

TQEF RESEARCH PROJECT FINAL REPORT



PROJECT TEAM:

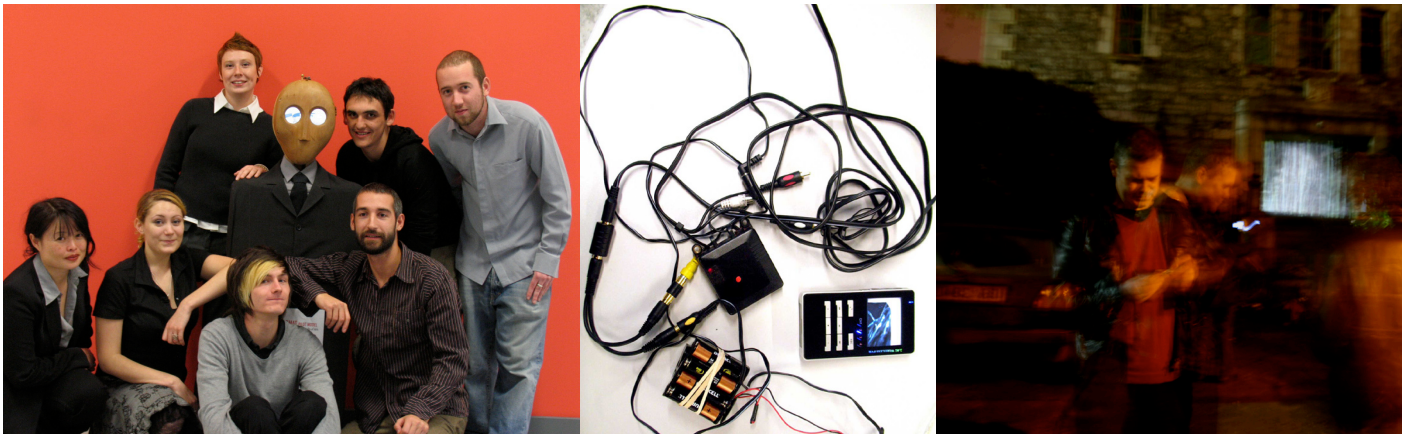
Sarah Bennett, Senior Lecturer in Fine Art
Dr Anya Lewin, Lecturer in Fine Art
Dr Karen Roulstone, Lecturer in Fine Art

PROJECT AIMS:

SPARCC aimed to create an innovative and experimental learning environment for undergraduate and postgraduate Faculty of Arts students through an engagement with research, critical theory and practice-based project as well as providing an interface between students, lecturers, researchers and outside agencies in and beyond the city of Plymouth. SPARCC enables the generation and focus of ideas and practices within the field of sited and interdisciplinary work. Site is understood in its broadest form and so can be taken to include engagement with identity, location, environment, history, science, culture, society, economics and politics. SPARCC projects involved students in applied research of staff at the University of Plymouth as well as invited researchers, artists and critics allowing students to connect their educational experience with professional practice and enterprise.

METHODS USED:

•Artist/Producer Labs



SPARCC delivered three successful artist/producer run workshops. Two of these were with international artists giving the students context outside of the UK, which is essential in the field of contemporary art.. The workshops focussed on developing research which the artist/producer was currently engaged with. The events were preceded by artist talks, which were open to anyone and the workshops were filled by application and were advertised in all departments in the Faculty of Arts as well as Humanities and Technology.

Fantomat led by Venelin Surelov (Bulgaria)

Venelin Surelov brought his developing project Fantomat to the University and worked with a group of seven students to create content for the Fantomat. At the end of the Lab it was installed in the Levinsky building as part of the grand opening.

Negotiations (in the Blue Screen) led by Artist/curator Daniel Kostova (USA/Bulgaria)

Daniela Kostova used her Negotiations project as the basis of her workshop and asked students to develop the work and tools for their own ideas. Students created their own projects using blue screen technology.

Source led by Producer Richard Milner (UK)

Richard Milner used his extensive experience in outdoor media events to examining issues relating to the use of video and digital media in external and non-gallery locations and venues.

Participant Comments:

I really enjoyed the project. It had a relaxed atmosphere, which helps me to be creative. Although the time available was short I think everyone achieved a lot of quite diverse work. I really enjoyed working within a group. Since moving to Plymouth Uni I haven't had the chance to get to know people and this workshop introduced me to like-minded people who I feel I will be able to talk about my ideas with in the future. - Susannah Williams

The Fantomat workshop gave me an opportunity to work closely with a visiting artist. This allowed for me to have an insight into some of the strands of the Bulgarian art's scene. I really enjoyed working collaboratively, especially with students specialising in areas other than myself. I learnt new editing techniques and considered other forms of screening a moving image. I appreciated the non-hierarchical ethos that the group attained. I would have liked to have experienced more workshops such as this in my previous two years of study. - Siobhan Mckeown

I have recently started using video in my work & when I attended a lecture by Venelin where he asked for students to take part in a week long workshop using video, I jumped at the chance. Working with other students during the week, coming up with ideas & filming them was a way of working that I really enjoyed & responded to well. Overall it was a really fun week that helped me to develop my ideas in other aspects of my art work. - Adam Garratt

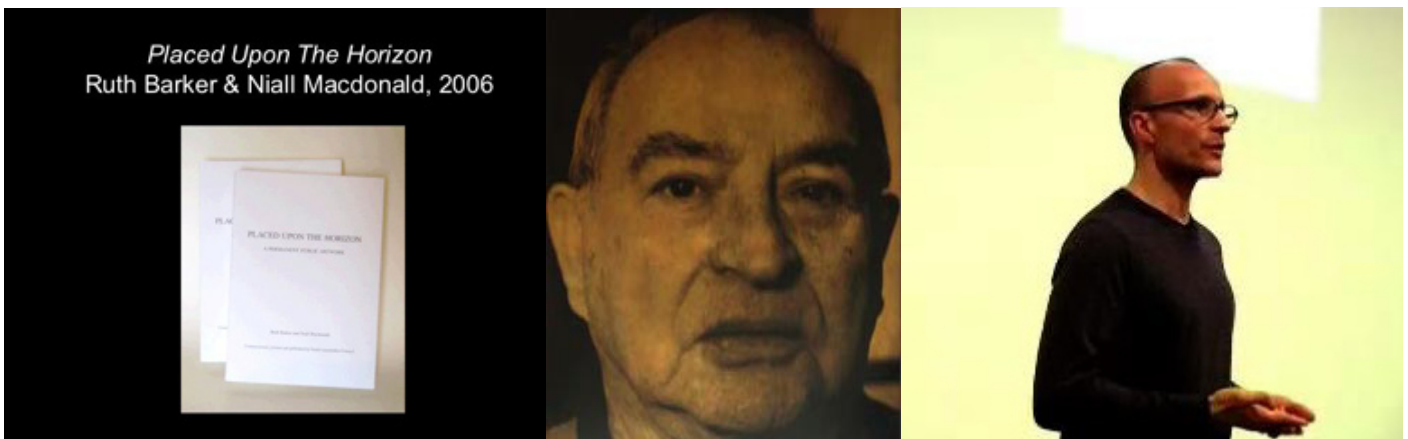
This workshop provided me with an excellent forum to use projection in a creative, spontaneous and collaborative way. Although the programme provided essential guidelines on siting work, it provided an environment where it was 'safe' to take risks and fail. By encouraging an experimental approach to making and testing work outside conventional gallery boundaries, the groups' final site-specific projections were achieved through Richard's positive attitude, considerable expertise and ability to facilitate and realise our ideas. This workshop has inspired and invigorated my practice, encouraging me to question and consider fresh ways of locating my work - Gail Flockhart

I found the workshop a very informative experience. Richard covered all the aspects of projection that I had been interested in. I enjoyed working as part of a group as we could bring together our ideas and relevant knowledge, which in turn helped me gain a wider awareness of what is involved in this type of projection as well as becoming familiar with other people and their studio practice. Being able to see our finished work in its intended environment let us see what works well and why, as well as what doesn't work well and how it can be improved - Sarah Adey

The workshop was not only an excellent opportunity to learn the technical requirements of projecting and the possibilities for the medium but also an opportunity to collaborate with other students with widely differing practices. The greatest benefit for me, came from the open brief in that it gave us freedom to experiment by playing with the effects of light, scale, image quality and timing and, more importantly, to observe the effect on our audience without the expectation of producing a well resolved outcome. I have returned to the studio determined to experiment more freely and be less self-conscious about my work. - Fiona Lovell

When I heard the project brief I realised it was a great opportunity to work towards a projection piece that could be completely different to any of the video work that I've made in the past. After discussing our ideas (Jack, Ian and myself) with Richard Milner and establishing a location to project it was clear that our piece would be set up to allow audience interaction. This prompted us to have some fun and shoot a tongue-in-cheek, pantomime style video, which would be site specific as it related to the outdoor smoking area. Being involved with outdoor projection work was greatly beneficial and I think Richard's thoughts on the connections between theatre and visual arts were very interesting. - Gareth Young

•Lecture Series



Legacies, Documents and Practices

This series was a collaboration between SPARCC, Plymouth Arts Centre and Peninsula Arts. The speakers included Faisal Abdu'Allah, Ruth Barker, David Cross and James Lingwood, a group of artists and curators who have all been involved in socially engaged practice. The series contributed to the debate on what legacies, if any, these works provided and was supported by a seminar by Stephanie Delecroix whose PhD research on the Artangel archive focuses on the ways in which these practices have been and can be documented. This series was well attended by both students and a wider public.

•Involving Students in Staff Research



Social Hacking

SPARCC (via Dr Anya Lewin) participated in the organisation of Social Hacking a series of temporary public art commissions for Plymouth by international artists' groups against a backdrop of urban regeneration. The project reflects the ways in which these changes to the city can be further influenced by creative human intervention. Over 25 students from Fine Art, Media Art and the Faculty of Technology were involved in the organization, delivery and documentation of the event and many more participated as audience members. The project was produced by KURATOR in collaboration with i-DAT and SPARCC and was funded by Arts Council England, South West and Plymouth City Council, with additional support from Deep Blue Sound, Drake Circus Shopping Centre, The Hub, Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery, Pyramid Presentations, ride cafe/bar and University of Plymouth.

With Heartfelt Gratitude for the Painless Treatment

A group of seven students worked on Dr Anya Lewin's film installation and were able to participate from pre-production to completion. The students were given the opportunity to work on a professional film shoot and to "apprentice" in the area of their interest: set design, camera or lighting. All students involved commented that it had been an extremely beneficial learning experience.

Seminar

Sarah Bennett held seminars focusing on the outcomes of her PhD research that included MA Fine Art students alongside arts and non arts professionals. The group considered ways in which site-based practices can be critically evaluated, so encouraging students to develop their own critical reflection strategies and methods.

Correspondences

Dr Karen Roulstone is currently working with a group of 2 staff and 5 students who share common critical, conceptual and philosophical underpinnings in their work. The group is working within the framework of correspondence where each participant produces an artwork in response to the work of another through consideration of the ideas positioned by the piece and the thoughts they might invoke. Central to the proposition is the idea of a fluid dynamic where possibilities for indeterminacy, correspondence and re-inscription of meaning occur through the possible dialogical tensions between works. Participants are working towards exhibitions in Plymouth and Toronto in May 2009 and the production of a publication to accompany the works.

• Documentation

Questions about documentation of art works and projects have been core to elements of the SPARCC programme as well as being a important focus of students on the Fine Art course through the newly introduced Professional Portfolio modules FIAR186, FIAR224 and FIAR355. Students have been involved in documenting the SPARCC projects, both in the execution and conceptual questions of the best way to document the events, which has helped them consider the issues in relation to their own practice.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS INVOLVED:

Over 60 students were involved in the artist labs and staff research projects while the lecture series had an average audience of 65.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS:

The collaboration with Plymouth Arts Centre has led to a number of joint seminars taking place with the MA Fine Art students in addition to opportunities for all students to actively participate in their ongoing programme of socially engaged projects. It was also beneficial in that it created a public context for SPARCC and allowed students to participate in debates relating to their studies outside of their peer group.

The artist/producer workshops were extremely successful for a number of reasons. Students enjoyed the intensive and collaborative work atmosphere and having to work to quick deadlines. (This is similar to a short professional residency.) They also benefited from the international context. It was useful to them to make work outside their own projects and the regular routine of the university. Great camaraderie was developed between students in different year groups and courses, including post-graduate and all participants were extremely dedicated – putting in long hours even though the work was not being assessed. Students were also able to get close to an artists process by helping develop the work thus linking their own experience as students to professional practice.

Involving students in staff research has been similarly fruitful with the students relishing the opportunity to participate in applied research and to work in a professional context.

Our conclusion is that these types of opportunities offer excellent educational benefit as well as concrete experience with professionals in the art field and should be integrated into the arts faculty. The Fine Art course will be developing these types of workshops as part of the curriculum.

CONTINUATION AND DISSEMINATION PLANS:

SPARCC projects were disseminated to the public as exhibitions *Social Hacking* (Plymouth), *With Heartfelt Gratitude for the Painless Treatment* (Bristol and Cardiff) and *Correspondences* (Toronto and Plymouth), in publications such as *Short Fiction* and on our website <http://www.sparcc.org.uk/>. The activities have also been featured on the websites of those who have participated in or led projects. Some URL's which feature SPARCC projects are:

<http://subprodukt.blogspot.com/2007/11/fantomat-workshop.html>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QoF6wDqydU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QoF6wDqydU>

<http://www.kurator.org/wiki/main/read/Hack+Commissions>

SPARCC is an ongoing project and more funding and partnerships are currently being sought to develop new projects.



The logo for SPARCC 2009, featuring the word 'sparcc' in a stylized, lowercase font with a red and black graphic element resembling a stylized 's' or a brushstroke to the left, and the year '2009' to the right.