, the audience recognizes that time reaches forward and that all beings arrive at the same destination.

Therefore the study observed that its attention to death driven and uncanny aspects of its artistic research practice, enabled access to contemporary art for both initiated and un-initiated audiences. This chapter now turns its attentions to the study’s approach regarding a disruption of authority in the context of an exhibition preview at Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery. Discussed in the following paragraphs is a justification of the study’s decision to present carnivalesque entertainments such as a Goth affiliated ‘Bedlam’ Morris dancing troupe and Goth DJs during the preview that launched the exhibition “Lace Works, Contemporary Art & Nottingham Lace.

### **The exhibition preview, drawing on carnivalesque influences.**

The study considered that events affiliated to authoritative, contemporary art such as exhibition previews reiterate certain conventions, or performatives to maintain exclusivity. Therefore, the particular, perhaps nuanced behaviours, gestures and specialized language of these events might not create the conditions for new or uninitiated audiences to feel at ease. The study observed that communities in possession of particular, or expert knowledge and experience often form the majority at preview events, and that certain customs familiar to them frequently follow. Moreover, supported by its own observations along with the curator of contemporary art Mary Jane Jacob’s analysis of the ways in which connoisseurs, regard uninitiated audiences as the “lowest common denominator”, the study considered that social hierarchies operate in such circumstances (Jacob 1998: 14). Thus, as curator of

the preview that would launch the exhibition “Lace Works, Contemporary Art & Nottingham Lace”, I turned to the study’s position regarding its approach to authority in contemporary art. Moreover, the study took account of audiences who might be new to, or unfamiliar with contemporary art and/or museums, such as young adult members of Nottingham’s Goth community. In doing this, the study drew on Jackie Willson’s observation that from a historical perspective, carnivalesque entertainments provide a popular and inclusive alternative to those that are exclusive or considered to be ‘higher’ arts (Willson 2008: 155).

Furthermore in their analysis of subcultural activities in relation to the concept of ‘carnavalesque’, Stallybrass and White observe that its importance resides in being a humorous and populist critical challenge to officialdom and hierarchies (1997: 298). Stallybrass and White go on to explain that ‘carnavalesque’ can be understood as a temporary, idealized, festive and utopian view of society as seen from a subordinate subjectivity (ibid). Moreover, Stanley Brandes analysis of carnivalesque festivities locates their humorous and jocular characteristics within the realm of the political, whereby authoritative and subordinate social position is noted and commented upon (2006: 92-93). What is more, drawing on Arthur Koestler’s theory that humour tends to include an element of aggression, Brandes describes carnivalesque celebrations such as those of the Mexican ‘Day of the Dead,’ as providing a momentary social, political and cultural space for the sanctioned ridicule of public and authority figures (ibid: 192).

Although I certainly did not aim to ridicule or deride any person or their ideals, I did aim to challenge ‘normal’ social codes within contemporary art that reiterate authoritative and subordinate subjectivities. Therefore, the study referred to James Zappen’s essay on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, in which he discusses Bakhtin’s proposal that the concept of carnival and the carnivalesque provides an antidote to conventional values of appropriate behaviour in everyday social life (see Goffman 1966, Zappen 2000: 6). Thus by offering an inverted version of an exhibition preview event characterized by carnivalesque style and Goth inspired entertainment, along with conventional aspects also, the study aimed to disrupt norms of exclusivity and authority. In doing this the study meant to include audiences and help those who might be new to, or unfamiliar with exhibition preview events, to feel that the event was relevant to them as well as to others, and thereby for all audiences to feel welcome and at ease.

Also, through the presentation of a carnivalesque themed event the study sought to recognise that although carnivalesque entertainment might be perceived as popular, ribald, high-spirited, and humorous, it also has a significant darker, antagonistic aspect. What is

more, the study perceived this aspect to be a reflection of the resentment caused by social and cultural problems resulting from inequality and marginalisation (see Booker 1991: 211). Indeed, the launch event's 'Bedlam' troupe represented a genre of marginalised dance dismissed by conventional Morris dancing troupes as degenerate for their use of robust sticks and primal drumbeats, rather than handkerchiefs and bells. Since 'Bedlam' costume consists of tattered, black clothing with blackened, or painted faces, Bedlam, or Border Morris troupes reflect the sights and sounds of the industrial regions in which they originated, rather than what to them, would be the alien, bucolic regions of traditional and 'legitimate' Morris dance (see Simpson & Roud, 2000: 245).

Thus, the study recognised that the darker aspects of its carnivalesque entertainments might be understood as ruptures of antagonism towards authority, expressed through resistance to convention. Certainly, the study sought to rupture the authority of conventional approaches to exhibition previews, and the event, 'Warped, Nottingham Lace Shadowside' was the means by which it considered that this could occur. Furthermore, to breach cultural barriers that perhaps exclude many potential new audiences, the study drew on aspects of popular but 'left-field', amusements, such as Bedlam Morris dancing and ambient Goth music. Therefore, for instance, a rupture of antagonism could be perceived in the Bedlam Morris dancers refusal to comply with the legitimate version of Morris dance, whereby clean, pressed 'whites' and carefully observed choreography are the norm. Instead, through its crashing, chaotic rhythms and indications of dirt and grime, 'Bedlam' Morris dance presents an alternative version, which challenges idealized views of the pastoral, as signified by legitimate Morris dance.

The study's approach of presenting alternative, left-field entertainments also aimed to create the conditions whereby different audiences might dialogically observe and understand another's point of view. Therefore a purpose of the study's exhibition launch event was to bring together those who were initiated in contemporary art and exhibition previews together with those who perhaps were not, but who were familiar with the Goth and carnivalesque theme of the entertainments. Thus, audiences would be exposed to each other's perspectives, experience and knowledge, thereby creating opportunities for dialogical engagement and acting out Woolf's interpretation of dialogism as 'shining a light on, and learning from, another's perspective' (Woolf in Little 1996: 31)

### **Conclusion to Chapter Three.**

In this chapter the thesis discussed the study's position regarding authority in the context of contemporary art, and explained how this was explored both theoretically and practically through its artistic research activities. The thesis framed this discussion within an egalitarian, or democratic perspective that, drawing on theoretical approaches to 'power' (see Baxter 2003 Gardiner 1992, 2002, Williams 2005), perceives all points of view concerning contemporary art as equal in value. To introduce the study's perspective this chapter initially explored the philosopher of aesthetics, Arthur Danto's position regarding the dominance of that which he terms the 'art-world'. Moreover, the study found Danto's position to be secured within a Modernist approach whereby a new manifestation of contemporary art supersedes, or topples the previously dominant, authorized version. The study proposed that Danto's view is limited by its compliance with a belief in the dominant and hierarchical version contemporary art as a singular, monolithic structure. Therefore, in this chapter the thesis concluded that Danto's view could be extended by perceiving contemporary art as comprised of multiple versions, of which the dominant version identified by him as the 'art-world', is only one of many.

Since the study's artistic research practice had developed a socially engaged aspect, this chapter proceeded by carrying forward the thesis' conclusions regarding contemporary art as comprised of multiple versions. Thus, this chapter explored different perspectives of community and socially engaged art, including those that demonstrate prejudicial views influenced by dominant, or authorised versions of contemporary art. This chapter noted the study's observations of shared aims regarding participant empowerment within some community art practice, such as that of Krensky and Lowe- Steffen, Herbert, and Jerram. However, the study had also identified Thomson and Craighead's artwork "London Wall" (2010) to be masquerading as community art, and the thesis argued that, rather than seeking to empower communities the artists sought instead to take an authoritative position whereby communities were exploited by them. Thus, this chapter noted the study's conclusions regarding its exploration of community and socially engaged art, which considered that if approached democratically, such versions of contemporary art enable audiences to be empowered, active participants and co-creators.

The theme of democracy was extended into the chapters discussion of audiences' responses to displayed artifacts, and addressed the cultural conventions that privilege the sense of sight. Thus the chapter proceeded by exploring multi-sensory, or synaesthetic perception, along with the blend of bodily and tactile memory, imagination, and cognitive knowledge that Joy & Sherry (1999) identify as haptic response. Through its practical and theoretical

research the study concluded that, since audiences who experienced haptic responses as a result of viewing artworks that invite multi-sensory engagement need not have specialized knowledge of contemporary art, such an approach to audiences could be perceived as democratic.

This chapter continued its discussion of democratised access to contemporary art in its observations of that which it identified as abject qualities in certain artworks, including those produced in the process of the study's practical research. The study observed that abject aspects of artworks elicit morbid curiosity, which the thesis connected to the concept of the 'uncanny' and in turn to the concept of the 'death drive' (Royle 1988, Beardsworth 2004). This chapter argued that since, generally speaking, audiences are aware that all people are on a journey towards the same, ultimate destination, indications of that journey, such as might be noted in the directly and nuanced morbidity of the study's artworks, could therefore be widely understood.

This chapter closed with a discussion of the study's aims to democratize, or disrupt the authority of hierarchies within the context of exhibition previews at museums and art galleries. The study had noted from its practical and theoretical observations, that exhibition previews often reiterate authoritative conventions, or performatives that alienate un-initiated audiences, or those who are unfamiliar with contemporary art (see Jacob and Brenson 1998).

Therefore, the study had turned to challenge authoritative approaches to previews through its curation of a carnivalesque style exhibition launch event titled 'Warped – Nottingham Lace Shadowside', which to encourage new audiences was charged with a Goth theme. In this chapter the thesis explored the concept of carnivalesque as a means by which the study sought to redress the balance of power in relation to audiences attending the exhibition launch event. The thesis emphasised that it did not seek to overturn the perspective of any person to replace it with another's, instead sought the recognition of all audiences' perspectives as being of equal value. Therefore, through the launch event the study aimed to include carnivalesque entertainments alongside conventional practices, such as for example, the provision of quiet, open galleries and spaces to sit. Thus this chapter noted the study's observation that although all perspectives might be considered to be of equal value, that which is relevant to audiences will differ.

The study acknowledged this view and discussed it as an aim whereby the launch event could offer potential for audiences to view another's perspective, that is to say to engage

dialogically, or to learn from others through exposure to their point of view. To close this chapter the study discussed the darker aspects of carnivalesque characteristics that are connected with anger and frustration generated by social inequality. The thesis drew on the study's presentation at the launch event, of a Bedlam Morris dancing troupe whose identity is founded on a non legitimate, industrially influenced, noisy and chaotic alternative to legitimate Morris dance. In so doing, the thesis observed that this alternative version of Morris demonstrated the existence of industrially related, harsh realities that contradict the controlled, pastorally idealized version of legitimate Morris dance. The study concluded that the version of Bedlam Morris performed at "Warped-Nottingham Lace Shadowside, reflected the existence of these industrially related, harsh realities with regards to Nottingham's lace heritage. In the next chapter the thesis explores, explains and justifies 'gossip practice,' a new methodology that has emerged from the study's artistic, theoretical and philosophical research.

#### **Chapter Four - A new artistic methodology: Gossip Practice.**

## **Introduction to Chapter Four.**

In this chapter the thesis discusses the study's development of a dialogical practice, which through artistic and theoretical research it proposes as 'gossip practice'. The opening paragraphs introduce the study's approach to dialogism and how this concept relates to the thesis, particularly with regard to its philosophical perception of democracy and egalitarianism. Since the study found available terms within contemporary art to describe its dialogical, relational and talking practice to be limited, the thesis claims identification of this activity as gossip practice. Supported by theoretical positions and aware of gossip's negative reputation, this chapter argues the case for a democratic speech genre that, although it is generally located within the feminine and domestic, is nevertheless claimed by this thesis as a universal mode of communication. The study's position regarding gossip as a viable version of contemporary art is discussed in relation to the eminent writer Virginia Woolf, who as a self proclaimed gossip, used the genre dialogically to view another's perspective (Little 1996). Thus, the thesis argues gossip's relevance to the study's socially engaged, dialogical artistic research activities.

This chapter also notes that gossip remains unclaimed by prominent practitioners in the field of participatory and conversation art, and the thesis speculates on the reasons for its omission by artists such as Grant Kester (2005). Subsequently Kester's practice comes under analysis by the thesis and this chapter follows the discussion of Kester's approach to dialogue art, which supported by art critic Claire Bishop's position, the study found to be limited through a lack of visibility. This study concludes that Kester's rejection of aesthetic objects and reliance on conceptual aspects of contemporary art potentially excludes audiences. Therefore in this chapter the thesis proposes the study's own approach of combining multi-sensory, aesthetic objects, with opportunities to engage in gossip, as a means to democratize access to contemporary art. Thus, in this chapter the thesis theoretically justifies the study's proposal and subsequent claim for gossip practice as a new artistic methodology.

Furthermore, the thesis recognizes that, along with theoretical evaluation a practical model for the implementation and evaluation of gossip practice is necessary if gossip practice is to be a useful, generalisable methodology. Hence, this chapter demonstrates quantitative evaluations of market stall events where numerical data was collected, and discusses the resulting, extrapolated figures in the contexts of live and virtual gossip practice. To demonstrate qualitative evaluation of gossip practice methodology, this chapter refers to sections of an Arts Council of England (ACE, 2014) grant application form that seeks to

establish the artist's past and proposed projects with regard to 'public engagement' and 'benefit for audiences'. The thesis argues that according to the Arts Council of England's strategic ten year plan regarding public engagement and benefits to audiences and artists, gossip practice is a viable and valuable methodology. Moreover, this chapter concludes with an outline case study to illustrate the thesis' seminal model for a meaningful gossip practice event.

### **Gossip: an unauthorised practice.**

The study's autoethnographic research methodology revealed my tendency to easily form relationships through informal talk, and that the initiation of dialogue with and between audiences had become a key objective in this study. However, the study found the available terminology within existing art and heritage literature that might define its developing dialogue practice, to be self-conscious and apparently anxious about such practices' perceived lack of authority (Kester 2004, Waltener 2013, Pitt 2013). Furthermore, it seems that much of the literature on the subject of dialogue is concerned with its mechanics rather than its characteristics. Thus, neither Bohm's seminal work on dialogue, nor Womack's recent study, mention the presence of 'intimacy', which the study considered to be a key aspect of its own developing practice (Bohm 1996, Womack 2011). Therefore, the study considered that contemporary art literature's authorised definition of relational, or talking art practices as "conversation art" and "dialogue art" (see Kester 2004, Waltener 2013, Pitt 2013) could not adequately express the colourful, rich and varied textures of the encounters that had taken place throughout its artistic research activities.

Consequently the study sought an alternative term to identify its developing practice that could, through its social and cultural associations, signal the mix of body language, facial expressions, laughter, asides, sadness, empathy, sympathy and anger that can take place between people who are relating to each other. Thus, drawing on Judith Baxter's perception of dialogue as comprised of genres that she acknowledges might include 'mundane' everyday talk but not necessarily 'gossip', the study's reasoning concluded that 'gossip' as an informal, intimate, and democratic practice, might also be perceived as a genre of dialogue (2004: 108-110). Furthermore, the study considered that a form of relating identified as 'gossip' could be perceived as representing commonplace, everyday talk that is associated with ordinary life, and which also creates relationships, and produces knowledge (Baxter 2004: 108-110). Thus, I reasoned that by initiating the practice of gossip through the

study's artistic research activities, a means could be offered for audiences to not only access contemporary art but also participate in its co-creation.

However, the study acknowledged that, as demonstrated by Thiele-Dohrmann (1995: 11) and Marianne Bjelland Kartzow (2009: 45) gossip has a difficult reputation and is often linked with malice, scandal, and character assassination. Furthermore, Thomas Aquinas, building on Aristotle's foundations for an overall dismissal of 'gossip' as anything other than idle and spiteful rumour mongering, declares gossips to be "talebearers and backbiters" who "speak evil of their neighbours" (Aquinas in Leach 2000: 227). Moreover Leach (ibid.), in a continuation of her inventory regarding gossip phobic, distinguished philosophers notes an academic prejudice towards 'gossip' that she insists, views it as a limited discourse concerned with 'frivolity, trivia and meaninglessness' (Kierkegaard), that is neither 'profound', nor 'authorised' (Heidegger). The study observed that Kierkegaard's fairly typical view of gossip supported Irit Rogoff's assertion that gossip is firmly located in the non-legitimate "domestic netherworld" of the feminine and is thus largely perceived as trivial, spiteful and of no importance (Spacks 1986: 27, Rogoff, 2003: 268).

Certainly the word 'gossip' is developed from a feminine context, that is to say, it first was used to identify women in attendance during childbirth as "God's siblings", and later shortened to "God's sips" (Worsley, 2013). Moreover, perhaps in recognition of gossip's original, respectable incarnation, several theorists aim to recuperate gossip as a specifically feminised, counter-discourse to that of the legitimate and "valorized concept of discourse" from which gossip is apparently excluded (Irigaray 1985, Leach 2000:15, Spacks 1985).

Indeed Rogoff (ibid.) proposes gossip as a mode of 'relational knowledge' which, when it is taking place is far more concerned with how the people relating to each other express that relationship, rather than with the information that is being exchanged. Moreover, she identifies 'gossip' as involving exchanges of information, of understanding another, of relating with another but primarily of expressing a view of life from the gossiper's own unique perspective (ibid). Since the study aimed for inclusivity, it considered that gossip need not necessarily be limited to feminised discourse and therefore that gossip might also be identified as the close, or intimate relating shared by any gender and none in particular. Consequently, the thesis recognised similarities between approaches to gossip and Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, which the study interpreted as the understanding of interactions between speakers and listeners as dynamic, polyphonic, multi- aspectual, open-ended and equal (see for example, Linell 2009, Zappen 2000).

The study's interpretation was supported by Bakhtin's notion that the self in dialogue is ever negotiable, responsive, and contingent, and therefore the study concluded that dialogic practice demands constant critical self – reflexivity (Vandevelde 2006: 1). In Judy Little's analysis of dialogism regarding Virginia Woolf's literary practice, she observes that within Woolf's letters the writer not only gives an account of herself as a self proclaimed gossip but also offers a simple and concise description of how she interpreted the practice of gossip. Woolf writes,

***I use my friends rather as giglamps: There's another field I see by your light. Over there's a hill. I widen my landscape.***

(Woolf, in Little 1996:31).

Thus, Woolf encapsulates the study's approach to its artistic research practice, which aims to be empathic and allosensual, that is to say, it recognises, accepts and learns from the others' points of view, and is egalitarian in its belief that all points of view are equally valid (Bauer & McKinsky 1991, Vandevelde 2006: 3).

Furthermore, in support of the study's position regarding the potential of gossip as a dialogical art practice, Rogoff argues that individual's perspectives, knowledge and experience might come together in an expression of new knowledge articulated in 'non-valourised' or un-authorized forms, such as gossip. Rogoff writes,

***In the struggle to locate and articulate new structures of knowing and alternative epistemologies which are actually informed by the conjunction of subjectivities, pleasures, desires and knowledges, gossip deserves serious consideration.***

(Rogoff 2003: 268)

Thus, sustained by theorists and eminent, artistic practitioners, such as Andy Warhol, Michael Corris, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Virginia Woolf, the study considered that gossip seemed to be a suitable vehicle for expressions of polyvocality and multi-perspectives (Wolf 1997, Corris 1999, Craft, 2012, Little 1996). However, the influential artist Grant Kester, who leads the field in participatory conversation art, along with other contemporary artists who claim dialogue as a significant aspect of their practice, have never yet claimed gossip as a viable genre (Kester 2004, Waltener 2013, Pitt 2013).

Therefore the study considered that although it might be the case that the practice of gossip as a viable genre of participatory art has never occurred to contemporary artists, it also reasoned that a dialogic, gossip practice could not, because of its reputation, comply with the conventions of legitimating "higher" or authorised discourse (Hess-Luttich 2001: 272).

Yet, Leach claims that some conventions of academic inquiry, such as listening to oral histories, or reading unpublished letters is the practice of 'gossip' and that it is therefore "worthy of the most astute cultural historian or social science researcher", (Leach 2000: 234). From an assessment of this chapter's discussion of the problems and concerns regarding gossip, the study nevertheless concluded that given a dialogical foundation, gossip practice is a viable version of contemporary art practice, which the study developed through its artistic research activity.

### **Bringing together context and content.**

Moreover, having established the study's approach to gossip as a viable version of contemporary art practice, this chapter turns to examine an aspect of Grant Kester's contemporary art practice that the study observed as anomalous to its own democratic aims. Kester is considered to be very influential within the field of participatory dialogue art, and his publications on the subject are regarded as key texts (see for example Bishop 2012, Carpentier 2011, Cohen-Cruz 2012). Indeed this study referred to Kester's texts as a theoretical aid to exploring the potential of dialogue as a means by which contemporary art could be understood, or accessed more easily by a range of audiences. However, in a divergence from Kester's conceptual position of anti-visibility, the study had created and presented environments in which artifacts had been produced to enable audiences' access to both material, physical contemporary art, and ephemeral, temporary "oral artifacts" expressed as gossip (Kester 2004, Rogoff 2003: 273-4). Furthermore, in the opening pages of his book on conversation art, Kester argues that artists engaged with 'dialogue' art production are "context providers rather than content providers", therefore content such as material, or physical artworks seem to be considered by Kester to be irrelevant (2004:1).

Nevertheless, the study considered that its artistic research activities offered both content and context, and the thesis suggests also that there are areas in which these boundaries are blurred. For instance, the study's research and practice brought together contexts, such as market stalls, disused bandstands, or the windows of retail spaces, that were equipped with what might be understood as contextualising content, such as lace artifacts, lace drapery, chocolate, or sound. Thus, the study reasoned that these environments became visual artifacts that provided contexts and content, which prompted further content, that is to say, gossip relating to Nottingham's lace heritage. Furthermore, in reference to Thomas Crow, (1996) Kester observes that conceptualism in art is characterized by a "withdrawal of visibility" (ibid: 52), which stems from a rejection of Modernism's privileging of the ocular (Kester 2004: 52-4).

Danto though, identifies this withdrawal as a phenomenon of that which he identifies as the 'art-world' that has developed into 'kalliphobia', that is to say, a hatred or fear of beauty in art. Therefore, the study reasoned that since Kester argues that the process of dialogue takes priority over any other aesthetic concern, such as visuality, he falls into a conceptual approach that is influenced by an authoritative and dominant version of contemporary art that excludes audiences who may not understand why some artists withdraw visuality. Furthermore, as the art historian Claire Bishop notes, participatory art practice largely fails to recognize that its avoidance of visuality or object-ness can be alienating to audiences (Bishop 2012). Drawing on the philosopher Jaques Ranciere she asserts that there is a need for mediating visual, sensory objects such as an image, story, film, spectacle, and perhaps also, aroma, taste, sound or tactility, that permits the experience of participatory art to have a "purchase on the public imaginary" (ibid. 2012: 45).

Furthermore, the study observed that Kester perceives artists who work with dialogue are providers of social or political contexts but not visual or sensory artistic content. However, through its artistic research activities the study found that if both aesthetic and social critiques are applied to the production of participatory art practice, it has the potential to generate positive social and artistic experiences. The study considered this to have been demonstrated in part, by audiences' interest in, and rapport with its physical artifacts, that is to say, the market stall installations, sonic installation and chocolate lace making performance event. In these instances, audiences were perceived to have, for example enjoyed the aesthetic objects, as in the case discussed in Chapter Two of the audience participants who 'performed' with eyeball brooches. For other audiences, such as some who visited "Lace is Ace", the aesthetic objects presented as the lace draperies and in particular lace decorated greetings cards, elicited thoughtful and emotional responses. The study also noted that connections between audiences, or participants including myself, often resulted in episodes of close relating whereby a positive, socially interactive space developed within the materially aesthetic spaces of the artistic research activities. Moreover, ephemeral, new oral artifacts as defined by Rogoff (2003: ibid) were created from these episodes of close relating. Thus, supported by Bishop's position regarding audiences' need for the inclusion of mediating artifacts in participatory art, the study considered that its version of a gossip practice, which attended to sensory and aesthetic concerns, extended Kester's version of conceptual, dialogue art (ibid: 40-44).

### **Practical Applications of a Gossip Practice.**

In the previous paragraphs this thesis identifies and claims a new methodology for art practice that it has termed 'gossip practice', to describe the process whereby 'gossip' the noun emerges from 'gossip' the verb. However, to be a viable and meaningful methodology that is useful to art practitioners, 'gossip practice' must offer a model for its practical application. By its close this study had, in keeping with its philosophical approach initiated a policy of resisting authorisation, curation, or indeed ownership of any new oral artifacts or gossip, nevertheless, the study had earlier set templates for the practical, quantitative evaluation of projects using gossip practice as a methodology. For instance, the study documented its first research activity 'Lacepoint' with classic ethnographic methods, that is, writing and photography. Although electronic recording equipment such as microphones and video cameras were considered by the study as means by which evidence might be gathered, it found in some early field studies that this interrupts and influences the flow of close relating and trust that might occur otherwise. Also, there are practical difficulties concerning security in busy public spaces where the artist's attention is to be focused on interaction rather than equipment. Appendix One offers a detailed account of the entire day written in autoethnographic, literary style. Thus, it is possible to extrapolate from this account that thirty three people who passed 'Lacepoint's' market stall installation stopped to talk as a result of encountering Nottingham lace artifacts displayed at the site. Of that number seventeen people, some of them at length, related their personal experiences of having been connected with Nottingham's lace industry. Seven people conversed briefly about lace in general, and thirteen expressed a particular interest in Nottingham's lace heritage. Seven were willing to give contact details and six requested updates on further, similar Nottingham lace related events. Nineteen people engaged in what the study came to consider as intimate dialogical relating, or gossip practice. There are indeed overlaps between the groups identified above and from the data documented in Appendix One it is possible to observe that conversations initiated by encounters with Nottingham Lace artifacts developed into the dialogical gossip of this study's gossip practice.

From the 'Lovelace' market stall installation a 'contact details' sheet yielded twenty-four names and email addresses, and three of these people have kept in regular contact regarding events related to their connections with Nottingham's lace heritage. Although the contact list might seem limited, this was perhaps because the study had initiated a Facebook page under the name of 'The Twisted Textile'<sup>20</sup> and produced cards to distribute at the

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Twisted-Textile/237157976341811>

event. An estimated number of approximately forty cards were taken and traffic on 'The Twisted Textile' received seventeen posts in the two days following 'Lovelace' and from these posts independent conversations between participants emerged. 'The Twisted Textile' is now dormant, however it remained active and indeed interactive until completion of the 'Nottingham Chocolate' event. Although the study opted to develop a methodology of non preserved, or documented ephemeral, temporality regarding gossip practice, other than in the memories of participants, it does recognise the value of a gossip practice that is situated either partially or wholly within social media.

Therefore there is scope to develop a methodology whereby a textual and perhaps also pictorial gossip practice takes place within social media that can be evaluated and quantified. 'Nottingham Chocolate' proved to be far too busy an event for the study itself to attend to social media, however audience members tweeted and blogged throughout the duration (see figure 21). The evidence and data cited in the previous paragraphs provides the means to evaluate gossip practice as a practical and useable methodology in contemporary art practice. To demonstrate a practical treatment of this claim the following paragraphs attend to a section of the Arts Council of England, 'Grants for the arts' application form that requires information regarding the benefits of projects to the public (2014). Although there is also a section that requires the applicant to justify his or her project's 'artistic quality', the study considers this matter to have been dealt with in its argument for the viability of gossip practice earlier in this chapter.

The application form section heading concerned reads "Public Engagement" and is followed by a sub heading reading, "People who will benefit from your activity". In addition to projected figures for future activities, the applicant is required to give information regarding "numbers benefitting your activities over the last 12 months" (ibid: 1). For the purposes of this demonstration the thesis will use figures from the 'Lacepoint' and 'Lovelace' market stall events along with those extrapolated from The Twisted Textile Facebook page to represent a preceding year of artistic practice. Thus the study can answer the application form's first question using data that reveals recent work to have benefitted one artist, one hundred and one live audience members engaged enough to have at least taken a contact card, a minimum of thirty three audience members who engaged online via social media and 'liked' The Twisted Textile page and four who sent emails.

To establish how audiences and myself, the artist benefitted from these activities, it is useful to consult the Arts Council of England's 10 Year Strategic Framework 2010 – 2020, which is

titled 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone' (2013). This document discloses the Arts Council's belief that

***..there remain significant disparities in the level of arts and cultural opportunities and engagement across the country. Those who are most actively involved with the arts and culture that we invest in tend to be from the most privileged parts of society; engagement is heavily influenced by levels of education, by socio-economic background, and by where people live. Sometimes this can be explained by a lack of appropriate opportunities to engage, or by a failure to offer communities something that is relevant to them.***

***(ibid: 28)***

As the artist initiating and presenting the study's events I did of course benefit from engaging with a range of audience members who generously shared narratives of their own lives and who co created gossip practice. The study claims that audiences from a diverse range of backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, abilities, education, socio economic positions and perspectives encountered contemporary art, and engaged with it because the study's market stall installations were carefully designed to be relevant to the local communities. Since local communities were thoroughly considered via the study's philosophical approach of multiperspectives and polyvocality, audiences' perspectives and voices were valued, thus they benefitted. Also, a condition of gossip practice is that it is co created, therefore audiences were involved in the co creation of contemporary art, and this often occurred between other audience members rather than only with the artist. In its strategic document the Arts Council of England, or ACE acknowledge that issues regarding a lack of engagement from some audiences might be addressed by the organization's support of relevant work and by offering opportunities to engage in its production (ibid: 29). ACE also recognises that audiences who might not engage with authorised art and culture do engage with 'everyday' arts and culture such as listening to recorded and live pop or rock music, digital gaming or watching films. Moreover, this thesis argues that the study's practice of close relating generated by encounters with aesthetic objects that are meaningful to local communities can be counted as 'everyday' arts and culture, and is thus relevant to ACE's aim to forge links between *all* audiences and cultural organizations.

Finally, ACE declares that it will "support the development of new artistic forms and experience" (ibid: 30). Since this thesis claims that the study's gossip practice is a new artistic methodology, and that the newly minted oral artifacts, or gossip is understood as a seminal form, then support from ACE might be anticipated by artists who choose to initiate gossip practice. Thus, an application for a projected gossip practice based project might, if it considers the conditions under which 'Lacepoint', 'Lovelace' and 'The Twisted Textile' were

initiated, rely on data extrapolated from these artistic research events. As an artist my interest is in communities whose perspective tends to be overlooked, ignored or forgotten in the wake of major disruptions that are often beyond their control, such as industrial atrophy or war. I am also a hands on maker, therefore the artistic work of this study has been to create everyday, aesthetic, aural and oral spaces for communities associated with the now defunct Nottingham lace industry. However, the study's model of gossip practice might for example, be applied to communities of any declining or threatened industry, and another gossip practitioner might not make their own aesthetic objects.

Further projects might for instance address communities in North Somerset who have for generations been linked to the now redundant Cadbury's confectionery factory in Keynsham, or again in Nottingham, where the phased closure of the last cigarette factory to be operating in England, Imperial Tobacco will complete in 2016. In the case of these possible projects it would be essential to conduct research that informs the artist as to how a gossip practice event might be made relevant to these communities. For example, a call or email to Imperial Tobacco will probably yield results on gender ratios and age ranges of the workforce (these figures are not listed in company reports available online), past and present. Since a key aim of gossip practice is to be relevant to its audiences, this information may influence decisions about the form that aesthetic objects for a market stall installation might take. A brief survey of market stall operators in Nottingham reveals that there are at least four organizations that may be approached for market stall hire in the areas around Lenton, which is where Imperial Tobacco's Nottingham factory is located.

A study of company reports, manifestos and press stories will also provide information regarding the activities that might exist amongst the workforce community, such as sports facilities, clubs, outings and charity interests<sup>21</sup>. This data can also aid the development of aesthetic objects that might initiate gossip practice at a market stall installation. In the case of this study aesthetic objects incorporating Nottingham lace provided a 'gateway' to close relating, or gossip at the market stall events, therefore familiar materials or tobacco related imagery particular to the experience of communities linked to Imperial Tobacco is likely to provide a similar gateway. For example, this image, figure 30 is scanned from an original 1946 copy of 'Housewife' magazine and it advertises 'Players' cigarettes, the founding brand of Imperial Tobacco and the locally known name of the factory itself. Thus, this image along

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<sup>21</sup> See for example <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-27050019>[http://www.imperial-tobacco.co.uk/files/financial/reports/ar2013/files/pdf/annual\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.imperial-tobacco.co.uk/files/financial/reports/ar2013/files/pdf/annual_report_2013.pdf)

with some imagination, artistic skills and subject research, could develop into an aesthetic object that is relevant to the communities associated with tobacco goods manufacture in Nottingham, and therefore generate beneficial and meaningful gossip practice. Moreover, the model outlined here for Imperial Tobacco could also be applied in the context of the Cadbury's factory closure mentioned previously, and on a cautionary note the study recognises and advises the use of proper procedures when using images that are still in copyright<sup>22</sup>. The study also notes the contentious nature of cigarette production but maintains that the industrial community is of interest here, rather than the product itself.



*Figure 30, Players advertisement from a 1946 issue of 'Housewife'*

#### **Conclusion to Chapter Four**

In this chapter the study's development of a dialogical, gossip practice has been discussed as a search for a means by which audiences and participants perspectives might be expressed and recognised as legitimate, co-authored and intimate 'oral artifacts' (Rogoff 2003). Furthermore, this chapter reported the study's rejection of 'conversation' or 'dialogue' to describe its practice, deeming both terms to be overly formal and insufficiently descriptive regarding the qualities of close relating. Despite its poor reputation, which is noted and discussed, the study has justified, with the support of theoretical perspectives, the

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<sup>22</sup>For comprehensive guidance see <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/hargreaves-copyright-techreview>

identification of gossip as a suitable term for its developing practice (see Leach 2000, Little 1996, Rogoff 2003, Spacks 1986). The study has also resisted reclaiming gossip as a feminine talking practice, or discursive mode, and instead argued that as a dialogical, democratic form of close, intimate, and personal relating undertaken by any gender, gossip must not be restricted to one in particular. Moreover, in this chapter the study noted that in spite of its recognition by academics such as Leach and Rogoff, along with eminent artists and writers such as Warhol and Woolf, gossip remains unclaimed by contemporary, participatory and conversation art (Leach *ibid*, Little *ibid*, Rogoff *ibid*, Wolf 1997).

This observation was explored through a critique of the approach taken by influential participatory artist Grant Kester, whereby the study identified exclusive, hierarchical tendencies related to a privileging of the conceptual over the sensory. Drawing on the art historian Claire Bishop (2012) and the study's practical research, this chapter asserted the thesis' view of aesthetic objects as useful in engaging audiences in dialogical gossip practice. Thus the study concluded that the study's easily understood aesthetic objects, presented in combination with a facilitation of empathic gossip could constitute audiences' democratised access to and co-creation of contemporary art. Having theoretically justified the study's claim for gossip practice, this chapter proceeded to set out a methodological model for the practical application of gossip practice. Figures extrapolated from an autoethnographic report of 'Lacepoint' and documentation of 'Lovelace', along with statistics from 'The Twisted Textile' Facebook page provided material, which the study employed to demonstrate how gossip practice might be quantitatively as well as qualitatively evaluated.

Using an Arts Council of England art project grant application form, along with the organisation's 10 year strategy document, this chapter explained how gossip practice can be justified practically as an activity that is beneficial to audiences and artists (2014, 2014). From these documents the study deduced that since gossip practice initiates the co-creation of contemporary art in the form of new oral artifacts, it is a version of 'everyday' arts and culture, and is a new art form, it is therefore justified as a new meaningful, methodology for art practice by ACE's strategic criteria. To further demonstrate the practical and meaningful application of gossip practice, this chapter offered an outlined case study to discuss the necessary steps required to prepare for a successful gossip practice event. In the next chapter the thesis explores and discusses the concept of authority in the field of heritage. The chapter resumes a discussion of Gossip practice and it is introduced within a heritage practice context whereby its originality as a methodology is restated.

**Chapter Five – The concept of authority in the field of heritage.**

**Introduction to Chapter Five.**

In Chapter Three the thesis considered and discussed the concept of authority in contemporary art, and to re think the study's own approach, it examined ways in which that authority is demonstrated. In Chapter Four the thesis introduced a new artistic methodology that emerged from the study's artistic research and which challenged hierarchical approaches, or authority in contemporary art practice. Likewise, this chapter addresses the same issue of authority but here the thesis sets its argument within the field of heritage. The concept and practice of heritage provided the context for the study's artistic research activities, therefore to provide a background to this chapter's discussion the thesis begins by briefly outlining the relationship that has developed between artists and heritage institutions. Following on from there is a further précis that explains the emergence of museums since the dissolution of the monasteries, and which introduces the concept of heritage to this chapter's discussion. Through its survey of expert views, the thesis acknowledges the difficulty of defining the term heritage. However by drawing on the study's artistic research activity and its unique 'gossip practice' methodology, along with relevant theoretical models, the thesis establishes its approach to the concept and practice of heritage.

In this chapter the thesis demonstrates the study's aim to establish an egalitarian and democratic approach to heritage that departs from dominant, authorised versions, but which also seeks to acknowledge and include those versions, rather than replace them. Thus, the thesis considers all versions of heritage to be equally valid, therefore this chapter explores the varying subjectivities and perspectives of audiences, and how these might have been developed, or constituted. The effect of this exploration is discussed in relation to the study's choice of retail environments as sites and contexts for its artistic research activities. From this point the thesis argues the viability of the study's version of dialogical gossip as intangible heritage and the practice of gossip as heritage performance. The chapter's discussion then turns to the study's version of presentational heritage performance, whereby an event to launch the exhibition "Lace Works, Nottingham Lace Shadowside" took place at Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery.

Through its observations of 'otherness' such, as death, exploitation, and social exclusion, the thesis argues the study's treatment of the launch event as a democratic and egalitarian approach to Nottingham's lace heritage. To conclude this chapter the thesis connects contemporary audiences' museums and heritage institutions since their emergence.

**A tradition of the visual: artists and museums.**

The art historian Svetlana Alpers observes a European tradition of the visual whereby the attention paid to objects in museums, such as for example domestic ceramics causes their transformation into works of art. Alpers identifies this phenomenon as “the museum effect”, which this study considered might have prepared the ground for relationships between artists and museums to develop and thrive (Alpers 2001: 31). Moreover, the “visible craft” of both natural and artificial artifacts, along with their re-contextualisation as ‘wonder’- full museum displays, suggests that unions between museums and artists would be an appropriate and perhaps expected occurrence (Arnold 2006: 26, Greenblatt 2001: 49). Certainly, ‘visible craft’ of the natural world was studied in great visual depth by the Renaissance artists Albrecht Durer and Jan Breugel the elder, so that it could be re-presented in paint alongside curiosities gathered by collectors of the period (Alpers 2001). Indeed those who were employed by collectors to create the visually enticing and carefully arranged displays that filled their curiosity cabinets, would have been required to possess some of the compositional and analytical abilities that were common to artists (see Pomian 1990).

However, a different kind of relationship between artists and museums of the Victorian period is noted in Pearce’s account of the establishment of provincial museums (Pearce 1995). Pearce notes an emphasis instigated by the remit of the South Kensington Museum that distinctly separates the two previously entwined parties into educators, that is to say, museums and artists, who would now receive education from museums. The South Kensington Museum, which eventually became the V&A, replaced ‘wonder’ with a business-like and authoritarian approach to the use of collections as instructive resources for design in manufacturing and also to provide teaching material for students of art (Greenalgh 1989). Furthermore, under the same principles and in association with the South Kensington Museum provincial museums were founded, including the Midlands Counties Art Museum at Nottingham Castle in 1878, which was the first publicly owned and funded art museum outside London (Pearce 1995: 68)<sup>23</sup>. Since the emergence of that which Peter Vergo identifies as ‘new museology’ in the 1980’s, the desirable artist/museum relationship has become one whereby each ideally offers the other the potential for enhancement (see

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<sup>23</sup> According to Deborah Dean, galleries manager of Nottingham Castle Museum and Art gallery, Nottingham Castle is actually a 17th century ducal mansion, on the site of a medieval castle. It was built by the Dukes of Newcastle - then in 1831, the people of Nottingham stormed the building and set it on fire, in protest at the (then) Duke's position on electoral reform. The building was gutted and left empty for several decades before being given to the then town council to be made in to a museum.

Vergo 1989). Indeed, visits to museums and surveys of 'opportunities' in artist's publications such as *An*, and articles in the *Museum Practice* journal demonstrate that there is evidence to support a view that museums provide support for artists through exhibitions, residencies, and commissions, which supply finance, opportunities for development, and exposure<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, Jane Morris (2005: 44) even suggests that the primary motivation for some museums is an emphatic responsibility to encourage and support contemporary art, thereby stating "a commitment to living artists" (ibid: 46).

Director of the Neukölln Museum, Udo Gosswald suggests that the benefits to museums in forming relationships with artists include fresh and innovative ways of approaching collections, lateral thinking, new visitors, credibility amongst the young, especially teenagers and a wide variety of experiences (2008: 1, Morris 2005). Moreover, Morris argues that art often expresses these practical benefits as manifestations of intangibility that may be elusive, vague, ethereal or un-sayable, and that this offers museums the opportunity to explore alternative modes of practice. Moreover, in accordance with Morris, Gosswald believes that insights to history can be afforded a new dimension because art will not give only a one-dimensional perspective, instead art has the potential to evoke a second or third dimension in thinking about history itself. Gosswald explains that such further perspectives, or dimensions might manifest as emotional responses to history, the recovery of personal and shared memories, and an awareness of loss (Gosswald 2008: 1).

What is more, it appears that along with Gosswald many museum professionals such as, Ken Arnold of the Wellcome Trust consider artists to be useful in making museums relevant and 'accessible'. Indeed Arnold brought contemporary artists to science research projects as a deliberate means to make science more attractive to a wider public audience and the majority of these projects were considered to be successful in terms of research and public engagement (see for example, Arends & Thackera 2003). The matter of public engagement is observed by Graham Black who writing in 2005 and under a Labour government, noted that government and funding bodies placed conditions on public subsidy to museums and heritage sites, which had an effect of "enhancing access' and for them to "generate income in their own right" (Black 2005: 1). Thus, according to Black for income to be generated visitor numbers must increase and to enable this visitors must feel welcome, comfortable, and that the museum is relevant to them (ibid).

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<sup>24</sup> See for example, [www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice](http://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice)  
[www.a-n.co.uk/publications/a-n\\_magazine](http://www.a-n.co.uk/publications/a-n_magazine)

The literature referenced in these paragraphs indicates that, along with widening debate a key drive for institutions is to attract new audiences, which the National Trust's new programme of exhibitions, events, artist's residencies and commissions launched in March 2012, is specifically designed to do. The aim is to significantly swell National Trust membership and to "make sure everyone feels like a member" (Freshwater in Stephens 2012: 26). However, from an artist's perspective working with museums can be a frustrating and even daunting experience; often museums will have protocols and systems that must be complied with, and issues such as health and safety, pest control, along with conservation have to be taken into consideration. Artists may have to reconsider the materials that they may use, how their work is made and perhaps rethink an initial proposal. Moreover, they must also consider the museum's audience and be prepared to adjust their work so that it is sensitive to the young age of some audience members, and artists may even find themselves involved in children's educational activities<sup>25</sup>.

Yet, for artists who have an interest in the concerns with which museums are engaged, the study considered this relationship to be potentially very positive and of benefit to all concerned, that is to say, artists, museums, and audiences. In the following paragraphs of this chapter the thesis offers a brief historical background that explains the development of museums into the institutions that are familiar today. By necessity it is a basic framework, however this explanation highlights some key aspects of this study such as, authoritative approaches to audiences, along with the ways in which heritage institutions have in recent times sought to address this. Also noted is an underlying theme of 'death', which supported by theoretical perspectives referred to in the following discussion, the study believes to concern heritage and heritage institutions. Thus this chapter commences by observing the emergence of museums as a relationship to both narratives of the dead, and the material evidence of death.

### **Museums: a beginning.**

In his essay on the origins of museum displays, Stephen Bann argues that museums emerged as a result of the dynamic created by a course of restitution, or compensation that connects

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<sup>25</sup> All of the above has been gleaned from my own experiences and confirmed by reports from other artists. For example, in an article, 'Artist's Point of View' (Morris, 2005: 49-50) the artist Susie MacMurray recounts the process of significantly re-adjusting her work to comply with fire regulations and of having to agree compromises with the museum in order for her work (a wall covered in feathers) to be safely exhibited.

Renaissance cabinets of curiosity with medieval religious iconography (1995: 22). Moreover, the study observed Paulson's (1989) claim that this restitutive link was formed by a process of breaking and remaking, whereby the dissolution of the monasteries and therefore the destruction of important shrines were recuperated, or amended by the collecting, composing and reverence that characterized cabinets of curiosity. Bann explains that prior to the dissolution, Medieval Pilgrims would have encountered shrines such as that of St. Thomas a Beckett at Canterbury Cathedral, as a performance in which they would be introduced to its precious components via a narrator equipped with a ladder and pointing stick (Bann, *ibid*: 21). Such Medieval shrines were constructed around human remains with particular provenance and religious significance, and were often richly, even ostentatiously decorated with gems provided by those hoping to buy their way into heaven.

Furthermore, the study noted that death, the fundament of shrines is, according to Peter Wollen the obsession beyond the obsession with history in museums. Wollen argues that death forms the link from the shrine containing bodily relics, to the restitutive cabinet of curiosity containing secular and often once living objects, set within a framed narrative (1995: 11). Moreover, Pomian defines the cabinet of curiosity as being an interim phenomenon between that previously ruled by Christian religious belief and the later, Enlightenment rule of objective science (1990). Therefore, cabinets of curiosity were concerned with exhibiting the unique, fantastic, or peculiar, and the contemporary approach to investigation was 'ideographic', a term associated with the forensic analysis of evidence offered by a single object, poetically described by Eamon as the 'epistemology of the hunt' (see Eamon 1994, Trigger in Arnold, 2006: 3).

Ken Arnold's study concerning cabinets of curiosity draws on Trigger's explanation that, Enlightenment thinking brought with it an alternative 'nomothetic' approach, which aimed to formulate general scientific laws (*ibid*). From this nomothetic approach, which would for instance, seek to learn about an avian species by taking and surveying considerable quantities of them, museum collections of multiple examples emerged. Thus a legacy of this approach is that many museum archives are stuffed with duplicated items, particularly from natural history. Furthermore, Tony Bennett links the ensuing Victorian habit of collection and display of global "plunder" with the drive of the ruling classes to reinforce perceptions of them as dominant and powerful imperialists (1998: 63). Moreover, Bennett claims that 19th century reforms allowing access to museums for the general public in order that they may be educated, contributed to the image of collectors as dominant, authoritarian keepers of knowledge (Bennett *ibid*).

Thus, museums came to represent a domain of scholarship and authoritative “middle-class, Western values” that has perhaps led to their image as a dusty, conservative and forbidding Victorian repositories. However, Bennet (*ibid*) and Black (2005) observe that developments in museum policy since the 1980’s have put pressure on museums to change the way that they present themselves and their collections to the public (Black, *ibid*: 3, Hooper-Greenhill 1994). Indeed, it seems that the emergence and recognition of poststructural paradigms, such as democracy and egalitarianism, along with the manifestation of them as polyvocality has managed, in many cases to reduce the volume of the authorial museum voice. Thus, museums now work hard at developing democratic approaches by presenting histories through multiple perspectives. Despite these developments the study observed from a combination of personal experience and the theoretical perspectives of experts, that some audiences still suffer exclusion or alienation (see for example, Black 2005, Donald & Hall 1986, Garton-Smith 1999).

Therefore, the study sought to address some issues concerning the alienation of audiences from museums and other heritage institutions, such as historic sites, monuments and buildings. Moreover, the study also set out to explore the notion that heritage is defined in a particular way and ‘belongs’ to only certain people. In the following paragraphs this chapter outlines the problems that the expert literature has experienced in defining ‘heritage’ and offers an indication that uncritical approaches to ‘heritage’ lies at the heart of some audiences’ alienation from it.

### **Identifying heritage.**

The study observed that heritage is perceived to be “slippery, vague and ambiguous concept,” that is notoriously hard to pin down, and for nearly twenty years heritage has been described as a wide open and undisciplined field that is extremely difficult to define ((Graham & Howard, 2008: 2, Merriman, 1996: 382). This struggle for definition and discipline is evident in the contemporary literature, which documents what are at times, fiercely quarrelsome exchanges between scholars. For example, the study located a row between Ralph Samuel and Patrick Wright, whereby each publicly slugged out their differing perceptions of ‘heritage’ in print, yet both acknowledged some years later that the other had a point of view that was worthy of recognition (Wright 1995, Merriman 1996). Furthermore, at that time the problems associated with defining heritage appear to stem from its semantic generalised ownership of all matters of the past. Both Samuel and Wright seemed to have become confused by the cultivation of ‘heritage’ as a word that

“subsume[s] widely divergent phenomena into the same field of discourse” (Merriman, 1996: 382).

Earlier, Merriman had even suggested that ‘heritage’ could be understood intuitively but not cognitively and as ‘heritage’ was still largely undefined more than a decade later, Lowenthal observed that it was “untrammelled by definition” (Merriman, 1991, Lowenthal, 1998: 95). However, Wright, having established a firmer position on the meaning of heritage, observed in a blistering critical review of Samuel’s ‘Theatres of Memory’ (1995), that Samuel neglects to separate or differentiate the phenomena that he brings under his umbrella of the past; it is instead collected together as an undisciplined whole (Wright 1995). Moreover, the study found that although Samuel’s volume is a useful encyclopaedia of contemporary culture in the past and present, it also demonstrates that gathering up the past into a generalised and uncritical view of heritage does not help in the search for an identified understanding of heritage. Furthermore, the study considered that, critical discussion would be enabled and thus allows analysis to take place if Wright’s suggestion to separate the ‘strands’ of heritage into distinct discourses were followed (Wright, 1995: 2). The study considered that Wright had noted the association of ‘heritage’ with certain narratives of the elite, which scholars argued had occurred as a result of the appropriation of ‘heritage’ by Margaret Thatcher’s ‘new right’ in the 1980’s.

Moreover, Thatcher and her supporters claimed ‘heritage’ as a concept of conservatism that was used to promote nostalgia for so called ‘Victorian values’ and a certain ideology of nationhood (see Walsh 1992, Merriman 1991, Hewison 1989). Some fifteen years later Laurajane Smith examined this elitist, authoritative perception of heritage and identified it as the Authorised Heritage Discourse, arguing that the dominant heritage discourse of any given (Western) society, inevitably reflects its dominant political, social, religious and ethnic groups (2006). Smith also recognised that the meaning of heritage was based on ideas of nation and nationhood, and indeed claimed this as a defining aspect of the Authorised Heritage Discourse (2006). However, along with Pearce and Samuel, Smith adds that nostalgic ideas of nationhood are also tightly bound to the idea of ‘heritage’ as monumental, physical and material (Pearce 1998, Samuel 1994, Smith *ibid*). Furthermore, Smith explains that the Authorised Heritage Discourse extracts cultural value and meaning from important objects, rather than ephemera, and such objects are kept in its institutions to be guarded and controlled by professionals.

Thus the study considered that the Authorised Heritage Discourse might be perceived as version of heritage that, like Danto’s ‘art-world’ is concerned with hierarchy, and which

views itself as a singular, univocal, monolith. Moreover, such monolithic hierarchies perceive knowledge to be filtered from the top to the bottom, thereby in effect judging, or controlling that which audiences are permitted to discover from their encounters with heritage, or indeed contemporary art (see Samuel 1994, Smith 2006). Since the study has noted a connection between Smith's concept of the Authorised Heritage Discourse and Danto's concept of the 'art-world,' this chapter continues with an analysis of Smith's model according to the study's interest in Nottingham's lace heritage. The study reasoned that Smith's definition of the Authorised Heritage Discourse provides a structure, which through resistance to it, or disruption of its normativity, provides some traction to enable the task of identifying alternative heritage discourses.

However, although the study intended to challenge the conventions of the Authorised Heritage Discourse, it did not believe that it should be replaced with a superseding discourse. Instead the study considered that the authority and domination of heritage discourse could be dissolved through the recognition and validation of alternative, democratic heritage discourses. Moreover, in a critique of that which he perceives as Smith's binary model of authorised/subaltern, Iain Robertson asserts that instead of there being a "simple dialectic process at play", such as Smith might suggest, there are many layers of contestation, which if subjected to deeper reading reveal a more nuanced understanding of heritage (2012: 10). However, although the study noted that Robertson does not explain how these 'more nuanced understandings' are gained, it considered that this could be achieved through acknowledging that multiple discourses, or versions of heritage exist. The study understood Robertson's approach to the Authorised Heritage Discourse as similar to that of Danto's to the 'art-world', whereby a dominant version of contemporary art or heritage excludes, or refuses to acknowledge all others.

However, as discussed by the thesis in Chapters Two and Three, the study's approach took the view that all versions of contemporary art and heritage can be perceived as a multiplicity of discourses, each of which might then be analyzed according to the study's perception of authority, or dominance. For example, from a simple reading of the urban landscape it is possible to interpret Nottingham's city centre regeneration of the Lace Market district as the Authorised Heritage Discourse in practice, because it is the generally monumental and 'valuable' architecture that has been preserved, conserved, and marked as notable, such as the grade two, listed Adams Building (Pastscape 2012). Furthermore, what is not particularly noted, marked or valued as 'heritage', in terms of civic recognition, is the now extinct slum district of Narrow Marsh where many of the poorer lace workers lived until its demolition in

the 1920's and 30's (see Beckett 2012, Dance 2008). Although the study recognised that it may be difficult to accord civic recognition to an absence, Smith's position can however be used to argue that, since the architectural 'small narratives', of Narrow Marsh remain unrecognized, a particular, dominant version of Nottingham lace's architectural 'heritage' is therefore reiterated (Smith 2006: 60-62). Further analysis reveals that within discourses or, versions of Nottingham's lace heritage, others exist such as a belief in the cultural value of the wealthy lace industrialist who founded the Adams Building.

According to the Authorised Heritage Discourse, the cultural value of the lace industrialist is greater than his employees, and even further analysis might reveal a hierarchy of cultural values attributed to members of the workforce, and so on (English Heritage 2012: 24, Palmer & Neaverson, 1998, Pomfret 2004, Pastscape 2012). Moreover, the study observed that the Authorised Heritage Discourse could be applied to understanding the absence in heritage organizations such as English Heritage, of certain literature that addresses the life narratives of people who worked for lace industrialists. Such an absence indicates an approach whereby only authorised, or recognised life narratives such as those of the wealthy, powerful and influential are considered to be worthy of documentation in the literature provided by this particular heritage organization. Thus the study concluded that English Heritage presumes other life narratives either simply do not exist, or have no relevance to audiences, and that as an organization it is concerned with presenting a limited, authorised version of Nottingham's lace heritage. However, the study noted, through its artistic research activities, that other narratives do exist in the memories of communities in and around Nottingham, and that they are relevant to them<sup>26</sup>.

Therefore, the study reasoned that, if it were to conceive means by which 'lesser told stories' might be heard, the dominance of Nottingham's authorised lace heritage could be challenged, and thus a democratic approach established. However, from its practical and theoretical approach the study learned that an academic perspective of a communities' desires do not necessarily accord with the community itself. Thus, in the following paragraphs this chapter discusses subjectivities of industrial working classes in the context of Nottingham's lace heritage

### **Working Class Subjectivity.**

Although this study was concerned with recognising democracy, polyvocality and multi perspectives, it observed that many of the visitors to "Lacepoint" who were once

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<sup>26</sup> As well as oral narratives there are in existence published versions of life as a Nottingham lace worker such as those authored by Ashfield 2004 and Dance 2008.

laceworkers, or are related to them, seem to miss the authority and validation that they believe a dedicated museum would afford the industry. Moreover, several visitors voiced disappointment that Nottingham's lace industry is not recognised by a dedicated museum, which perhaps indicates that the 'heritage value' bestowed by an authority might not be as undesirable to communities as some current scholars of 'heritage' may insist (Graham & Howard *ibid*). Thus, drawing on Strangleman's (2011) examination of working class autobiographies, this study inferred that the desire for an authorising and validating heritage institution that tells the 'truth', is developed from an ideological belief in, or acceptance of hierarchy. Furthermore, Strangleman discusses a number of working class autobiographies that describe how identities are formed by, and embedded within, the workplace structure. Linking together the accounts of working life to which Strangleman refers, is a common thread of workers knowing and accepting their place, or position within this structure.

Informed by Marshall (1992) Strangleman explains that this is a function of "industrial citizenship", whereby industrial citizens in a workplace community are offered a sense of identity or belonging, and of ownership (Strangleman *ibid*: 156). However, for this to take place there are conventions that must be observed such as, knowing and staying within the bounds of one's position in the industrial community. Thus, reflecting on one's situation was to be avoided and in an account written by an assembly line worker it is apparent that a range of activities, for example rolling and smoking cigarettes, running to and from a different part of the factory building, and dropping onto the floor to push a few press ups, would be called upon to 'guard against thinking' (*ibid*: 150). By relating this acceptance of personal subjectivity to Nottingham's lace industry, it is possible to see that former lace workers would be prepared to look to an authorizing institution, such as a dedicated municipal museum, to 'tell the story' of Nottingham lace. Furthermore, supported by Howard (2009) the study considered that such subordinate subjectivity seems often to appear in relation to areas that are considered to be the domain of middle class, educated 'experts', such as medics, teachers, politicians and museum professionals.

Howard recognises an imbalance of power between acknowledged experts and the public, which he suggests is constituted through both formal and informal education (Howard 2009). Moreover, this suggests that citizens of industrial communities are conditioned to submit opinion, or 'thinking' to the qualified expert who they rely on to guarantee, in the case of museums, 'authenticity' and authority. Thus, the study learned from its observations regarding 'industrial citizenship' that it was powerless to provide the authenticity and

authority that some audiences considered would represent Nottingham's lace heritage. However, the study's encounters with visitors to "Lacepoint" who had been involved with the lace industry in some capacity demonstrated that, given the opportunity people were keen to relate their experiences and knowledge. Therefore, the study considered that it could, through its artistic research activity, provide environments in which audiences might relate their versions of Nottingham's lace heritage.

Consequently the study sought ways to carry out its intention to perceive all points of view, knowledge, or experiences regarding Nottingham's lace industry, as equal in value. Thus, supported by its practical and theoretical research, the study considered the potential of retail spaces as means by which audiences might informally encounter Nottingham's lace heritage.

### **Retail space as social space.**

In Chapter Two the thesis discussed the study's observations regarding the function of retail environments as places where communities socially interact, seek entertainment and relax. In this chapter the thesis examines these observations in the context of museums and heritage, thereby noting a hierarchical, authoritative approach to the cultivation of audiences. Therefore the following paragraphs examine some functions of retail environments and explain the relationship of this to the study. Informed by established theoretical perspectives, the study considered retail environments as spaces where communities engage in a familiar activity that Moss claims "transports people away from their mundane existences" (Moss 2002: 28, Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 383, Hampton 2005: 85 Danziger, 2006: 191, Turngate, 2012: 62, Yarrow & O'Donnel 2009). Moreover, Moss explains the experience of being transported by shopping as the occurrence of a liminal moment, and drawing on the anthropologist Victor Turner, he describes this experience as certain emotions and the altering of one's mental state when the connection with everyday duties, or routine life is surrendered (Moss *ibid*: 1).

The study considered such liminal moments might allow for interaction and cultural experiences that would not otherwise occur in cultured environments such as museums because, as discussed in Chapter Three, visitors and audiences in retail environments may experience aesthetic objects in ways that are normally and understandably, unavailable to museum audiences. Thus audiences in retail environments may very often handle, smell, listen to and even taste objects that are on display. The study related this sensory, social and apparently leisurely distraction to Greenhalgh's observation that an aspect of the Victorian

aim to create a cultured society, was to present educational spectacles such as the Great Exhibition and its like, which demanded intellectual concentration, along with a focus on the absorption of authorised knowledge. However, Greenhalgh also notes that these sites of edification required the presence of entertainments in the form of fairgrounds, sideshows, and stalls selling merchandise, if they were to attract the kinds of audiences who 'needed' educating (Greenhalgh 1989: 74). Thus the study considered that this Victorian approach to retail environments as 'lures' demonstrates a contemporary link with approaches to museum gift-shops, whereby retail browsing is considered to be a treat that should be earned through the "cultural labour" of engaging with the actual museum beforehand (Macdonald 2011: 38).

Hence a legacy exists of that which Thomas identifies as the Victorian "discourse of cultivation", which prioritises 'upright, industrious and respectable' versions of experience over those connected with the entertainment and leisure of retail environments (Thomas. 2004: 3-5). The study though, reasoned that the experiences and knowledge gained through engagement with retail environments could be valued as equal to those gained through intellectual effort during visits to heritage institutions (Macdonald *ibid*: 38). Moreover, in support of the study's view, Laurajane Smith argues that 'meaning making' in relation to heritage is rooted in everyday life (Smith 2008: 145). Therefore, the study considered the 'meaning making' that takes place during an encounter with for example, a postcard in a museum shop, whereby a relationship to that object or image is formed and framed by the audiences' life narrative and subjectivity, has an equal validity to a museum interpreted encounter with an exhibit within the museum itself. Consequently, the study considered that the everyday life experience of shopping, browsing and interacting in retail environments could provide the conditions for 'meaning making' in respect of Nottingham's lace heritage.

Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Two, the study's artistic research activities aimed to create familiar environments that bore little or no similarity to museums or heritage displays. Thus the pressure to behave, or indeed 'perform' according to the conventions and norms of museum audience subjectivity might be dispelled, thereby creating space for that which the study argued could be defined as 'intangible' heritage (see Rees –Leahy 2011 Smith 2006, Smith 2008, UNESCO 2012). Furthermore, this argument is sustained by Rodney Harrison's very recent work on exploring a dialogical model of heritage that is relational, and includes objects within its dynamic rather than focuses on them. Harrison claims that intangible heritage emerges when connections are made between people, the objects that

they encounter, the places where they encounter them and what they do, think or feel as a result (2012: 223). Thus, the study concluded that people, objects, places and behaviours might be understood as prompts that enable the connections to which Harrison refers, and then lead to the emergence of intangible heritage.

Therefore, in the following passages of this chapter, the thesis discusses the relational aspects of the study's artistic research activities in the context of heritage. Hence, the discussion proceeds by noting Harrison's view in relation to that which Smith identifies as "small narratives", or the everyday stories and exchanges of knowledge that occur in all people's lives (2006: 6). According to Smith, each person, whatever age they are, has a personal narrative and subsequently knowledge, that could be understood as a version of heritage equal to that of any other version. Through its artistic research activity, the study learned that people responded to prompts by talking about their experiences and knowledge, and that such prompts were represented in the first place by aesthetic objects. This dynamic was demonstrated early in the study through a visit to view "Tree" by the artist Tania Kovats, at London's Natural History Museum.

The piece consists of a polished, transected slice of an aged oak tree, including roots, that partially forms a gallery ceiling within the museum. Situated beneath "Tree" are benches, which I lay back on to view the ceiling artwork. In this small gallery were several Italian schoolchildren, who more concerned with each other, took no notice of "Tree" or of its interpretive material, comprising a documentary film situated at adult eye level and wordy text panels written in English. The location of "Tree", literally over their heads, along with its "sympathetic and appropriate"<sup>27</sup> response to the Grade I listed Waterhouse building (Gulbenkian, *ibid*) rendered it invisible and irrelevant to the visiting schoolchildren.

However, the woman lying on the benches gazing skywards was noticed by the youngsters.

Some of the Italian schoolchildren began to look upwards themselves; one asked, in English what I was looking at. So, in a mixture of patchy Italian, corrected and expanded for me by

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<sup>27</sup> The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, sponsors of the project state that, "Tree is inspired by Charles Darwin's iconic sketch of the branching tree to represent evolution in his transmutation notebooks" (Gulbenkian.org.ukonline). Later in this website article Bob Bloomfield, the art project leader says of Kovat's successful proposal,

"The judges were unanimous in their decision that Tania's response to this challenge was the most appropriate, even exceeding the criteria, and is an excellent response from the contemporary arts. It is considerate to the Grade 1 listed building and explores one of Darwin's core ideas, that all living things share a common evolutionary origin." (Gulbenkian.org.uk 2010)

Moreover, the study noted that in the extended reports from the judging panel neither 'audience' nor 'visitors' are mentioned.

the children, and distilled English I tried to explain that it was a picture of a tree put there by an artist who I thought wanted to remind us that we are all, including animals and plants, connected. A small knot of around four or five continued to look at 'Tree' and comment to each other, and some watched the film for a while before drifting off elsewhere, and pleased to have been taught some more Italian, I too departed.

The study considered that this exchange of knowledge illustrated the possibilities that Harrison proposes, whereby heritage emerges through democratic interactions between people, aesthetic objects, environments and behaviour, or action. However, the Natural History Museum's approach to the commission, interpretation and accessibility of 'Tree' seemed to be set on appealing only to a culturally hegemonic audience, therefore the study considered it not to be democratic.

Moreover, writing that museums are the props or tools that facilitate heritage processes, Smith indicates that institutions such as the Natural History Museum, certainly in the case of 'Tree', still privilege scientific and aesthetic expert judgment, and in so doing promote a certain set of western elite cultural values as being universally applicable (Smith, 2006: 29). Consequently, the study concluded that other, enabling approaches to heritage via aesthetic objects might, through a combination of prompts and dialogic interaction offer the potential for enrichment in the case of all audiences.

What is more, the author of 'The Participatory Museum' and executive museum director Nina Simon observes that rather than controlling the entire visitor experience, museums should instead use their professional expertise to provide "platforms" whereby the diversity of voices around a given object, exhibit, might be harnessed, prioritized, and presented. (Simon 2008). Simon discusses museums' fear of relinquishing power and control to audiences as unhelpful to its development but also observes that museums should protect the professional expertise that is reflected in the preservation of objects, exhibition design and programme delivery (ibid). The study considered that Simon's desire to 'protect' demonstrates an approach that, despite her progressive work on participative audience experiences, is still influenced by models of hierarchy. The study's leveled, or democratic approach understands the museum's professional expertise as knowledge, or a point of view that is equal in value yet different to that of audiences' knowledge. Therefore such an approach would not accept the dominance of one point of view, such as the audiences', over another, such as the museum professional's.

Moreover, Simon illustrates an institutional expectation of control or authority in her assertion that 'a diversity of voices' should somehow be 'harnessed' and therefore

legitimated by the museum. Since the study aimed to resist the capture and authoring of other's knowledge beyond that which is personally remembered, its own experience of offering opportunities for dialogical encounters between people and aesthetic objects did not seek to 'harness' voices or points of view. Instead the study sought to create conditions whereby ephemeral knowledge, or "new oral artifacts" might emerge and exist as participant owned and ephemeral, or intangible heritage (Rogoff 2003: 173-174). Furthermore, since these oral artifacts, existed only as temporal, ephemeral utterances in that moment of exchange and relatedness, the study perceived them as representative of Nottingham's intangible lace heritage.

However, the study found its claim that 'new oral artifacts' could be identified as intangible heritage to be initially undermined by the criteria set out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, otherwise known as UNESCO. UNESCO states that the "cultural manifestation itself" that is to say, the dialogical relating demonstrated in the study's practice of co creating 'new oral artifacts', or that which this study came to claim as 'gossip' is not important but the "skills" and "wealth of knowledge" that are conveyed are important (UNESCO 2012). Yet, UNESCO also states that "oral traditions" and "social practices", that "contribute to social cohesion, encourage a sense of identity" and help "individuals to feel part of society at large" meet the criteria for its version of "intangible cultural heritage" (ibid). Moreover, in the introduction to their volume 'Intangible Heritage', Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa observe that, through its criteria UNESCO seeks to promote a romanticized Western perception of exotic and colourful, non-Western traditions that it believes are in need of protection (Smith and Kagawa 2009:2-9). Therefore, traditional storytelling practices of indigenous Australians, for example are considered by UNESCO to meet its criteria because those traditional skills are imparted in the re-enactment of that storytelling practice.

However, as Smith and Akagawa argue, the very act of list making effects exclusion, thus although the wording of UNESCO's criteria might give the impression that the study's co-creation of 'new oral artifacts'/'gossip' could be included in its model of 'intangible cultural heritage' the organization appears to recognize only ritualized or re-enacted means by which knowledge is transferred (Smith and Akagawa ibid). Furthermore the study considered that UNESCO places an emphasis on presenting what knowledge is and legitimizing that knowledge, rather than asking how and why it is produced. Nevertheless, Iain Robertson explores the production of such knowledge and in his volume 'Heritage from Below', argues that intangible and "unofficial knowledge[s]" exists in all local communities, and that it is

important to acknowledge the alternative ways in which these might be expressed (2008:146). Consequently the study considered that the new oral artifacts, or gossip, which emerged as a result of audiences encountering its artistic research activities, could be supported by established literature and therefore identified as intangible heritage. Moreover, although the study considered gossip practice and the knowledge product itself to be bound tightly together as a conjoined entity, it also perceived them as separate identities.

Thus, on the one hand, the product of gossip practice, that is to say, the new oral artifact, or gossip is understood to be 'intangible cultural heritage' and on the other, the practice of co-creating gossip is understood to be the performance of 'intangible cultural heritage'. Accordingly, this chapter proceeds with a brief outline of the field that is understood within the relevant literature as 'heritage performance', and the thesis then continues with a discussion as to the viability of gossip practice as a means by which Nottingham's lace heritage might be performed.

#### **Performing Nottingham's lace heritage.**

Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd (2011) observe there had, until their own study of the subject and subsequent publication of an edited book, been scarce academic attention paid to the use of performance in heritage contexts. Jackson and Kidd's own introductory discussion presents heritage performance as incorporating both dramatic and theatre based performance, along with other perspectives of performance as everyday social acting (Goffman 1990). Therefore activities such as "entering a museum" and participating in guided tours are considered to be heritage performance as much as re-enactments, costumed demonstrations, or scripted storytelling (Schechner, in Jackson and Kidd *ibid*: 2). Moreover, in the same volume Rees-Leahy (2011), writes that performing and being performed to, is a simultaneous occurrence, which is demonstrated in the everyday practices of interacting, participating and relating. However, along with the other contributing authors to Jackson and Kidd's book, she situates her observations within designated heritage sites and institutions, thus the performances and performatives that Rees-Leahy discusses are shaped by the normative contexts in which they take place.

The study though, considered that heritage performance could take place in everyday circumstance beyond heritage sites and institutions. Nevertheless, from the literature consulted in this study, it seems that in most cases, heritage is linked with cultural sites, institutions, traditions, rituals and practices that can be thought of as distinct from 'non-

cultural' everyday life. Graham and Howard though, argue that heritage is a concept constructed from personal experience, and Harrison perceives heritage to be a live experience that occurs in the present at any moment and anywhere (Harrison 2012: 22, Graham and Howard 2008: 23). Furthermore, Smith asserts that heritage is performed through the thoughts, emotions and actions of daily life and although Rees-Leahy situates heritage performance within heritage sites and institutions, she does acknowledge Bagnall's observation that heritage is now performed in "new kind[s] of social space", such as online social networking sites (Bagnall 2003: 95 in 2011: 32-33). Given these established views from recognised scholars, the study concluded that performances of heritage could also take place in physical social spaces beyond official, recognised or authorised heritage spaces, such as those associated with retail activity.

Thus, the thesis argues that the study's artistic research activities, enabled heritage to not only to be evoked through dialogical interaction but also to be experienced as the everyday performance of Nottingham's lace heritage (Brett 1996, Harrison 2012). Along with everyday performances of Nottingham's lace heritage, the study also explored heritage performance in terms of a presentational approach (see, de Merenis 2002 and Carlson 1996). As discussed in earlier chapters the study aimed to breach cultural barriers that perhaps exclude many potential new museum audiences, and include perspectives beyond that which might be thought of as dominant within art gallery and museum contexts. Moreover, to promote a perception of Nottingham's lace heritage as relevant, living narratives the study drew on Atkinson's view of heritage as never fixed or closed and that "the past is something being made and reproduced in our present" (Atkinson 2008: 385). In reference to Boyarin, Atkinson argues that the many perspectives and resulting polyphonic, evolving senses of the past, offer the potential for the experience and understanding of the present to work with those of the past, and therefore to result in expressions of live, vital heritage (Boyarin, 1994: 22 in Atkinson, *ibid*).

Thus the study's presentation of the exhibition launch event, 'Warped, Nottingham Lace - Shadowside' re-made a certain heritage of exhibition previews that reflect the polyphony and multi perspectives of Nottingham's lace heritage. Through the launch event, 'Warped, Nottingham Lace - Shadowside' the study aimed to address the dissonant, or difficult aspects of Nottingham's lace heritage such as social inequality, exclusion, oppression and exploitation (see, Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996, Atkinson 2008:385, Smith 2006:80, Sharpley & Stone 2009:150, Robertson 2012:8). Moreover, according to these scholars dissonant versions are often missed out, or excluded in authorised discourses of heritage and

dissonance occurs when such discourses are challenged. The study's approach to acknowledging difficult aspects of Nottingham's lace heritage was, in the first instance to challenge its authorised versions, thus the Bedlam Morris performers' appearance and accompanying sound represented the reality of mechanical industry. Additionally, the study sought to address marginalization and social exclusion through its presentation of popular entertainments that would be familiar to Nottingham's Goth community.

### **Subcultural Goths, society's disruptive outsiders and misfits.**

As discussed earlier in this thesis and supported by scholars such as Black (2005) and Jensen (2001), the study had found young adults to be resistant to entering museums, therefore it had created links with some young adults within Nottingham's Goth community and had considered how the museum and Nottingham's lace heritage could become relevant to them, as well as other audiences. Furthermore, the launch event's Goth theme designated the matter of death, which supported by scholars, this chapter related to the emergence and then establishment of museums (Wollen 1995, Pomian 1990, Bann 1995, Paulson 1989). Moreover, death and morbidity was discussed in Chapter Three with regards to audience responses to the study's artistic research activities, along with its function as an indication of a universal, and democratic destination. Chapter Two introduced the study's interest in Goth subculture and in the following paragraphs the thesis connects some fundamental Goth interests, to Wollen's belief that death is the obsession behind the obsession with history in museums (Wollen *ibid*). The study had noted that subcultural Goth style might typically be regarded as dark or necromantic and a proliferation of black, often historically inspired clothing accessorised with death related decorations, tends to identify members of such communities<sup>28</sup>.

Therefore, the study sought to locate a basis for Goth style and aesthetic preferences, which it discovered had emerged from the iconoclastic style and attitudes of punk that had, in the mid 1970's offered alternatives to those of the mainstream (see, Hebdige 1987, Polhemus 1994). According to Sheila Whitely a "confrontational glamour" emerged from the 'do-it-yourself' attitude to punk music and punk style, which the study considered to have caused not only a disruption in established understandings of musicianship but also in the normatives of appearance (Whitely, 2000:98). Thus as Goth style materialized in the early 1980's it presented itself as a troubling, deathly 'other' to the prevailing aesthetic of health, youth and vitality (*ibid*). The study observed that Goth style, particularly but not exclusively

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Victorian style corsets, tailcoats, top hats, veils, gloves, bustled skirts and laced, heeled boots. See appendix 3.

for women, draws heavily on the erotically charged image of the 'Vamp', as represented by early Hollywood silent movie stars such as Louise Brooks and Theda Bara. These 'Vamp' women were typically presented as alabaster skinned with dark painted lips, heavily shadowed eyes, and were often dressed in slivers of black satin or lace, thus representing the flip side of the 'girl next door' as dangerous, sexually predatory, and often deranged sirens.

Drawing on Kristeva, Whitely places this vamp/Goth identity within the psychic and irrational pre-oedipal space of the symbolic order, which she claims via Kristeva, conceptualizes the pre-oedipal, or semiotic as time and space that is affected by the psychic and irrational to become repetitive and cyclical, and thus eternal (ibid: 97). Furthermore, in her discussion of the concept of the 'outsider' in the context of the symbolic order, Whitely suggests that it is possible to understand that the 'misfits' in society such as the mad, the irrational, racial and ethnic minorities, homosexuals and lesbians, and the oppressed in general are all excluded from a dominant order. Thus, the study considered that according to its approach regarding hierarchical versions or discourses, the model of the 'phallic', symbolic order can be understood as a dominant, or authoritative social discourse, which might then be disrupted by 'outsiders' and 'misfits', such as Goths. Moreover, Goth imagery and culture is known for having a dark aspect that is associated with the supernatural, which the study reasoned might according to Whitely, be considered as irrational, and therefore as existing within the pre-oedipal space of the symbolic order (ibid: 98). Furthermore, Goodlad and Bibby note this dark aspect and in their introduction to a collection of ethnographic essays on Goth, claim that it has a romantic obsession with "death, darkness and perverse sexuality" (2007:2).

Later on in the same volume Catherine Spooner argues that Goth constantly revives and references past historical moments, citing examples such as, the decadent morality of the late nineteenth century, late eighteenth century Romantic art and literature and medieval architecture (2007: 147). Significantly, Spooner concludes that Goth, through its revival of history, unavoidably signifies the past, therefore although Goth might indeed be obsessed with death and darkness, this may be a superficial layer beneath which an obsession with the past is discovered (ibid). However, a further layer may conceal an obsession with death that lies beneath its obsession with the past (Wollen 1995:11). Thus, the study considered that, according to the established literature and its own observations, Goth imagery and culture demonstrates a superficial obsession with death that obscures an obsession with

history, which in turn obscures an obsession with death. Therefore the study concluded that the obsession is cyclical, repetitive and ultimately death driven.

### **A Death Drive.**



***Figure 30, at Whitby Goth Weekend, April 2012.***

In his analysis and interpretation of the concept of the 'uncanny', Royle (1988: 85) connects the compulsion to repeat, which he claims is characteristic of uncanniness, with that which Freud identified as the 'death drive'. According to Royle, Freud claimed that the aim of life is death, and that the constant recurrence of the same thing, both in real life and literature, beats out a 'demonic' rhythm to accompany us to our deaths. (ibid: 89). As already observed by Spooner (2007) and as evidenced in subcultural Goth's borrowing of early Hollywood imagery, Goth style continually returns to specific periods in history. Moreover, Goth subculture also continually revisits particular literary works, such as and most obviously Stoker's "Dracula", which was published first in 1847, thereby literally recycling obsessions with death and the past. Goodlad and Bibby observe that, unlike other subcultures such as grunge or punk, Goth is an 'undead' culture and thrives in ongoing communities across the world (2007:4). The study considered that this is perhaps because the continual repetition of Goth's death drive is in fact also its life drive and the propeller that keeps life moving towards death. Moreover according to Freud,

***The two kinds of instinct seldom-perhaps never-appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying and very different proportions and so become unrecognisable to our judgment.***

(Freud, 1973:310 in Royle, 2003:93).

The study also reasoned that Montaigne's words, "When life is over, we are taught to live", might propel not only the symbolism of Goth's aesthetic but also the engagement of audiences with heritage and heritage institutions (1958: 70). Thus the study considered that the underlying obsession with death in heritage and heritage institutions identifies death not as a terminus but rather as a starting point for imagining and living life. However, as discussed in Chapter Three the study also recognized the (Western) contemporary difficulty in accepting the presence and inevitability of death, and reasoned that, in this respect Goth culture exhibits a carnivalesque attitude to death. Like the Mexican attitude to its 'Day of the Dead' celebrations, Goth culture approaches death with respect but also as an associate of festivity and entertainment, which is largely anomalous to Western culture (see for example, Aries 2010, Dollimore 2013). Moreover, its often light hearted approach to deathly totems such as skulls, skeletons, coffins, funeral garb, and gravestones does not seek to trivialize death but instead seeks to place it within the context of life thereby putting it into perspective as a normal, rather than exceptional occurrence. Thus, "Warped – Nottingham Lace, Shadowside" sought to acknowledge 'others' constituted within the margins of social life, such as the 'other' of death, along with those who might be socially and culturally excluded from authorised versions of heritage.

### **Conclusion to Chapter Five.**

In this chapter the thesis discussed the study's approach to its concept of authority in relation to heritage and heritage institutions. To provide a contextualizing background for this discussion the chapter opened with a brief historical overview of the relationship between museums and artists, along with the museum's genesis in the medieval period. The museum's development into an authoritative, educating institution led to a survey and discussion of scholarly approaches to the concept of heritage, from which the thesis explored the study's treatment of the same. The study found that the concept of heritage could, along with contemporary art, be perceived as comprised of multiple, equally valid versions, rather than monolithic, dominant versions. The perception of heritage as a plurality of versions, or micro-ideologies is discussed by the thesis in this chapter as

informing the study's dialogical approach to audiences and therefore its artistic research activities.

The thesis discusses the study's aim to develop an egalitarian and democratic approach to heritage through its exploration of audiences' varying subjectivities and perspectives. Thus, the Victorian drive to cultivate its public is discussed alongside contemporary efforts by heritage institutions to engage audiences, which the thesis argued, demonstrated the existence of some authoritative approaches. Moreover, the thesis drew on these discussions to justify the study's decision to situate its artistic research activity within retail contexts and to engage with retail practice. Supported by established literature, the thesis claimed the dialogical gossip that emerged in such retail contexts to be examples of intangible heritage. What is more, the thesis argued that the practice of, or the act of dialogical interaction, could be identified as everyday, heritage performance.

The study's approach to the exhibition launch event, "Warped- Nottingham Lace Shadowside", incorporated presentational heritage performance in the form of Goth DJs and Bedlam Morris dancers. The thesis explained that the performances were intended by the study to acknowledge aspects of Nottingham's lace industry related to exploitation, social inequality, and cultural exclusion. Moreover, early in this chapter the thesis identified death as an underlying theme of museums and heritage institutions, which it later discussed in relation to the study's version of presentational performance demonstrated at "Warped - Nottingham Lace Shadowside". The thesis identified Goth culture's identification with death and morbidity as a disruption of Western conventions that perceive death as a marginalised 'other' to be excluded from normal life. However, the thesis drew on psychoanalytic models of 'the uncanny' and 'the death drive' to theorize Goth subculture and style as life affirming. Consequently, the thesis matched its conclusions regarding Goth culture's recognition of death to the study's observation of an underlying theme of death in museums and heritage institutions. This observation deemed artifacts of the past and associated narratives to be versions of 'memento mori', which although they remind audiences that we will all die, might also alert a realisation that they are for the moment, alive. Moreover, "Warped - Nottingham Lace Shadowside" was held as a preview event to launch "Lace Works: Contemporary Art & Nottingham Lace", and so was situated within galleries displaying lace inspired artworks and lace artifacts. Therefore, the thesis reasoned that through the study's approach to the presentational heritage performance, which incorporated death as not other but universal, demonstrated egalitarian and democratic versions of Nottingham's lace heritage. Thus, the thesis concluded that the study's combination of intangible heritage as

dialogical interaction, everyday heritage performance as the process of creating dialogical interaction and presentational heritage performance as subcultural entertainments, constituted an inclusive approach to heritage.

## **Chapter Six - Conclusion to the thesis.**

### **Introduction and Claims.**

At its simplest this thesis claims that audiences respond to artistic, participative and interactive situations. To establish this claim I conducted, in my capacity as an artist, the study's practical research as a series of participative and interactive procedures that were presented as; market stall installations, a sonic art installation, and performance events. Since an aim of the thesis was to collapse authoritative relationships between observer (artist as researcher) and the observed (audiences) the selected methodological approach to undertaking the study's practical research was autoethnographic. This methodology allows the researcher to self – reflexively observe her or him-self in society and it was vital to maintaining the study's non – authoritarian approach and position. Along with dialogical

methods of interacting constituted by the mutual recognition of another's perspective, the study's autoethnographic approach, discussed as Chapter One, provided a means by which research could take place and results, that is to say, the participants' responses could be reported.

The thesis itself is structured around three themes overarched by a theme of 'authority'. The theme of the second chapter is that of 'interpellation', or 'hailing', and how this study adjusted philosopher Louis Althusser's original version for its purposes. The theme of the third chapter is 'authority' in contemporary art practice and the aim of this study to redress that authority through its research activity. The third theme of the thesis and the subject of the fifth chapter, concerns 'authority' within the concept and practice of heritage, which the study sought to challenge in the context of Nottingham's lace heritage. Between these two chapters is Chapter Four, which introduces and develops a new artistic methodology; 'gossip practice' that emerged during the study's artistic research. Since this new methodology straddled the study's research practice in both the fields of contemporary art and heritage practice, it was interleaved between the two themed chapters.

The cultural concepts of 'heritage' and 'contemporary art' were approached and analysed according to Althusser's original version of interpellation. However, the study sidestepped Althusser's view that a person's position, or identity is fixed within a single social and cultural order. Through practical, artistic research the study aimed to erase social and cultural hierarchy within the fields of heritage and contemporary art, and thus re-viewed them as leveled, rather than stacked, or ascendant. Hence, the study's democratic view presumed that all perspectives, positions and experience are equal, so for instance what the cleaner in a lace factory knew about Nottingham's lace heritage is probably different to but of equal value to the knowledge of an eminent lace historian. The study also used the idea of interpellation to create situations that audiences would feel were relevant to them and to which they might therefore respond. This approach required careful consideration of potential audiences and what might draw them into engaging with a situation that I had, as an artist created.

As well as considering communities of the general public in city centre retail environments, this study also sought to involve non-mainstream and sub-cultural communities, specifically Goths and those from alternative social groups. Moreover, a degree of personal involvement with and some understanding of these communities provided foreknowledge of how they might be interpellated, or drawn to engage with Nottingham's lace heritage. These groups were targeted by this study not only because they tend to be constituted by young adults

who are within the age range that Graham Black (2005) observes as the least inclined to visit museums but also because they are often excluded by mainstream culture. Thus, their exclusion was important to the study because it demonstrated the authority of the dominant, or mainstream culture to deny the perspectives and voices of those communities who appear not to comply with its conventions, or hold its point of view. Furthermore, this study made a connection between a Goth interest in deathliness and Peter Wollen's (1995: 11) notion that death is the obsession behind the obsession with the past in museum displays.

The thesis theorized this connection according to the psychoanalytic model of the 'death drive', which demonstrated that Goth imagery and culture repetitively draws on certain periods in history. The thesis argued that this compulsion could be an extension of Wollen's notion that an obsession with death is behind an obsession with the past but that Goth culture and imagery foregrounds yet another layer of an obsession with death. Furthermore, a comparison with carnivalesque aspects of Mexican Day of the Dead celebrations provided an insight into Goth culture as insubordinate to conventional, or dominant attitudes to death and deathliness. This insight connected with the study's analysis of Goth imagery and culture as 'uncanny', because dominant, or mainstream society can perceive Goth as a representation of irrationality and perversion that threatens its order. Drawing on Sigmund Freud (Royle 1988) and Michel de Montaigne (Hartle 2003), the study observed that as Goth's imagery and culture brings death to the forefront and thus its recognition along with perhaps also its acceptance, Goth could be perceived as celebrating life in the guise of a sub-cultural version of memento-mori, or a reminder that we shall die.

This study concluded that despite the fact that death is ultimately unavoidable, the dominant contemporary Western attitude to death is to suppress or subjugate death through denial of its inevitability (See Aries, 1975, Staud, 2009: 3-41). Thus any disruption of the dominant attitude of death's denial, such as Goth imagery, culture and style will be rejected, or marginalised by prevailing mainstream culture and society. Through analysis of artworks and museum exhibits the thesis also connected death and deathliness, or morbidity, with the concept of 'abjection'. In concise terms, the 'abject' is that which causes feelings of revulsion or disgust because it reminds us of being an undifferentiated mass of organic material within the mother's body before birth, and also of the extinction of the self after death. The thesis' discussion of certain artworks and exhibits with abject qualities identified them as means by which audiences might differentiate themselves from the dead, unhealthy and abnormal, and so encounter deathliness from a safe distance.

Furthermore, by drawing on scholars of 'the abject' the study concluded that through abjection, that which is associated with vitality, normality and health notionally dominates death by tightly restricting its access to conventional social and cultural life. (see Beardsworth, 2004:82-83, Kent, 2010:376-372, Menninghaus, 2003:374).

Regarding the dominance of ocular experience in encounters that audiences have with artworks and museum artifacts, the thesis demonstrated that contemporary art and heritage could be experienced as encounters that actively involve other senses as well as sight. To arrive at this position the study combined the analysis of relevant texts such as artworks, museum displays and literature, together with a series of practical artistic investigations. The study took Helen Rees-Leahy's observation that museum audiences are taught to behave appropriately by "look[ing] properly", as a departure point from which to explore ways that the authority of sight might be addressed (Rees-Leahy 2011:30). Rees-Leahy refers to the reverential way that she argues, audiences respond to museum displays and that this is directed by the curatorship of authorised museum professionals. Informed by academically supported reflections on personal experience and observations of others during encounters with museum displays, the study sought to offer encounters with Nottingham's lace heritage that invited audiences to touch, listen, smell, taste and speak, as well as to look.

The encounters, that is to say, the practical artistic explorations that took the form of market stall installations, sonic installation, a chocolate making performance and presentational entertainments had strong, carefully thought through visual characteristics that were intended to attract the attention of audiences. However, once drawn in audiences could experience Nottingham's lace heritage as a multi-sensory encounter that might for instance include the smell and taste of warm chocolate, the feel and 'handle' of Nottingham lace, the sound of industrial lace-making machinery, and the spectacular sights and sounds of a Bedlam Morris dancing performance.

Alongside multi-sensory encounters with Nottingham's lace heritage the study developed a talking, or dialogical practice that, drawing on Irit Rogoff (2003), Patricia Spacks (1985), and Mary Leach (2000), the thesis identified as 'gossip practice'. The study found that 'gossip practice' could be usefully employed to describe the way that participants interacted with one another during encounters at the installations and events that constituted its practical artistic research. This finding was supported by Rogoff's proposal that gossip is a mode of relational knowledge, which is concerned with the act of relating, that is to say, of exchanging information beyond what is actually said. Rogoff situates gossip as a means by

which “subjectivities, desires, pleasures and knowledges” come together in co-operative social interactions to form alternative epistemologies, or other points of view (Rogoff, 2003: 268). Also supporting the study’s use of ‘gossip practice’ as a suitable term for its relational activity is scholar Mary Leach’s claim that listening to oral histories, reading unpublished letters, or conducting qualitative research is to engage in the practice of gossip and thus it is academically viable (Leach, 2000: 234).

The study exercised gossip practice as a method to extend the characterization and definition of Nottingham’s intangible lace heritage beyond its existing boundaries within heritage literature. Furthermore, the thesis identified inconsistencies in the criteria that stipulate what UNESCO will recognize as ‘intangible heritage’. According to UNESCO’s criteria ‘intangible heritage’ is defined as re-enactment, or ritualized practices that maintain the existence of traditional skills and knowledge, such as for example, crafts, folk dances and storytelling. The thesis argued that the criteria could be interpreted as inconsistent because although UNESCO states that “cultural manifestations” or expressions of heritage are not defined as intangible heritage, it includes among its criteria “social and oral practices” that “contribute to social cohesion, encourage a sense of identity” and help “individuals to feel part of society”. Thus gossip practice might on the one hand, be considered by UNESCO as intangible heritage because it meets the criteria stated in the previous sentence.

However, on the other hand, the inter-activity and open-endedness of gossip practice does not fit the UNESCO definition of intangible heritage as reenactment or ritual. Moreover, drawing on observations by scholars that the expression, or cultural manifestation of communities’ “unofficial knowledge” is important, the thesis argued that the knowledge product of gossip practice could be identified as ‘intangible heritage’ (see Robertson, 2008: 146, Wainwright 2012, Smith, 2006). Additionally, the thesis also argued that cultural manifestations of Nottingham’s lace heritage expressed as gossip practice could be identified separately as heritage performance.

Through its establishment of gossip practice, the thesis extended the existing literature within the study of heritage performance by developing a unique position founded on the work of Gaynor Bagnall (2003), Anthony Jackson & Jenny Kidd (2011), and Helen Rees-Leahy (2011). Although these scholars recognize that heritage performance might be constituted by everyday occurrences of interaction, participation and relating, according to them these occurrences must take place in designated heritage sites and institutions.

Nevertheless, by drawing on scholars of linguistic and social theory, as well as those of heritage studies, the thesis proposed that the study's gossip practice, initiated by Nottingham lace artifacts is a valid version of heritage performance (see Schechner, 2005:22,174, Graham & Howard, 2008:2, Smith, 2006, Samuel 1994, in Smith 2008:145, Brett, 1996, Harrison, 2012:223). What is more, the thesis also argued that, the study's carnivalesque approach to the launch event, which opened a lace themed exhibition entitled "Lace Works, Contemporary Art & Nottingham Lace", could be identified as heritage performance. Offered as an alternative to conventional exhibition launches and previews, "Warped-Nottingham Lace, Shadowside", meant to disrupt the norm of standard previews, which the study observed, tend to be populated by initiated art and heritage visitors. In addition to the museum's open galleries "Warped-Nottingham Lace Shadowside" offered performances by a 'Bedlam' Morris dance troupe, Goth DJs and opportunities to visit 'sideshows', such as chocolate lace making. The performances and sideshows brought with them, and attracted communities who follow, or share their interests, which as the thesis observed, offered prospects for both regular and new visitors to experience another's point of view. Thus, by combining a cultivated environment, that is to say, a museum and art gallery, with popular entertainment, the study's contemporary art practice sought to challenge authority in exhibition previews by presenting an alternative version.

This alternative version aimed to enable an experience for audiences whereby none claimed superiority over another, and no audience was prioritized over another, therefore all could feel welcome and included. The thesis observed a further challenge to authority in the study's treatment of the field concerning 'dialogue art', whereby it countered claims that, artists who are engaged with 'dialogue' art production work only with conceptual artistic methods. Instead the study found despite Grant Kester's claims that conversation or dialogue artists work conceptually without contextualizing material, artists who use dialogue might also incorporate material and physical artistic methods to provide context (2004: 1). Moreover, this study found that the presence of material artworks in particular environments that have some relevance, and which are familiar to audiences provide meaning and therefore access to dialogue. The thesis argued that this study made sensory alterations and additions to environments that aimed to build on existing contexts.

Thus for example, a sound work ('Lacework') was installed in Nottingham Castle's disused bandstand, a lace chocolate making performance ("Nottingham Chocolate") took place in

Nottingham's Tourist Information Office where both chocolate and Nottingham lace gifts are retailed, and a Nottingham lace decorated stall offering modest Nottingham lace artifacts ("Lace is Ace") was situated in a street market close to defunct lace factories.

The thesis also observed that 'gossip' is ignored or overlooked in the literature on conversation or dialogue art and considered that this is due to it being perceived as feminine, trivial and thus unauthorised. Moreover, despite his support of feminist art practice and recognition that concepts of empathic 'connected knowledge' owe much to feminist theorists (ibid: 14), Kester, along with other conversation artists does not acknowledge gossip. The thesis noted that because gossip is largely perceived as a feminised and negatively framed version of 'chat' or 'nattering' it is therefore perhaps considered unworthy of consideration as conversation or dialogue art. Moreover, although Kester leads the literature on dialogical art, art as dialogue and conversation art, neither he nor any of his peers (see for example, Richard Keating and Trevor Pitt) mention 'gossip' or suggest it as a viable genre of relational practice.

However, informed by the theoretical literature concerning 'gossip' and through the process of artistic research activity, this study established gossip practice as a viable version of dialogue art. The thesis observed that the study sought to re-present gossip as a positively framed, multi vocal mode of informal and empathic relating that is perceived as equal in value to recognised versions of conversation, or dialogue art. Enlightened by aspects of the literature on both gossip and conversation art, this study found gossip practice to be far from trivial, and instead found it to be a valuable means by which participants might dialogically relate during the study's artistic research activities.

Overall this study aimed to challenge that which might be thought of as accepted hierarchies within the fields of heritage and contemporary art. To do this the study took a dialogical approach that, framed by aspects of poststructural theory, such as democracy and egalitarianism, asserted the equal validity of all perspectives.

To avoid an inadvertent fall into assuming a position of power or authority, this approach demanded rigorous self-reflexivity from me as an autoethnographic researcher. Moreover, it was important to maintain a non-authoritarian position because the study sought to disrupt practices of authority that it had identified within the fields of contemporary art and heritage. In the following paragraphs the thesis revisits how the study understood 'authority' in the contexts of contemporary art and heritage, which then leads to a discussion of the thesis' themes of 'interpellation' 'art authority' and 'heritage authority', along with the study's new and unique, artistic gossip practice.

### **An over-arching theme of 'authority'.**

Throughout the thesis the term 'authority' describes the kind of power that is assumed and perceived as dominant within social structures. The study set out to challenge and disrupt authority within discourses, or modes of thought that identify 'heritage' and 'contemporary art' because they exclude perspectives that are beyond their current dominant, or authorised views. A scale of value represents this exclusive-ness, so for instance a monumental historic building such as London's Natural History Museum would be at the 'high value' end of the scale and the memories of a Nottingham lace factory cleaner would be at its opposite end. Similarly, a recognised contemporary artist who exhibits in prestigious galleries would be positioned at the 'high value' end of the scale, whereas an unknown, unrecognised artist working with communities would be positioned very much further towards the 'low value' end. Where on the scale inclusivity begins is hard to define on a general basis, however it is perhaps the case that trends allow for 'low values' to slide along the scale to become 'high value'.

Arthur Danto (1964) writes that this occurred with the arrival of Modern Art during the first quarter of the twentieth century; he describes the replacement of beauty at the 'high value' end with a grunge aesthetic, or as he terms it 'kalliphobia', a fear of beauty. In heritage institutions such as museums, a paternalistic approach to exhibition and interpretation is frequently, in an inversion of 'classic' heritage authority, relegated to the 'low value' end by entertaining and interactive displays aimed at the very young. However, inclusivity on the sliding scale of value means that the perspectives of some people will become excluded; those 'kalliphiliacs' who appreciate beauty in art such as Danto, or those who do not wish to 'interact' in museums, beyond quiet contemplation of the past will perhaps find that they are out of touch with a new dominant perspective, or authority. Therefore, it seems that authority within 'heritage' and 'contemporary art' adjusts to maintain a dominant point of view that excludes other points of view.

However, this thesis took the position that replacing one dominant perspective with another is unhelpful to audiences because either way some will be excluded. Instead, this study aimed to create conditions in which many perspectives could be expressed and valued equally. The study achieved this aim by self – reflexively observing and analyzing the occurrence of authority, that is to say, dominant perspectives, in everyday situations and by responding to these in non-authorative ways. In practice the study demonstrated this aim by inviting responses to Nottingham's lace heritage through a version of contemporary art in which materials based sensory prompts led to ephemeral and intangible, collectively

produced knowledge products. The study resisted ownership of the knowledge produced as a result of participative gossip practice and instead it argued that to create ownership through capturing or claiming this knowledge would constitute the practice of authority rather than its disruption.

Unlike Oral History, that is to say, recorded and stored interviews, the gossip practice of this study avoided the exertion of any power or authority over the knowledge products, such as recording, editing, or storing, other than as the personal memories of encounters. The thesis measured the success of the study's approach through its observations of audiences' responses to the artistic research activities, and along with its reflexive approach facilitated the recognition that all audiences' possess an equally valid point of view. Furthermore, the study had no intention to overturn, replace, undervalue, or dismiss any perspective from any quarter, it aimed only to include perspectives, or versions of Nottingham's lace heritage that might otherwise have been overlooked, or excluded. Hence 'Authority' and its disruption, is the theme that over-arched the organizational themes of this thesis and influenced the discussions that arose as a result of addressing those themes. The study selected three separate but related themes to construct and support its argument; 'interpellation' provided a theoretical perspective that framed the democratic aims of the study, 'authority' in contemporary art practice informed the study's practical and artistic research activity, and 'authority' in heritage practice guided the context of the study's research.

In addition to the thesis' exploration of 'interpellation', 'authority in contemporary art', and 'authority in heritage practice' is a discussion of the study's new artistic methodology, 'gossip practice'. This chapter now proceeds with an overview of Chapters Two to Five, which form the body of the thesis' discussion, and are dedicated to the study's new artistic methodology and each of the study's three themes

### **Reviewing Chapter Two.**

This thesis demonstrated and therefore claims that, through the artistic research practice of its study, audiences will participate and interact with artistic situations. The study was concerned with the participation and interaction of audiences with Nottingham's lace heritage, and it borrowed from Althusser's (1977) structural model of interpellation to facilitate this concern. The structuralist version of interpellation that was theorized and proposed by Louis Althusser describes how people recognize their place in socio-economic hierarchies or class systems. Thus, according to Althusser subjects, or people recognize their place within a social, hierarchical structure because social consensus tells them where they

should be. Althusser first published this theory in 1970 and it could be said that since then a prevalence of social mobility and economic opportunity has rendered Althusser's theory of interpellation redundant.

However, his version of interpellation could be understood in simple, contemporary terms as the way that perhaps most people recognize first class travel is not where they 'belong' because it is generally speaking, prohibitively expensive and thus a majority of travelers 'know their place' as standard or economy class passengers. Chapter Two opened with a discussion that explained other theoretical perspectives that move the concept of interpellation on from Althusser's initial proposition. The thesis observed that theorists such as Slavoj Žižek (Sharpe 2004), perceive interpellation as a subjugating function of a monolithic, ideological structure and that currently, that structure is represented by Western consumerism. However, the thesis also observed that other theorists such as Gearhart (1992) and Turner and Rojek (2001) perceive interpellation as an invitation to membership of a multiplicity of micro-ideologies. The effect of these observations on the study was to alter my approach to audiences, which Chapter Two demonstrated in the thesis' discussion of an 'open studios' event.

The 'open studio' event took place in the study's first year and it observed that rather than view artworks passively, audiences insisted on participating and interacting with me, the artist. The study recognised this as an unexpected response, which the thesis theorized as a transgression of an Althusserian, structural model of interpellation. This incident was noted in the thesis as being important to the study since it caused a key shift in theoretical perspective, which subsequently influenced its course. Consequently other democratic perspectives of interpellation, that resist hierarchical models were thought to be more appropriate to the study's aims. Thus, for instance, Judith Butler's work on subjectivity and performativity in the context of interpellation supported the study's aim to develop non-hierarchical methods, by which audiences might be drawn to participate in and interact with Nottingham's lace heritage.

Moreover, Butler, along with Foucault argues for a 'disruption' of structural hierarchies and the idea of breaking through ascending levels of power and influence became highly important to the conceptualization of the study's practical research. Hence, the study readjusted its understanding of and approach to concepts of power, or authority in the contexts of heritage and contemporary art, which in turn directed the study's artistic practice. From this point of analysis onwards the thesis took the view, in accordance with some ideas regarding the flexibility of power offered by theorists such as Butler and

Foucault. Such notions propose that the subject has the capacity to be free from subjugation within hierarchical structures, such as in the case of this study, those of contemporary art and heritage. What is more the thesis argued that it is possible for the subject to be interpellated, or hailed by familiarity with an aspect of a hierarchical structure such as that of Nottingham's lace heritage.

Thus for instance, a scrap of Nottingham lace might attract the attention of a former lace industry worker whose point of view, that is to say, their knowledge and experience of the lace industry need not be fixed by heritage authority on a scale of legitimacy. Thus, Chapter Two of the thesis discussed how in practice the study employed its reviewed version of interpellation to guide the design of the artistic research activity. This activity was constituted by a series of market stall installations, a sonic installation and performance events, and the thesis noted the importance of carefully considering the locations where these activities would take place and the communities who might encounter them. As previously discussed in this concluding chapter, the study attended to the marginal communities connected with Goth sub-culture. However, the thesis observed that the study also sought to include other, perhaps more conventional communities who might have represented audiences familiar with Nottingham's lace heritage but who were un-initiated in contemporary art.

Therefore, informed by its reviewed version of interpellation the study had set out to locate ways in which its artistic research activities might democratically 'call' or 'hail' audiences to engage with Nottingham's lace heritage. Moreover, the thesis had learned from the 'open studios' experience that some audiences would resist models of authority adopted by the field of contemporary art practice. Consequently, the study aimed to create the conditions for audiences to decide for themselves how they would respond to Nottingham lace related prompts offered by the study's artistic research. Hence, the thesis observed that the study's artistic research activities resisted the use of planned scripts and other means of influencing responses, beyond the presence of artistic, Nottingham lace related prompts. Furthermore, the thesis identified the encounters between participants that occurred during the study's artistic research activities, and which were prompted by artifacts, as the participatory authoring of texts concerned with Nottingham's lace heritage.

The study acknowledged that communities vary and that different artifacts would accordingly 'call', 'hail' or 'interpellate' communities to Nottingham's lace heritage. For instance, the study produced gothic themed artifacts using Nottingham lace to populate and dress the market stall installation entitled "Lovelace", which was situated at the 'Alternative

Village Fete'. On the other hand, the location of an ordinary street market in which the study's "Lace is Ace" market stall installation was situated required, according to the reviewed version of interpellation used in this thesis, a selection of more mainstream, or familiar objects made from Nottingham lace. Chapter Two related theoretical perspectives of performance to the study's artistic research activities and noted that self-reflexivity regarding my own 'social acting' (see Goffman 1999), was vital to creating the conditions whereby audiences would respond to them. Chapter Two closed with a discussion of how the study's artistic research practice had brought together popular entertainments and a cultivated environment so as to democratically interpellate both experienced and non-experienced audiences to Nottingham's lace heritage.

The discussion explains that the study intended the described event to be a disruption of authority regarding exhibition previews, and thus led the way to introduce Chapter Three, which addressed the theme of authority in contemporary art practice, and which is now revisited in the following paragraphs.

### **Reviewing Chapter Three.**

This chapter of the thesis argued the study's development of a position on the concept and practice of authority in contemporary art. This chapter discussed the study's expanded version of philosopher of aesthetics Arthur Danto's theory regarding the 'art-world', which he identifies as a system constituted by a hierarchical power structure (1964). Danto maintains that the 'art-world' excludes art that does not comply with prevailing tastes and trends, and that this is exemplified by contemporary art's habit of rejecting beauty, a practice that he has identified as 'kalliphobia'. Danto coined the term kalliphobia to identify modernist art's rejection of beauty in the aftermath of World War One and traces the dominant art discourse's or 'art-world' current conceptual trend to this time.

On page 191 of an essay in which he discusses the 'abuse of beauty,' Danto argues that kalliphobia is a result of Modernism's revolutionary custom of acquiring new, dominant trends to replace those that led previously, thus a rejection of beauty follows a love of beauty, or 'kalliphillia', that was prevalent prior to World War One (Danto 2004).

However, in this chapter the thesis argued that Danto perceives the art-world as the sole contemporary art discourse and therefore any aspect of contemporary art that is excluded from this discourse, such as beauty or community art has no place and is thus obsolete or irrelevant. This study found that although Danto's identification of the art-world was useful as a means to understand how some contemporary art becomes dominant, it nevertheless

sought to perceive contemporary art beyond the restriction of a single, structural hierarchy. Thus, the study compared Danto's perspective of the art-world to aspects of poststructural theory, such as the disruption of exclusive and dominant monophonic, single perspectives, which led to the study's reconsideration of contemporary art discourse. The result of this reconsideration was that the study perceived contemporary art as constituted by multiple discourses of which the art-world is only one.

Moreover, in this chapter the thesis used this perception of contemporary art as constituted by multiple discourses, or versions, to justify the study's decision to incorporate so called 'denigrated' art forms such as greetings cards, as a means to reach and include un-initiated art audiences. The recognition of value in other versions of contemporary art was addressed in a discussion regarding community and socially engaged art. Furthermore, the thesis explained that the study's artistic research activities aimed to promote audiences' agency and authorship, and observed how this might be achieved by exploring other, artist initiated projects. Furthermore, through such an analysis, "Play me I'm yours", a community artwork instigated by Luke Jerram, in which pianos were accessible in public spaces around the City of London, was found by the study to be an artwork that offered participants agency, or the opportunity to make independent decisions regarding their responses to the artwork.

On the other hand the analysis concluded that Thompson and Craighead's "London Wall" exploited the contributions of participants and often did not offer them agency, that is to say, the artists had decided upon an outcome and used participant responses to achieve this. Thus, in Chapter Three the thesis argued that because participants probably already had common knowledge of this study's familiar visual and, or sensory artifacts, such as greetings cards, the aroma of chocolate, or plastic skeletons, they did not require any other knowledge to participate in its artistic activities. The thesis also proposed that authority in contemporary art could be challenged, or disrupted through art that engages senses other than only sight, and stressed that since a specialized knowledge of contemporary art was not needed for audiences to access the study's multi-sensory artistic activities, they could therefore be perceived as democratic. The theme of democracy was extended into the chapters discussion of audiences' responses to displayed artifacts that might be understood as abject. In this discussion the thesis theorized abject aspects of artworks that elicit morbid curiosity as 'uncanny' and 'death driven' (Royle 2003, Whiteley 2008).

Moreover, the thesis argued that abject artworks, such as those produced in this study, could be understood as democratic and inclusive because, through morbid references, they indicate the shared destination of all people. Furthermore, the thesis discussed audiences'

object responses to the study's artifacts and identified these responses as dialogic engagement with Nottingham's lace heritage. Chapter Three closed with a discussion of the study's approach to re-thinking standard, or conventional ways of presenting exhibition previews. Thus, to launch the exhibition "Lace Works, Contemporary Art & Nottingham Lace" at Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery, the study presented an event that combined popular, goth themed presentational entertainments, with preview conventions, such as open galleries, speeches and drinks. The thesis notes that this combination intended to attract inexperienced museum and contemporary audiences to the museum and galleries, yet also sought to maintain some traditional aspects of previews familiar to experienced audiences.

Thus, the study aimed to include a breadth of visitors and provide an environment, whereby different audiences from varying communities might dialogically experience another's perspective. In this closing section of Chapter Two the thesis concluded that the event titled "Nottingham Lace, Shadowside", which launched the exhibition demonstrated the aims of the study's intention to challenge authority in heritage and contemporary art practices. Chapter Three's concluding comments prepared the ground for Chapter Four, which addressed the subject of the study's new artistic methodology, gossip practice.

#### **Reviewing Chapter Four.**

The thesis' dedicated chapter to gossip practice introduces gossip as an aspect of human relating that earned its name at the bedsides of women in childbirth and which entered the study through a recognition that initiating dialogue with and amongst audience was important to its artistic practice. However, the study failed to find a satisfactory definition within the field of dialogue or conversation art to describe its own practice of close intimate and dialogical methods. Chapter Four expanded on Chapter Three's discussion of audiences' participation through its identification of the study's artistic activities, whereby materials and making, or crafting were combined with ephemeral methods, as 'gossip practice'. For artistic support this expanded discussion drew on the literature concerned with 'conversation', or 'dialogue art' (Bishop 2012, Kester 2004, Pitt 2013).

Although the study found the contributions of the influential scholar Grant Kester (2004) usefully marked out a territory and guidelines for the practice of conversation or dialogue art, there were nevertheless, aspects of his views that the study challenged. Thus to reinforce the study's challenge of Kester's position, Chapter Four introduced Claire Bishop's

(2012) alternative views on conversation and dialogue art practice. Bishop's proposition is that participatory art practice has the potential to generate positive social and artistic experiences but that it requires mediating visual or sensory objects for it to be meaningful to audiences. Thus, in Chapter Four the thesis observed that this study responded practically to Bishop's assertion that the application of both aesthetic and social critiques to the practice of participatory, conversation or dialogue art is beneficial to audiences. Moreover, the study's practical response was manifested in the artistic research activity constituted by market stall installations, performance events and collaborative projects, which the thesis observed as having generated interactivity between participants.

Supported by Bishop the thesis argued that an absence of visual or sensory object-ness can be alienating to audiences and that some artists may deliberately employ such methods as a means of establishing a 'conceptual art authority'. That is to say, that being 'let in on' the artist's exclusive knowledge is essential to the audience gaining access to, or understanding a participatory artwork. In this chapter the thesis notes that the current literature concerning contemporary art and heritage practice has overlooked the term 'gossip' but that it is given serious affirmative attention by cultural and literary experts such as Irit Rogoff, Patricia Spacks and Virginia Woolf. Therefore, despite critical disapproval, prejudice and dismissal by authoritative elements from much established academic literature, noted in Chapter Four, the study located sufficient robust argument to justify its adoption of the term 'gossip' to define its emerging practice.

Furthermore, Chapter Four of the thesis recognised similarities between established approaches to a constructive understanding of gossip along with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, and drew on Woolf's interpretation of 'gossip' to develop its own position (Woolf, in Little 1996: 31). Thus fortified the thesis argued its case in respect of the study's resistance to 'anti-visibility' in dialogue art, and related Kester's adherence to a 'context over content' approach with Danto's model of an exclusive and hierarchical 'Art World'. Consequently the study considered that visibility, or the inclusion of aesthetic objects in gossip practice events would initiate broad and diverse audience inclusivity. The thesis offers examples from the study's artistic research events that demonstrate the benefit of including aesthetic objects in the creation of gossip practice and also observes that as an established maker, this aspect of my practice is vital to overall personal artistic activity. In the first half of Chapter Four the thesis' sets out its theoretical and historical justifications for the study's employment of gossip as an artistic method, and in the second section of the chapter it exemplifies the practical application of gossip as a methodology.

Thus, quantitative and qualitative evaluations are demonstrated using evidence and data extracted from the 'Lacepoint' and 'Lovelace' market stall installation events. Numerical and relational evidence is also interpreted from the Facebook' social networking site set up by the study titled 'The Twisted Textile'. To enable gossip practice as a generalisable and transferable methodology, the thesis discussed its practical application regarding quantitative and qualitative evaluation according to the Arts Council of England's strategic documentation (ACE 2014). Chapter Four's discussion in respect of the value and viability of gossip practice as an artistic methodology examined it within the framework of a project grant from the Arts Council of England. In this case the numerical data extracted from the study's documentation of its research events provided the retrospective figures required by ACE, and facilitated the meaningful projection of figures for further, potentially funded projects.

Chapter Four concludes by setting out a procedure for the implementation of gossip practice events through a treatment of a potential project. Following the geographical location of this PhD project and my interest in the communities of declining industries, Chapter Four offers an example of a potential gossip practice event connected to Nottingham's declining tobacco industry. This example sets out a basic template for the initial preparation of a market stall, or similar installation and the initiation of gossip practice related to the staged closure of the Imperial Tobacco, or, as it is locally known, Players cigarette factory in the Lenton area of Nottingham. The model offered is designed to be transferable and generalisable, that is to say, it may be used and adjusted to suit other projects. Gossip practice returned for discussion in Chapter Five as a relevant methodology within the field of heritage practice.

There is currently much discussion and debate in heritage literature regarding authority and the following paragraphs revisit Chapter Five, which commences with the study's recognition of Laurajane Smith's contribution to the literature on heritage and authority.

### **Reviewing Chapter Five.**

In Chapter Five the thesis discussed the concept and practice of heritage within the study's aim to redress, or disrupt hierarchical structures in heritage and contemporary art practice. To support the study's position the thesis drew on Laurajane Smith's discussions of the 'Authorised Heritage Discourse', in which she argues against a dominant version of heritage discourse that prioritises monumental buildings and designated, historic artifacts. Smith proposes that many equally valid discourses of heritage exist and her particular focus is on

intangible heritage, such as rituals and oral traditions. To set the scene for understanding how the dominant versions of heritage that Smith identifies have come to be generally accepted, Chapter Five opened with a brief and condensed historical overview of relationships between museums and artists, followed by a similar overview of museum's emergence and establishment as heritage institutions. Thus, in Chapter Five the thesis noted that many museums are monumental buildings founded on the idea that they are places where heritage is kept and controlled by authorised personnel.

However the thesis also observed that museums currently aim to be inclusive and democratic, and that since the 1980's museums have changed their approach to audiences so that more people, particularly the very young will be inclined to visit. Nevertheless, the study established that exclusion still occurs, even in major, national museums such as London's Natural History Museum. Moreover, in Chapter Four the thesis discussed the study's observation that some audiences are excluded or overlooked as a result of what might be some museum professionals' misguided lack of concern for their inclusion. The thesis supposed that the exclusion of some audiences by some museum, or heritage professionals could happen if, as discussed in Chapter Five, heritage is understood as a structural, hierarchical model. This hierarchical treatment of heritage is also discussed and demonstrated briefly in the context of how dominant, authorised version of heritage practice become superseded by new, dominant versions.

Moreover, the thesis noted that the study found this hierarchical treatment to be important because it revealed that in some professional heritage practice, an authoritative approach to audiences is still in place. Furthermore, the thesis discussed the concept of 'interpretation' in the context of heritage and museum practice, and observed that it is generally understood to be a communication process in which relationships to cultural and natural heritage are revealed through objects, artifacts, landscapes and sites (see Veverka 1994). However, supported by Hooper- Greenhill the study perceived problems regarding authorship of this communication process, which the thesis identified as modernist and therefore hierarchical, influences in current practices of heritage interpretation. Accordingly, the thesis reasoned that a key aim of this study was to re consider how Nottingham Lace and its heritage might be encountered and interpreted by audiences. Hence, related in Chapter Five is the study's practical and artistic location of Nottingham lace in retail environments, which the thesis argued could be understood as a valid means by which Nottingham's lace heritage might be experienced.

Through its practical research the study's artistic activities also sought to present Nottingham lace artifacts beyond the museum environment in circumstances that could open opportunities for interactivity, or authorship by participants. In so doing, the study acted on its observations of shoppers in retail environments who seemed to be at ease browsing among and handling familiar merchandise. Furthermore, the thesis observed that this study aimed to challenge hierarchical approaches to heritage and contemporary art practice, which conform to the habit of privileging, recognising, or authorising particular knowledge only. Hence the study elected to strictly limit its influence on participants' interpretation of Nottingham's lace heritage with regards to the practical and artistic research activities. Thus, the interpretation of the study's Nottingham lace artifacts remained open for participants to author according to their own perspectives and through dialogic processes with other participants, including myself, the study's own participant.

Therefore, in Chapter Five the thesis re-established that the approach taken to interpretation in this study was non-hierarchical and aimed to be democratic rather than authoritative. To further demonstrate this position, the thesis drew on Smith's (2006) concept of Authorized Heritage Discourses, to argue that monumental buildings such as the Adams Building, dominate architectural narratives of Nottingham's lace heritage because they are recognised as culturally important, whereas other sites such as the now extinct former 'Narrow Marsh' slums are not. Subsequently, the study used Smith's model of the Authorized Heritage Discourse to identify authorised versions of Nottingham's lace heritage and from there, to seek out unauthorised versions of the same. In Chapter Five the thesis discussed the study's observation that authorised versions of Nottingham's lace heritage concentrate on dominant perspectives, which tend to be celebrations of lace as a decorative fabric along with pride in a formerly thriving industry. The thesis noted the study's acknowledgement of this perspective but also justified the study's concentration on ephemeral, officially un-recognised versions, or overlooked narratives of Nottingham's lace heritage.

Moreover, the thesis argued that these alternative, un-authorised versions could be regarded as being of equal value and legitimacy to dominant versions of Nottingham's lace heritage. Chapter Five recalls that throughout this study the practical research aimed to facilitate the emergence of many different versions of Nottingham's lace heritage, so that they might exist alongside its civically sanctioned, tangible and authorised versions. Furthermore, the thesis argued that this aim was achieved through the participatory airing of alternative perspectives, narratives or versions of Nottingham's lace heritage during the

study's practical and artistic research activities. Indeed, Chapter Five reported that, aside from photographs, the study did not make electronic recordings of the dialogical interactions, or 'gossip practice' that took place during the practical and artistic research activities. The thesis reasoned that this decision was made so that authorship and ownership of participants' perspectives, narratives and knowledge products would remain with the participants, to do with as they wished. Furthermore, the decision not to record also allowed for alternative, un-authorised versions of Nottingham's lace heritage to emerge and temporarily exist as forms of intangible, ephemeral and uncontrollable heritage.

Chapter Five outlines the tensions within the concept and practice of heritage that are related to issues of authority, and the thesis argued that authorised, or officially recognised discourses seek to present only a limited and controlled perspective. This perspective was illustrated by a discussion of the selection, installation and interpretation of 'Tree' by Tania Kovats, which is a contemporary artwork on permanent display at London's Natural History Museum. In this case the study observed an elitist and exclusive approach to heritage, which in Chapter Five the thesis noted was typical of that which Smith (ibid) identifies as the Authorized Heritage Discourse. Subsequently, in Chapter Five the thesis reinforced its position on the study's aim to seek means by which all perspectives of Nottingham's lace heritage might be acknowledged and recognised as equally valid.

Chapter Five closed with a review of the study's outcomes regarding its aim to achieve recognition, or acknowledgement of alternative versions of Nottingham's lace heritage. However, the thesis noted that simply hearing and accepting a version of Nottingham's lace heritage, which may perhaps be formed of only one or two sentences could constitute an act of acknowledgement. For example, a participant at "Lace is Ace" who recognised a lace motif used to decorate one of the study's greetings cards gave a single sentence that encapsulated a version of Nottingham's lace heritage. This particular version was formed by his perspective as a young Pakistani immigrant who as a child had played with the son of a lace factory owner, and this factory had produced the lace motif that he had recognised. Thus, in a response prompted by a scrap of Nottingham lace encountered in the context of the study's research activity, this participant shed light on a version of Nottingham's lace heritage that other participants might never have otherwise witnessed.

Therefore, Chapter Five concluded on a reassertion of the study's aim for Nottingham's unofficial, or unauthorized lace heritage to be acknowledged, through the study's dialogical artistic practice, alongside that of Nottingham's official and authorised lace heritage.

### **The Contribution to knowledge.**

This thesis established that given careful consideration, audiences will respond to artistic situations and events. The experience of audiences was a central concern to the study because audiences were at the core of both its artistic approach and its context of Nottingham's lace heritage. Through its rethinking of Althusser's concept of interpellation, the study developed an artistic practice that prioritized the audiences' agency, and which it applied to the concept and practice of heritage. Thus, through a combination of practical research and theoretical exploration the thesis offered contributions to the fields of contemporary art and heritage.

### **Gossip practice.**

This study developed a new dialogical art practice that, drawing on scholars of conversation art along with scholars of gossip, the thesis identified as 'gossip practice'. The thesis observed that gossip is generally perceived as feminised and trivial, or malicious but argued that although gossip might indeed sometimes be unkind, its so called 'feminine trivia' could be understood as a form of empathic and informal relating. The thesis reported that no evidence exists whereby gossip is recognised as a practice in the fields of heritage and contemporary art. However, in Chapter Four the thesis demonstrated that gossip practice is a viable version of dialogical art. Chapter Four also set out practical models for the meaningful evaluation of a gossip practice methodology, and also defined a procedural model for the basic preparation of a gossip practice event. Furthermore, Chapter Five argued that this study's gossip practice contributed to the thinking on 'heritage performance' (see Jackson & Kidd 2010) and 'intangible heritage' (see Smith 2006, 2008).

### **New approaches to Nottingham's lace heritage.**

This study offered ways to experience Nottingham's lace heritage that differed from existing models because the study's artistic research activities combined material objects and sensory experience to facilitate open ended, participant directed interactivity. The study's version of interactivity did not author, or direct participants and therefore differed from interactivity as it is generally experienced in heritage institutions. The thesis observed that interactive exhibits in heritage institutions can be thought of as 'closed' or authored by heritage professionals because such exhibits tend to invite participants to access prescribed texts by pressing buttons, touching screens, opening drawers and so on. However, rather than ask participants to engage in activities with predetermined outcomes, this study used

sensory prompts to initiate participants' self directed and self authored interactivity with Nottingham's lace heritage.

#### **A new model for exhibition previews.**

The study also presented a unique event to launch the exhibition "Lace Works, Contemporary Art & Nottingham Lace" The launch event, "Warped-Nottingham Lace, Shadowside" presented a version of Nottingham's lace heritage that embraced and included the perspectives of audiences from Goth communities. Furthermore, the curation of the event was realised through consultation with Goth communities who therefore claimed agency of and contributed to authoring the event's version of Nottingham's lace heritage. In acknowledgement of the perspectives of experienced museum and gallery audiences, as well as those less experienced, or uninitiated audiences, the study combined a cultivated environment with popular, sub-cultural Goth themed entertainments. This approach reiterated the study's aim to consider all perspectives of Nottingham's lace heritage as equally valuable, and none as privileged over any other.

#### **New models for the display of Nottingham lace.**

This study presented Nottingham lace related artifacts to the public as familiar and inexpensive goods that could be inspected, handled and perused without concern. The thesis explained that this strategy emerged from the study's aim to challenge conventions that, conceptually and practically separate audiences from artifacts. Through its practical artistic research the study explored alternative means by which audiences might access Nottingham lace and its industry's heritage, therefore the majority of the study's research events took place beyond museum and art gallery contexts. Informed by the thesis' theoretical position on the concept of interpellation, the study developed a strategy of situating relevant artifacts, or merchandise in shops and markets to create the conditions for audiences to informally encounter Nottingham's lace heritage.

The study also offered displays of Nottingham lace and its heritage through a performance of chocolate lace production in which chocolate drawings were derived from actual Nottingham lace samples. Therefore, "Nottingham Chocelace" offered a direct visual reference to Nottingham's lace heritage. However, the sensory aspects such as, the smell and taste of chocolate, along with the activities involved with the audiences' and artists' engagement with the chocolate lace provided a unique, contemporary experience of Nottingham's lace heritage.

### **Looking Forward.**

Through its analysis of this study the thesis brought attention to opportunities for future research in the fields of contemporary art and heritage, which are discussed in the following, final paragraphs.

### **Gossip Practice; a New Artistic Methodology.**

This study engaged a gossip practice that the thesis justified by referring to scholars of linguistic and social theory, as well as those of contemporary art and heritage studies. (see Schechner, 2005: 22,174, Graham & Howard, 2008: 2, Kester 2004, Smith 2006, Samuel 1994, in Smith 2008:145, Brett, 1996, Harrison, 2012: 223). As demonstrated in the second half of Chapter Four, there is scope to develop the study's version of gossip practice as a practical and transferable artistic methodology. Additionally as a new version of heritage performance there is scope beyond this study to develop and explore gossip practice as a viable means to express heritage in a variety of contexts.

### **Re- Considering the gallery preview.**

The study's carnivalesque approach to the gallery 'preview', exemplified as "Nottingham Lace, Shadowside" brought together different communities so that they might dialogically experience another's perspective. This approach required the study's involvement with a particular community that was noted by the study and in heritage literature (see Black, 2005) to be reluctant museum visitors. The study's involvement with the community, along with the preview event's unconventional flavour brought this community to Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery. Therefore, there is scope to consider the study's approach as for instance, a means to expand museum and gallery audiences, or to create publicity for an exhibition.

### **List of illustrations.**

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## **Appendix 1.**

An Autoethnographic Report on Fieldwork at The Christmas Market, Nottingham on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

“**Lace** . **n.** **1** a fine open fabric of cotton or silk made by looping, twisting, or knitting thread in patterns. **2** a cord used to fasten a shoe or garment. **v.** (**laces, lacing, laced**) **1** fasten with a lace or laces **2** twist or tangle together **3** add an ingredient to ( a drink or dish) to improve flavour or make it stronger: *chefs laced their pastas with caviar.*

ORIGIN Old French *laz.*” (OED)

### **Preparations**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2010 a decision to take a pro-active position lead me to contact the organisers of the German Christmas Markets and Sneinton Market. Positive, supportive, and enthusiastic replies were received from both organisers; Wendy, the Sneinton manager wrote of her passion for Nottingham’s history of lace manufacture and Paul, the Christmas Market manager requested a proposal of my intended Christmas Market activities.

The trail has gone cold with Sneinton, maybe to be reheated at a later date, but Jayne, at the P.R company to which Paul passed me, got things rolling with the Christmas Market. Two days were planned for a temporary studio to be situated at the market, the objective being

to draw attention to and raise discussion about Nottingham lace. Jayne requested a statement and pictures, which she transformed into an almost full page article that appeared in the Nottingham Post on December the 10<sup>th</sup>.

I arrived at the Christmas market early on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December, dragging a loaded wheelie bag and struggling to clamp an undulating satin covered mannequin in a failing, teapot handle embrace. After several circuits *avec* trolley and dolly, I identified and trapped Dominic, the new Nottingham market manager who had no idea about anything to do with me, or my temporary studio. He offered to try and hire a gazebo, but we decided that, as I had not realized a gazebo, a table, carpet, chair, lights or a heater would be needed (it was -2 degrees C. and snowing), it would be better to stay with just the 15<sup>th</sup> December and work on making it a good show.

The aborted market day was no surprise, it had been impossible to contact Paul or any of his associates after our initial communications so, I had elected to take what might be called a speculative approach.

Although 3<sup>rd</sup> December didn't go as originally intended, it was very useful; after being cornered in the tea chalet, Dominic was extremely helpful and our meeting ensured that 15<sup>th</sup> December could be confidently planned and executed.

As the idea of the market experiment was to attract people and encourage discussion, I set about making an 'attractive' banner, scripting the word "LACEPOINT" in Nottingham lace onto a black polished linen background.

To accompany the banner was "Siren" an image from a body of work I made in 2009, cut down to size so it could be wiggled, forced, and willed into a small car for the journey to Nottingham.

A bulging wheelie bag stuffed with Nottingham lace intended to be 'work in progress' completed the trinity of lures that I hoped would hook some interest and land a few discussions.

After a not very enjoyable game of actual size Scaletrix with the Nottingham trams, I was escorted to my Christmas chalet studio, an open fronted affair situated next to a semi-detached stone lion and with a metal security fence holding at bay the Holy Family .

"Lacepoint" was to temporarily oust the three carved wooden figures and I was delighted with the space, not yet sensitive to the fact that people would visit the market specifically to see the nativity scene.

The Godless cuckoo occupying the nativity nest was not what they wanted, and they let me know it.

### Set Up

The Lacepoint studio was set up behind the metal, grilled fence, because rules stated that security fences, must be moved only by market security employees.

### Let's Roll

The journey of the day is documented as follows..... I recall it in the present tense so that the reader may also be present, if he/she wishes.

**10.10** – A magnificently presented woman, (brilliant red lipstick, long, pillarbox red coat, a velvet devore scarf of oranges, pinks and bronzes, heeled knee length black boots) probably of retirement age, stops to peer through the grille, apparently curious. We blink at each other through the metal lines, she looks up at me on my elevated stage with what I positively interpret as a friendly, scarlet rimmed smile which bisects her foreshortened face. I form a nice smile to send back, aware that I am uncomfortable and awkward in my position as pedestalled zoo exhibit.

Nervous and unsure, I feel unprepared I don't know what to say yet, but the Red Woman rescues this odd moment by beginning to speak.

A staccato of broken sentences and solitary words are passed to me through the rectangular spaces, "Abroad, .....yes." "Textiles." "Nottingham,..... yes." "Yes, Raleigh bicycles." "Yes. It was big wasn't it?" "Yes, bicycles. Hmmmmm." "All abroad. Yes."

I mentally kick myself up the backside and flick an internal 'START' switch. I'm taxi-ing towards a semi- rehearsed explanation about being there for the day to encourage discussion around Nottingham lace, but The Red Woman seems not to want me to speak, she wants to speak. She has spotted my 'attractive' banner and has things to say so, I elect to abort take-off, bypass my spiel, and instead be an observant listener.

The Red Woman is not at all aggressive, just adamant, and *feeling*. In fact I think I can feel the *feeling* emitting from her, there's a detectable vibrating energy emanating from this surprising person.

"Yes. Re-invigorate industry in Nottingham." "Bring it back here, that's what we want."

"We're not insane are we?"

I agree that no, I don't think we are insane.

I believe this to be a true statement.

The opening session is closed and my first encounter of the day pivots on her stacked heel, departs my cage, and stirs the cold air with a carmine, kid-skinned hand as she scissors across the square.

She leaves me wondering... her plumage of brights is stylishly out of step with the urban camouflage of beige, black, grey and blue, a peculiar mix that seems always to create vista in the hues of wet newspaper.

I want to know more, I have many nosey question about her background, about her personal peripatetic theatre, about where she is striding off to so purposefully, and...why,... why did all those words fire out of her like mechanical, 2 stroke farts?

I resolve to be bolder and try harder, I will ask questions, I will be delicately interrogative, I will *find out*.

### **11.00**

I'm still behind bars and it feels safe, I'm partially hidden. The Holy Family are tucked behind an easel supporting "Siren" and the Holy hay is piled high in a corner, primed for ignition by the curtain of fairy lights and a nestling domestic extension socket.

Dominic is doing his rounds and spots this likely disaster so the fairy lights are killed, he also decides it is time that the 'guys' got rid of my security fence and thus, I am dimly exposed.

A burly gentleman with engine coloured hair stops in front of my stable, he gives

"Lacepoint" a coat of looking over and then grumps....

"Not very Christmassy are you"

"Well, I'm here today to invite discussion about Nottingham Lace, and this is my temporary studio....."

I'm sure I can hear a hiss.

I go avian, feeling my wings and shoulder blades rise ear-wards, ready to fold around the front of my body so I can stick my head right down into them where nobody can see me.

As he turns away giving his shopping bag an irritated flap, Mr Engine-Hair leaves me with the certainty that responses to my experiment will probably be quite varied.....

"I don't want to talk about bloody Nottingham Lace, I want Christmassy things"

### **11.10**

Another gruffy looking older male approaches "Lacepoint."

"Have you got any lace tablecloths?"

"No, I'm afraid I haven't, I'm here today to see if people are interested....."

Gruffy male has left the vicinity of "Lacepoint".

### **11.16**

A young woman and her friend scan the interior of my hideout, I avoid offering an invitation by smiling but looking downwards, "Lacepoint" is emotionally closed for business. But, a sunray moves across my mind when the Young Woman says,

"I had Nottingham Lace in my wedding dress"

"Wow! Was it all Nottingham lace?"

"No, just the frills around the hem, cost eight hundred quid just for the lace. Got divorced 3 months later and the dress went to the charity shop"

The Young Woman and Her Friend have begun to incline their bodies away and are preparing to leave. I'm psychically clinging onto the Young Woman and willing her to meet my gaze so we can converse. She won't look at me and while she speaks, continues her scanning of the space where I am not.

Desperate for her to stay and talk, I display a ridiculous lack of tact and ask the Young Woman if she "would do it again?"

"Get married? Nah."

They are gone.

### **11.30**

Two silver haired women in zip up fleece jackets spot the "Lacepoint" banner and approach cautiously. The banner is fixed across the front of the chalet so its top is around a metre off the ground. The women remind me of shy but curious young cattle who, braced and extended cannot resist the scent of potential danger.

They grow less nervous as they become engrossed in the lace on the banner, jabbing at the different patterns and murmuring in a private language to each other.

I leave them be for a few more moments, until I'm sure they won't bolt and then ask them if they are interested in Nottingham Lace.

Bingo.

They are Bobbin lace makers and want to know if the lace on the banner is hand or machine made. I'm able to confidently inform them that it is all machine made Nottingham lace.

We all grin with a relief borne of the realisation that this a friendly meeting. The conversation begins to motor along sensibly and they tell me that they are members of the Bobbin Lace Society who are taught by Helen Young.

I am bestowed with the contact details of their chair, and we agree that we are all very keen to raise awareness of the Nottingham lace industry.

I tell them of the plan to hold an exhibition at Nottingham Castle and ask them if they think their organisation would be interested in discussing the possibility of presenting demonstrations or workshops during the exhibition.

They consider that this is a distinct possibility and inform me matter of factly that they regularly hold demonstrations in shopping malls.

### **11.55**

A woman, again probably around retirement age marches directly at "Lacepoint."

"You can't get at the lace anymore, where is it?"

Her chin-out challenge causes me to feel momentarily responsible for the absence of accessible lace in Nottingham.

This might be because I also feel the guilt of a privileged outsider who enjoys private pleasures with the NTU and Castle lace collections.

"I bought some in the lace market ten years ago,... Leaver's, it's nicer, more special. Where do you get it now?"

The Outsider begins to splutter righteously that indeed, the Lace Market is a misnomer and that she, the Outsider first came to Nottingham to see some Nottingham lace and that yes, it was not possible to find any and Ebay seems to be the only place to find it.

"Yes, yes, there was silk shop with a lace machine in it opposite the pub that's a church – The Pitcher & Piano."

"Ohhhh." The Outsider says, tilting her head and nodding so that she looks as though she knows where this is.

The Direct Woman straightens her hat, gathers her gloves together and departs, ominously muttering through gritted teeth: "I just hope they haven't thrown it away."

### 11.59

A middle-youth male tentatively approaches and examines "Siren"

"ahhhh, eeeehhhh, ahhh. Different"

The Outsider has re-integrated and I explain what I'm doing in the Christmas market and that there will be an exhibition in 2012, at the Castle, on the theme of Nottingham lace.

"Ohhh," says the Man of Vowels, "I shall go and see that then."

I am triumphant.

Maybe he was being polite.

Or kind.

**BUT**, he might visit the museum as a result of being interpellated by an artwork.

And this is my point.

He has supported my argument.

A little bit.

### 12.07

Just as I'm smiling at the sky and basking in the afterglow of my encounter with the Man of Vowels, a *teenager* stumps by, passing so close to the chalet's front facing aperture that her hip bumps my banner.

"Get yer fuckin' box out ma corner" is the gobbet she spits towards me and my wooden imposition.

The Outsider twigs that her marvellous temporary studio is squatting the territory of the *teenagers*.

Dread and misery are the primary emotions felt by the Outsider now.

She would like to leave.

But she is obliged to stay until seven o'clock this evening.

Snow is on its way though.

She may have to leave early.

More *teenagers* gather and jam themselves into the small gap between "Lacepoint's" wooden wall and the semi-detached stone lion.

Even more of them arrive and spill out into the area in front of "Lacepoint".

They smoke.

A lot.

They have created a screen that conceals "Lacepoint"

The Outsider thinks she should ask them not to.

She can't.

She smiles at them and tries to pretend she's cool.

This is clearly pathetic.

So she ignores them and writes notes.

And cuts up lace.

Eventually from beyond the frame of the Outsider's prison, a *teenager* leans backwards into shot and very briefly inspects "Siren".

The action is comic.

And quite sweet.

### **1.12pm**

The *teenagers* have dispersed.

I feel back in control.

A little bit.

Two women, retirement age, gravitate towards "Siren".

I refer back to my non-script and ask them if they are interested in Nottingham lace.

They are.

"I used to have loads of it," says one.

"Kate will be wearing it next Spring" says the other, nodding and smiling in a conspiratorial, insider way that only certain women are privy to.

The Outsider is confused, the Women don't look as though they would follow the fashion forwardness, or antics of Kate Moss, so she inwardly searches a thin databank of celebrity names and thinks it might be Katie Price.

The Outsider's wanting enthusiasm gives her away and the Women have to tell her that Kate Middleton, Prince William's fiancée will wear Nottingham lace for The Wedding, and that the lace will be manufactured in Nottingham.

Because of this, the Women say,

Nottingham lace will become popular again.

**1.24pm**

P. Turner arrives at "Lacepoint". She tells me that her grandmother and mother worked in the lace industry and that she would help them to cut the scallops when she was a little girl.

P. Turner tells me that I should have a petition lobbying against the invisibility of the Nottingham lace industry, ready for people to sign.

So, I flip to a page in my notebook and transform it into a petition, the woman who cut scallops signs it P. Turner, and now I know her name.

**1.38pm**

Derek and Margaret arrive. They have seen the article in the Nottingham Post and have come to the market to see what I'm up to.

They want to talk about how they met as teenagers (or *teenagers?*) at Birkin's lace factory, that they were employed there all their working lives, that Margaret's family all worked in the lace industry in some capacity, that they met the Queen, that Jane Birkin is part of the Birkin dynasty, that Birkin's lace was too good for Marks and Spencer, that the White Rabbit at Houndsgate is an excellent tea shop.

Derek is in full flow, he has found a groove in the wooden frame in which to anchor his left side and is getting down to reminiscence.

Margaret manages to get a few words witnessed, but Derek has been invited to speak and he is incontinent in his verbal spillage.

Margaret's nose begins to turn red at the tip and her eyes water with the cold, she is clearly beginning to freeze but she falls silent and gives Derek his head.

After several furlongs I can no longer stand to see Margaret pretending to be fine and ask if it would be possible to meet them again at some point, perhaps at the White Rabbit.

My suggestion is waved away and they insist that I must come to their house, that way they can show me some of their personal memorabilia.

I suspect that Margaret realises Derek would like to take his time and that the comfort and convenience of home would be preferable to hours spent perched in a café.

We part as new friends and promise to meet again in the New Year.

## 2.10pm

An elderly couple, she seated in a wheelchair and he pushing with purposeful determination, bowl up in front of my stage. He flips on the brake.

"It said in the paper you have a lace factory."

"Er, no, that's not me, that would be Sheila Mason, I'm the artist in the feature trying to raise interest in Nottingham lace"

"So you haven't got a factory then?"

"No, I'm afraid I haven't..... did you work in the industry?"

"We both did, since we were fourteen, I was a winder, he was a twisthand"

My ears are as erect as those on Securicor's canine elite.

"See, he wants to see the machines again, but working, and we thought you had a factory where he could go and see them again."

"So you were a twisthand then?" (God, a real live twisthand, this thrill feels a bit pervy, I can't really relate it to anything else, it might feel like finding a pre 1950's Schiaparelli complete with Dali buttons for £5 in a charity shop. An intensely guilty pleasure. Am I going to take something from them? Or do I just think I am? It might be because they have the *knowledge*. Something that I will never ever have, but will probably try to extract from them somehow)

"Yeesss, I was twisthand for many years at Sampsons, made veiling and stuff for Royalty"

George Hoy has three dark moles on his bottom lip, I stop hearing what he is saying and speculate as to why he has moles, hoping that they are not melanomas.

Mrs. Hoy scares me a bit, but she's quite friendly in a matriarchal way as long as we're clear she's in charge.

She looks beautiful, she has pale skin and pale eyes that assess me from behind rimless spectacles. Her cashmere mix wool overcoat is duck egg blue and she is topped by a matching trilby. The tartan mohair rug snuggling her knees is coordinated to complement the rest of her outfit, which includes an elaborate sparkly brooch and duck egg blue leather gloves.

This dame has style.

I tell her.

She laughs and says it's the first hat she's ever had.

"He bought it me." Her hand paddles around her head in the direction of George.

"He bought me the brooch as well. Ernest Jones, very expensive"

“He bought me a beautiful red coat the other day, hundred and ninety five pounds.”

“Got good taste he has”

Mrs. Hoy settles down to tell me more.

They have a son who knits.

A daughter who sews.

Her mother crocheted.

George desperately wants to be with lace machines in action.

I think about Sheila Mason.

I tell Mrs Hoy that I will contact Sheila and try to put them in touch with each other.

Sheila may be able to help George and Mrs. Hoy.

I ask Mrs. Hoy if it would be possible to meet them again.

Mrs. Hoy says,

“You sort out George’s visit first and then we’ll see”

She leaves their address with me.

### **2.30pm**

A couple in their twenties, hand in hand approach “Lacepoint”.

“What’s “Lacepoint”?”

I explain.

“Hmrrmm, not really interested in Nottingham lace.”

### **2.33pm**

Three *teenagers* stand before me.

They want to know about “Siren”

“coooooell”

I am chuffed.

One tells me he does photography.

Another says he is doing illustration.

They are worried about tuition fees.

They have been on a protest march in Nottingham.

They are worried about water canons.

I am overcome with affection.

I tell them I am proud of them.

I give them a catalogue each of my work and ask them if I can photograph them.

They pose and smile.

The photography one asks me to send the photo to his email address.

I sneak in a bit about Nottingham lace.

They nod and say that it is a shame that there's no where to see it any more.

They might be telling me what they think I want to hear.

They might not.

They offer to fetch me some tea.

I give them a pound and they return with my tea.

They rejoin their friends in their diminished corner.

They return with some more teenagers, who touch and marvel at "Siren".

It makes sense.

They are clad in black,

With chains,

And black eye make up,

They are baby Goths.

And baby Steampunks.

"Siren" has a background of black latex paint.

They like this and ask questions about it.

"Siren" has a World War 2 gas mask opened out and pinned to the latex surface, like a dissected frog.

They like this too.

There is a kilo of pins jammed into the surface of "Siren"

They express amazement.

And approval.

I hand out more catalogues.

They look after "Lacepoint" while I visit the Ladies.

Everything is in order.

They are my new minders.

### **3.00pm**

Sue, a sculptor working in wood and metal introduces herself.

She says that she was drawn in because her brother makes wooden lace bobbins.

He's a heroin user on the mend and the bobbins help him get through the day.

We chat and discover that I have taught her niece at UWE.

I promise to tell Alanna that Aunty Sue says "hello" the next time I see her.

### **3.15pm**

Sophia is a young Greek Cypriot textile printer.

She has lived in Nottingham for seven years.

She like "Siren" but thinks that I should have used some buttons in the image.

She thinks that I should make some accessories and decorate them with lace.

If I were a dog, the hair on my scruff would be rising.

But.

I listen, because.

She might have a point.

Not about the buttons.

About the accessories.

I relax and we chat.

"I'm inspired now, I might use some lace in my own work, byeeeee."

### **3.24pm**

Two young women are attracted by "Siren".

Daylight has slunk away and two halogen spotlights are doing a good job of making "Siren's" pins twinkle.

"Yeah, I'm glad lace is having a bit of a revival"

They head off towards Primark.

### **3.30pm**

Three young women in hijab edge towards "Siren". I open a conversation and they tell me they have been visiting Nottingham University. They want to be medical doctors. They are Iranians living in Brighton.

I am pleased that they talk to me.

Because

People misconceive each other.

And perhaps fear intolerance

I'm delighted that these young women chat about the sun in Iran and how cold they are here, but how exciting it is.

And that we are all friendly together.

We wish each other well.

### **3.39pm**

"They usually have the crib here, I thought you were the crib"

The woman is annoyed.

I'm tired and very cold now.

And not feeling very tolerant

"The Nativity isn't anything to do with me, I'm just here for the day."

"Well where is it then?"

"They're here, behind this picture."

"What!! Is that it? Those three figures?! Where's the rest of it and what are you doing in there?"

"I'm doing a project and I'm going home soon, this will be the Nativity again tomorrow."

"Well, that's not very good is it!"

I respond silently

"Piss off and leave me alone you crabby old boot."

### **3.45pm**

My teenage minders fetch me another polystyrene cup of tea.

### **3.56pm**

A woman stops by who knows Amanda Mason, Sheila's daughter. They were friends years ago but have since lost touch. We chat a little about Nottingham lace and then we try to sort out the identity of a Spanish film she has seen recently. We confuse ourselves with 'Pan's Labyrinth' and 'The Orphanage' before deciding that I probably haven't seen this film.

Anyway, Amanda's erstwhile friend was taken with the costumes in this film, it seemed that there were vast mantillas and voluminous frocks, all made with lace. A wistful expression alters her face as she mists into the snappy air.. "I'd love to wear things like that."

#### **4.00pm**

A young Asian man asks me if I make my own lace.

"No"

"Takes about 8 years to learn how to do it doesn't it?"

"I don't know I've never tried, I use lace that's been given to me and I make stuff with it"

I am really cold and getting fed up now. My brain is busting with all the stories I've heard today and all the things I've learned, all the challenges to my thinking, the disruption of my prejudices.

Being friendly all day is quite exhausting.

Extracting information is draining.

Who would be an investigator,

Or a journalist.

"Yeah, it's good, cool"

I thank him, he's nice.

#### **4.09**

Rapunzel M.A.P. knocks me out of my torpor.

"That's amazing, it's quite 'steampunk' isn't it"

"Yeah, I suppose it is, but I didn't know about 'steampunk' when I made it"

"Ooooh, ahead of the game that's good"

We natter a bit, I tell her about my son who makes 'steampunk' jewellery and sells it on Etsy.

"Oh Etsy, I love Etsy, everyone I know loves Etsy"

She's young, early twenties I estimate.

I file her enthusiasm for Etsy.

I'll quiz my son about it.

She's a singer and songwriter who has been told to lose weight by her agent, otherwise she won't get work.

How depressing.

I could go on about manufactured pop mediocrities.

But not this time.

We exchange contact details.

She's off to sing for some old folks.

She promises to tell them about my project.

I promise to tell Bristol music venues about hers.

#### **4.12pm**

A man comes to talk to me, his grandfather owned a factory in the Lace Market.

The man has lived in Canada for many years but remembers going to the factory after school.

He collects Nottingham lace samplers.

He thinks of Nottingham as being synonymous with lace.

He met another Nottingham man in Cairo and they swapped stories about the lace market.

He says something else,

"What people don't want to remember is that the lace industry was basically a slave trade – if you were desperate, you went into the lace mills."

He wishes me luck with my project and departs.

Another man has been waiting while this exchange has been going on.

I've got a second wind and turn to attend him.

Here's here to tell me that the electrical supply to "Lacepoint" will be cut at 5pm.

He's very sorry.

I'm elated.

#### **4.21pm**

A woman inspects "Siren"

"I got all my wedding dress fabric from the lace market, reams and reams."

"Gosh, when was that?"

“Twenty Three years ago.”

“What! You don’t look anything like old enough to have been married that long.”

We chat a bit, she’s Nottingham born and bred.

She wants to know if there are any books written about ‘it’.

I rattle off the titles that come immediately to mind.

Between us we write them down.

I mention Cluny Lace.

And Cite de la Dentelle in Calais

“It’s such a shame the industry has disappeared and you can’t find this stuff anymore”

I agree that it is a shame.

But at the same remember what the Man from Canada said.

#### **4.31pm**

The penultimate one.

A silver haired man, cross.

“Where’s the Nativity?”

“Come here every day to see it.”

“Where is it?”

“Behind the picture, back tomorrow.”

I begin packing some of my clutter.

At the moment

I couldn’t care less what he goes to see every day.

It is uncharitable of me

But

I’ve had enough

Of Cliff Richard,

Noddy Holder,

Santa Baby,

Chris de Burg,

Bono,

And

Him.

**4.46pm**

The last ones.

A mother and daughter visiting from California.

They want to know where the lace market is because they want to buy some lace.

Ah, I have to let them know that there is no 'market' at the lace market.

They are very disappointed.

Can they see Nottingham Lace anywhere?

I show them some of mine

And tell them about the Castle Museum

And the NTU archive.

They decide that they will go to London tomorrow.

Do I know of any good markets in London?

I do.

**4.51pm**

"Lacepoint's" electrical supply is shut off.

Appendix 2

"LACEWORK"

by

Nicola Donovan & Tom Watts

A Victorian lace machine is  
engineered perfection.  
Its sound, a symphony.  
The movements  
Of the crafted interior parts  
are their own poetry.

The embers of  
Nottingham's lace industry

glow  
in  
one  
last  
remaining  
factory.

You hear  
Ghosts  
Of an industry  
In this house of music  
Where  
Brass  
wind  
and  
strings  
no  
longer  
play.

“Soundwork” has been kindly facilitated by the Mason family at Cluny Lace.

The decibel levels of “Soundwork” are not representative of those at Cluny Lace, which are kept within Health and Safety requirements.



*Goth style at Whitby, April 2012, own photographs*

