

A&HP_UA_Interview_14_Aug_2018

Date: transcribed 27th August 2018
Comments: anonymised March 2021
Duration: 63.32

KEY:

Cannot decipher = (unclear + time code)

Sounds like = [s.l + time code]

I: = Interviewer

R: = Respondent.

U1, U2 = Other team members

NT1 = National Trust staff member

I: The recording device is on. I've got them both on, so hopefully they can, at least record our conversation. So, obviously I sent you that email a while ago, which you've responded to, which is brilliant, have you had a chance to have a look at the web link I sent you, about our project, I don't know whether you know about it, much about it?

R: I had a look yes, it was a few weeks ago now.

I: Okay, I'll recap you on our project then, I'll give you a little introduction to our project but first of all, before I do that, you'll be familiar with this, doing a university project, I have to just go through a consent form thing and normally, obviously I would do this, and we would do it in person and you'd sign something. So, I'm just going to do this via audio, just to say, obviously I'll give you some more information about the project and what we're doing with our material but just that you're happy for me to record this conversation as part of our research process, are you happy with that?

P: Absolutely, not a problem.

I: Okay, brilliant and that we'll obviously use ... it's part of our research data, so obviously some of this interview might end up in an article or conference presentation or quoted material. If it's lengthy quotes and things, we'll probably come back to you, to make sure that you're happy with those, is that alright?

R: That's correct.

I: Great, okay I'll just tell you a bit more about the project. So my name is [I], I'm a research associate on the Mapping Contemporary Art and the Heritage Experience project, which is led by Newcastle University by Andrew Burton, in Fine Art. But it's also a collaboration with Leeds University.

It's AHRC funded, three-year project and we're about halfway through that, at the moment. The project really has got three strands to it, the first one, which is really occupied the main part of our work so far, is about ... it's a practice-based project, so what we've actually done is to commission and present a series of new artworks in collaboration with the National Trust and the Churches Conservation Trust and English Heritage at four sites in the North East of England.

The North East of England is chosen because it's got a variety of sites, just because it's practical for our project. So those have all just come on-stream recently, over the summer and they're all on show at the moment and those close at various times in September and into the autumn. That's the main part of our project, the first part of it.

The second part is that we're then, in parallel to that, we're doing a series of focus groups and investigations into audiences, reception, consumption, understanding of those artworks that we've commissioned.

Then the third part, which this bit of research, this interview with you is really about, is this side of it where we're actually looking at ... we're mapping this contemporary art in heritage site practice, in terms of what's it looks like in the UK, at the moment. Having a little look, internationally but that's not the main part of our research.

Mainly it's looking at the UK, what's the scope of that practice now but also historically, well going back to the 1980s, 1990s, where has that emerged from, where has it come from and where do we think it might be going, in the future.

In contemporary art in heritage practice, we're talking about, as you can guess from our partners, the National Trust, English Heritage, Churches Conservation Trust, we're looking at sites which are heritage properties, some of them. Some of the like visitor ... well you've worked with the National Trust, you know, they're visitor attractions. Some of them are more ... like the churches are properties which have lost their initial use and are then coming into a new use.

Can you hear me, I'm coming up with poor connection things here?

R: Yes. I don't know if it's the same for you, your video and sound is slightly out but it makes you sound very odd, but the sound is absolutely perfect.

I: Okay, alright, well hopefully I can capture your voice okay as well. So that's what this interview is about, and this is what ... so I'm doing a series of these interviews, mostly actually by Skype or Facetime at the moment, with

curators and arts organisations, principally, who have been engaged in this field.

So, I've come to you and obviously you've got a joint role, as have some other people I'm talking to, as an artist, yourself but also as a curator and probably it's more about the curating side of it, that I am probably talking to you but it will overlap with your own work, as an artist as well and when I'm talking about our take on this arts and heritage field, it overlaps with the museum sector but we're saying, obviously there's been a lot of work with artists' interventions in museum collections, including work you've done but we're looking at those kinds of interventions outside of what you think of as a museum and more into the heritage property. But I know that they overlap massively, so we're not drawing a very clear line between those differences but maybe we can touch on that in talking to you.

So, does that make sense, and have you got any questions on what we're doing?

R: Yes. The only question I have, at the moment is, with something like the National Trust, I assume you're not dealing with landscapes, you're dealing with (unclear 00:06:03)?

I: **Yes, I mean some of those are ... so we're not dealing with parts of the Lake District or coastal places, which are part of the National Trust portfolio, we're looking at house, gardens, country, landscape, those sorts of country estates or whatever or other sorts of properties that the National Trust have but yes, it's not natural heritage so much. We're looking at historical, built heritage, designed heritage, does that make sense?**

R: Absolutely.

I: **Okay, I've got a, kind of, rough agenda of questions, topics and they're quite open. My first question is very open, so we can mix and match between these. So the first part and obviously I've done a bit of research, so I know a bit about your practice and obviously I was there as the Prejudice and Pride thing, I think we met briefly at that, recently, that conference, National Trust conference and I've looked at some of your other projects with Unravelled.**

So that was one of my principal things, but you'll probably be able to tell me about other things beyond that as well. So my first question is, an open one, which is about, can you tell me about the history of your engagement in this area of contemporary art practice, including the partnership you might have developed with the heritage or museum sector?

R: Yes, sure, yes, god, do therefore close me down, [I], if I'm not giving you what you want, I'm not going to be upset at all about that, but I've been interested in art since working with historic woodlands for quite a long time and I was feeling fairly (unclear 00:08:02) getting commissioned repeatedly, you know how it is, but it does almost feel like certain people are regularly being recommissioned.

Partly in response to that, along with [U1] and [U2], we decided that we were interested in starting an incubator for new artists and shamelessly [U2] and myself, to start bringing in ... well basically we started a new project of historic houses to allow, relatively lower in financial recommissioning to go on and as well as providing small commissions for artists, also hopefully training the artists up, into the specifics of working with historic houses, which is different to either wide use or museums.

And also trying to provide a bundle of benefits for the artists, although the commissions weren't huge, they would get free photography, we would do (unclear 00:09:21). There was a lot of the add-on's that we couldn't ... well we couldn't give them huge financial benefits, we tried as much as possible to, as we were learning, pass that information on, but also to do the sort of things, if you're giving professional photography to ten artists, it's no way reflective of their professional photography from one to another. All the things that we do, by the benefit of having a group advantage, (unclear 00:09:52).

(Unclear 00:09:54) and we did an initial project with Petra Maddock which was (unclear 00:10:04) and the scale of the thinking was incredibly small for that and then based on that, I met with [NT1] of the National Trust and we went into a three-year partnership with them, to work with two committees and one was the exhibition but with three properties.

As the scale of the project grew then, including the one with Andrew here and what I started to realise during that project and what interested me was that as soon as you get ten or 12 people responding to a property and we were really clear that we wanted people to respond to the property, rather than place their work and use the property as a backdrop for whatever they were interested in. As soon as you got ten or 12 people responding to the heritage of the site, you started to get whole interpretations of the site, coming out.

Firstly, the thing that I thought we'd struggled with using a heritage site is the group might try to get or any airtime or slip up at some point in time (unclear 00:11:29) forever more in a locked pad. So I was excited that if other historians were excited to come and help and the parity (unclear 00:11:39) were starting to really get engaged with.

I: So how was that first project funded, the Preston Manor project? Was that Arts Council or through the Museum Service or what was that?

R: Yes, well the money came from the Arts Council and then we did get sponsored for the entire (unclear 00:12:05), anyway, through sponsorship, it was a verbal thing and (unclear 00:12:16) and when they could.

I: And then it became part of the Trust New Art programme, so funded through the National Trust, is that right?

R: My god, I don't know quite what to ... you'd probably have to talk to [Name] or [NT1] about that, in fact it up to them. So although my casual answer would be yes, but the official answer is, I don't know. They would probably be the ones that would define what was in and what was out.

I: Yes, don't worry, I know it's confusing, whose contributed, which bit, I know it's a difficult thing and that's not the main focus of my interest anyway, it's just in passing but what sort of scale, those commissions, so you had ten or 12 different artists responding to the site, what was the scale of funding and do you know their commissions, was it under £5,000, over £5,000?

R: Yes, it was tiny and the first project, I think from memory, was £1,000 and then it varied between that and £2,000. So, a tiny amount of money and we were really fussed that we were asking a lot of artists ... it was up to them whether or not they wanted to apply but I was conscious that the project benefited from the artists, doing a lot more work and being able to (unclear 00:13:56), which is, kind of what I felt, as I now thought, we had to pay back as much as we could to the (unclear 00:14:03). Albeit that it wasn't necessarily financial but I think this was a huge issue with us, funding in general, it's not a unique experience for either of us but actually the people who tend not to get a good salary, tend to be the artists and as I said, I've been both a curator and an artist and I know how the numbers add up and why these things happen but I think there is some sort of issue there, that for an artist to have a living wage, I think the whole ecology of the arts environment in the UK is problematic.

I: So that was ... you've mentioned just now, did you do some sort of limited or open call or were these artists that you knew you wanted to work with, as a curator, how did that work?

R: I think certainly with the first project and this is –

I: I know it's a long time ago.

R: With the first project, yes, it's a long time ago, my memory is addled, with the first project, it was mainly artists we knew. We'd set up a small networking group in Brighton and we went out to those people. With the National Trust, we went to open calls that we published online and why (unclear 00:15:32) occurred and that was a really active decision that while it created work in terms of sifting through applications, we were getting between two and three hundred applications for each project.

One, it meant that the artists were interested in working with us but also it meant that anybody could, regardless of their level of training or experience, could be considered and I think there's an interesting balance there, that if you want a really successful ... because it's that balance isn't it? All artists go through this pressure feeling relatively unknown to getting more and more of a profile and if you want the high-profile artists, you have to call them and ask them.

Whereas with an open call, we were getting artists with less experience in the field but that was incredibly exciting because, I felt we were bringing on ... I hate it when you tell that, with all these young artists, we're bringing on talent that was good, in particular it was quite often and that really excited me and for us to say (unclear 00:17:04) to be commissioned, she's gone onto work with other

branches and she said that something that started the whole part of their career and they did ones and who may have moved on.

For artists we commissioned repeatedly, Steven Follen, we've used him in Ireland and we've used him again at [Uppark] and that was the real joy, when you've got somebody, that you enjoy working with ... that was the case with [Name] he had good, strong ideas, it was just that he wasn't sure which way he was going to go.

I: And what was the ... were National Trust, either [NT1] or the local teams at those properties, involved in the selection process for those artists?

R: Yes, we absolutely knew, and we were really clear that we weren't prepared to do that and the reason being that [U1], [U2] and I, all have a large number of years of experience in the art world and we were conscious that we were trying to put on a really good, quality art show, not necessarily a show that would appeal ... well we didn't want a show that went oh god this is really tough. We (unclear 00:18:45), we put a lot of work in and I think we had a really good discourse in the field and we absolutely gained a power of veto to the house that we selected a shortlist of artists and we ran through them with the house and explained our reasons for choosing them.

There were times when we had some quite strong discussions with the house, with their house, the appropriateness of an artist, in that environment and choosing the right person and we were fortunate that actually most of the houses we dealt with, were incredibly relaxed and trusted us but the ones where there was more of a question, we went through those conversations. I think, in the same way, if I was working in another field, I would allow other experts to come in and listen to their advice, I would be grateful to that property for trusting us to know and to do the best we could for the houses.

Is that a bit of a ramble, I was really trying ...? I absolutely respect the professionalism of the houses we worked with, but I am conscious that programming contemporary art was not something that we particularly had a huge experience of doing.

I: Yes, I was going to say, you might want to enlarge on that bit, obviously working with [NT1] and then working with those three properties and I know you've done work with National Trust since then, which we can go onto but what you learnt from that experience or what was that experience of doing that, working with that particular partner, that heritage partner like?

I mean it's interesting for me and some of these questions are about ... because how we've set up our commissioning process, working with Judith King, whose part of the project team, so a lot of experience is built into that and some of those questions are about how your processes might have differed or been similar to the route we particularly chose, obviously there are lots of routes but is there anything you wanted to say about working with the National Trust, as an experience, maybe as in

contrast to working with some of the museum environments you've worked in.

- R: Yes, well what always surprised me with how much autonomy there is in each property. So although I am grateful to obviously have a huge amount of skill and experience, they were very small seeing for a future programme. So while we would meet with [NT1], occasionally, we would very much left to deal with the management side of the project, rather than the (unclear 00:21:51). I mean this is where [NT1], being incredibly good for the Trust, that [they] had the ability,[they] had the freedom of this project and because of that things happened, with very little input and that benefits the diversity of the property.

So what, quite often and this is where the Trust, I think, (unclear 00:22:23) not joined up or (unclear 00:22:26) way of being but ... and the Trust properties are better on this ideas of consultancy model. So they are used to people parachuting into the site, to do something specific or deal with specific aspects of the site and then parachuting out. So in a way, without adding the Trust, we had a (unclear 00:22:53) of that and it worked really well, I think having worked in museums where they're used to being on one site or a small number of sites, it tends to be a much more ... I'm trying to think of the right way of putting this ... a much more involved and having top management.

So the level of chain between the people making significant decisions and the people putting stuff on the walls is geographically really close, in a way that the Trust makes it very difficult.

- I: **Yes, I see what you mean, so yes, a curator in the museum, you've got a much smaller team, they're only working with that collection, generally, whereas the National Trust have got area things and as you say, they've got national specialists and that kind of thing, is that what you mean?**

- R: Yes and also just I think it's (unclear 00:24:06) V&A, you have 500 people working at the V&A and two or three at Farley. Whereas the National Trust is such a huge organisations and so I think it's somebody who likes control, he likes to make sure that stuff is going to happen, when they expect it to happen, (control freak), it's a really different way of work. Decisions are made centrally in the Trust and then actually what's happening on the ground, geographically, they're quite distant from each other.

- I: **That was interesting and was there, I don't know, some of the projects ... I'm trying to think about the differences somehow between the museums we're with ... I mean obviously some museums are in historic buildings and they're heritage properties themselves but basically, the focus is on working with collections and objects and is that a similar approach that you took in those three National Trusts and in Preston Manor, were you getting artists to respond to the object collections or the buildings themselves or the landscapes or the narratives, maybe it's all those things?**

- R: Yes, so these are the fundamental differences and they are blurred in between that there will be ... I'm not getting the absolute category and you tend to take

objects in and divorce it from people and (unclear 00:26:04). So, if I painted a teapot for the V&A, it would come back from the collection, it would have date of manufacturing and things, whereas if I come in with my teapot that's required by the National Trust, it will usually be with (unclear 00:26:23) and it will be used in the narrative and the emotional ties that are around (unclear 00:26:31) and it will be with that, those connections of emotions and bond between people and place which is something we were really interested in when we were commissioning.

I: Because these are in-situ, well they appear to be in-situ objects, I mean they are usually, I suppose if a National Trust property has a collection, generally speaking, I'm not sure, those objects are in-situ, part of the house, as you say part of the biography of that place and its people, the people who lived there, as a home environment, the domestic environment. But I suppose they're not always and maybe also heritage properties which fall out of the National Trust, maybe appear to be full of ... or disparate objects, sometimes, which don't actually necessarily belong to that place. Sorry I'm putting ideas into your head.

R: No and I think there's no hard and fast rule, I mean (unclear 00:27:47). I mean it would be good to ... I mean it would be good to check the National Trust, but they tend to use a (unclear 00:27:56) in narratives, whereas the museum would use certain areas that would inspire a narrative. So one is emotionally dealing with (unclear 00:28:14) and you can really ... but I don't think that in any way whatsoever, it's just he was ... and it's not something that was particularly urgent (unclear 00:28:30) and the part was true, as much of my finals, we do what is there and so for me, that was due to the others.

But the history is that, traditionally I come and talk to them, (unclear 00:28:50) in a way that you (unclear 00:28:54) managed to do for that home.

I: Let's move on a bit then, obviously there's the LGBTQ, sort of, focus, I'm interested in that because as you say, these are maybe some of the hidden stories and uncomfortable histories, possibly, that come out of those properties that haven't really been explored, which are now being explored through the National Trust, National Programme, or they have been, and that conference and I'm just interested to get your take on this, about whether these are ... I think you could see ... and what I was thinking, at the Prejudice and Pride conference, I was thinking you could take it in two ways.

You're thinking yes these are new stories that have not been told and it's a celebration of those understories, but also for the National Trust, dealing with visitor numbers and membership and sustainability, is it about institutional critique and looking at these different stories and drawing them out or is about visitor numbers and thinking about pink pounds, do you know what I mean? I know I'm being a bit blunt there or these two things together, I don't know, two drivers.

R: Yes, I think that I would, with [NT1] and talk to [NT1], about this project, I detected no cynicism whatsoever in him, that this was a physical, commercial attempt to bring the pink pound in. I absolutely believe that [NT1] did this

because [they] thought it was morally the right thing to do and the appropriate thing to do and everybody will disagree, or everybody has the right to disagree, but I would argue that, I don't know, technically in history of the National Trust is not (unclear 00:31:11) to do the core work. I mean it is just an absolute shock that because of the way our society has been, with dealing with it, there was a big thing about acceptable (unclear 00:31:27).

I think (unclear 00:31:34) will look back in 50 years and be really shocked that this wasn't going on before, it's just as society moves on, we move on. I think what is going to be even more interesting (unclear 00:31:51) on a liberal turnout and the LGBT programme there, I think will be really interesting to see how that moves, whose (unclear 00:32:05) being a National Trust member and whether that changes the demographic.

I think for me and it's a really broad thing and crude term, but I think the traditional view of the Trust, as somebody who managed to give birth to this and (unclear 00:32:29). So the indication that you would have to try not to be conservative, with small devalues to be emotionally embedded in the organisation. I think it's going to be a really big change for them and I think that would ... I hope it would openly and promptly (unclear 00:32:55) a broader demographic of people to see that these are not particularly related to their lives and that they're saying they have a connection and the relationship is invested in them.

I: I mean I know that that was part of ... that year was part of the first of the national programme approaches, wasn't it? And we had this year, this women in power and I think next year, is it radical landscapes?

R: Yes.

I: So I'm just wondering, about how was that a one-off year but whether this LGBTQ programming will continue in National Trust. I mean [NT1] and various other people are on my list of people to be interviewed as well, so obviously I can talk to them directly about it, but your take on that or your understanding, will it continue and be part of the mainstream story?

R: I think [NT1], certainly says he wants it to have legacy and going back to your question, not because I was only affiliated with the National Trust but from (unclear 00:34:12). So it will remain in character and more often, these things rely on interest and focus and money to keep on happening.

So, I think it will be really interesting to see, not only whether the Trust will carry on but also as people change their ownership of the Trust or move to a different property, whether it carries on and moves around. With that, there are some properties with incredible narratives who tell you what are the right things to do, in terms of programming and there are some properties, with no heritage who were absolutely this is what we want to do.

The real thing is (unclear 00:35:07) or not, have a really strong church relevance and a really exciting curator for art. The two things were about chance, so I think it's really exciting but there's still a lot of work to be done, both in the building and

curatorial narrative, which has been quite quiet but also making all of the properties feels well connected with those communities.

I: Yes, that makes sense. Okay, let's go ... go on.

R: Is [Name] (unclear 00:35:55) one of the people that you want to interview?

I: [They aren't] specifically –

R: (Unclear 00:35:59).

I: Yes, from the University of Leicester, [they aren't] specifically but I can add [them] to that, I mean obviously it could be a huge list and it could be a shorter list, but I could speak to [them] and I've read some of ... obviously there's the publication that came out of it and various other things as well, so I have been reading some of that material.

R: Yes, okay, well do you mind if I ... the internal danger in audio recording is that I think, I don't think they would mind if they did it, because I think the difference between what people are feeling and what they're actually saying was so huge that without that, audio capture, I think it would make very, very bad, cultural decisions on what was easier to report it. (Unclear 00:37:08), you might have to wrap brackets around that.

I: Yes and I think some of that was discussed, wasn't it? At the conference, it was brought up there as well.

R: Yes.

I: I was just going to go back to another strand of your practice and interests and actually I looked at your ... it's interesting for me, looking at your ... I printed off a copy of your CV, from your website and –

R: Oh dear.

I: Yes, I know it's interesting and going back, I see that you started off, what it looks like from the CV, it started off in museum studies, you did something about museum studies and then you went on to do ceramics degree and obviously you've got this relationship between being an artist yourself and a curator.

So I'm quite interested in those, for you, those initial interest about wanting to work with heritage, history, historic collections yourself, either as an artist or as a curator and where that comes from and also what the difference might be, in terms of, as a maker or somebody working in the craft sector, as opposed to somebody working with, I don't know, film, video or fine art, you know what I mean? Those sorts of divisions, again they're all blurred categories, I don't really have divisions but whether there is something there, for you?

R: I lost you on the sound a bit there, but it's alright. That's a lot, that's a big question, let me try. Yes, I think the only thing I ... I'm not quite sure why but as an undergraduate, I just knew that after my PhD degree, I wanted to work for a museum and I don't know why, I just had a feeling I wanted to do that, but I don't enjoy being at a museum but (unclear 00:39:38). So, I worked very hard after graduating to get a job in a museum and certainly my first job at the Victoria & Albert Museum, I was putting it back to the right shape (unclear 00:39:57), it was brilliant, and I mean yes, it was just great.

Then the only thing is, I find the whole material culture, I enjoy looking at objects and understanding why they haven't aged and just really, I find that it was my thing. Then, when was it? Actually what happened was, this is all really (unclear 00:40:39), I did an MA in Museum Studies and they showed us a picture of the (unclear 00:40:48) who did (unclear 00:40:49) at the museum and he was an American and I suddenly realised that the way museums deal with history was so impartial and so vivid that I didn't really feel like I could buy into ... I felt that the way museums deal with history was (unclear 00:41:15) and I just didn't feel like that good or part of the system anymore.

So I started retraining as an artist and it was natural though and I started working with, whether you call it interventions or (unclear 00:41:37) but that kind of, I don't know, I'm doing it whether it was in museums or not, (unclear 00:41:47) antagonism at all but I was just really interested in art, how we can move museums forward to better serve the population than maybe they have historically done. That sounds really blunt and there are many people who do an incredible stuff to progress their social services project, I've not got that on where I'm leading but I would like to feel that big pushing at the back, as people move along a bit.

In terms of the division in our (unclear 00:42:35), admittedly, they're not bad or particularly interesting and are absolutely interested in what people have to say and I'm happy to draw from any of material to get those points across. I am starting to grow a beard, but I haven't yet got an attempt to gone to Wales to do work on my ceramics, maybe one day in the future. It's almost (unclear 00:43:13) but I find those livestream arts and crafts incredibly problematic and there's a lot of people to draw on those certain arguments, is perhaps not very aware I want to focus my energy.

I: **Sure, fine, good. I'm just moving on towards the second half of my questions, which are more about thinking about now, about the key opportunities or challenges or issues for artists and curators who are working with this museum, heritage organisation sector, what would you say those might be, at the moment or in the future, where do you see it going or not going?**

R: Yes, I think (unclear 00:44:19) really, it seems like we've got into a bit of a doldrums, especially the properties that have chosen to commission artists and I feel really lucky that I've been in on this during a time where there's this huge number of (unclear 00:44:38) and those people are willing to try (unclear 00:44:44) and actually I think it's an area that (unclear 00:44:51), shall we say.

I think there are various things that we can still do at these properties or as part of these properties, but I feel it's an area that has been under-theorised compared to a museum or art gallery, say, but I think there's still a lot there to discuss and share (unclear 00:45:23).

So I think one of the opportunities and also one of the challenges is how, I think this goes for all heritage, not just built heritage, it goes for museums as well, that quite often, people who want to work in the sector, do so because they have a deep love of the past and it's how to rebalance that deep love and appreciation of the past with a need and love and excitement of the present, how do you bring that and still looking after the past but making it relevant for contemporary audiences and following and reflecting contemporary society.

There are people that care for that, who will absolutely get this and will remain absolute in saying it is worth seeing but it would be less effective with everybody, so how do we ... we've already talked about a museum study of the whole thing, doing what we're talking about what we want the places to be (unclear 00:46:38) and it helps change or do we want to be small things in terms of organisation but preserve part of the aspect and how we do that.

I think the other issue is that we always get stuff like that and I think what we must do, there are a huge number of issues and so if you increase the number of entries in contemporary art programmes hugely but the (unclear 00:47:25) are programming money.

So it's how to do, I mean how (unclear 00:47:40) apology, how do we get there morally is just culture, the rewards aren't there for their work and how do (unclear 00:47:55) is unheard of, programming well and how to basically we had the advantage available at certain times.

I: That's interesting, I mean you're based in Sweden now, is that right?

R: (Unclear 00:48:18).

I: I'm just wondering whether you see, with your international head, I'm now being in a different place, whether you ... do you think this contemporary art, heritage museum thing, is it quite a UK ... does the UK have a particular focus on this practice or can you see other examples in Sweden or in other places where this sort of thing is happening?

R: Yes, I've actually ... I'm running a course next year with a group of grant graduates and working with historic towns, actually in Stockholm, to do something similar, to unravel and to train them up and (unclear 00:49:04). So there are historic properties, there are historic houses in Sweden who hold contemporary art. I would think the landscape is much more (unclear 00:49:24) the UK than I think it is, or saying that, I feel it in Sweden and that whole ... gosh it's hard to put generalisations on it. I think this works in both countries, but I think the National Trust and art and heritage, there's a few pockets of people who develop quite large portfolios in the UK over time and I think, also touch wood, (unclear 00:50:02) instinct but I do think a lot of work has been done in England and maybe (unclear 00:50:16) I think in other countries where they just work in

some more than others and they're a ... I mean there are other people like [Name] who is basically (unclear 00:50:13) a few days of work.

Castle House in Dublin are very, very contemporary art and that interested me that quite often that houses will begin to have a good size for artwork to be placed in and actually what ... basically what I'm most interested in is that dialogue between artists and the site and I'm looking at one in (unclear 00:51:12) but the one that really interests me is when you're deemed in close reading with a property and the way it can be injected in every site specific or would not have the same cultural meaning elsewhere.

I: That's interesting because that brings me onto something else, that I just picked up on, which again is a few years ago, where I think you did something, I think it was called 'Leaving Home' and it was an exhibition of contemporary art where it was exactly that issue, where it was about work that had been commissioned, I understand, for somewhere else and then how do you show it in a gallery, have you got any comments to make on that experience or idea?

R: Yes, well I just want to say, it was wildly influential and perfect in every way, no not at all, it was (unclear 00:52:06). Again, it was supposed to be an adult project, so we felt a moral ... well we wanted to do the best we could, and we answered and yes, the work was shown in a natural younger man, we thought was a really nice timely project and (unclear 00:51:29) for the artists. I think the work spoke very differently in a gallery space, to the house space and if I were to choose, if I had a choice to show one project off, I would certainly (unclear 00:52:51) where the work was culturally really ensure.

But it's that interesting and difficult one, that in the art world, most of the money happens in London and I'm sure they're all they're cracked up in London. There is nothing historical that (unclear 00:53:18) the artwork and the commercial artwork, they don't go for that, that much. So, central London has a very limited number of historic houses that programme contemporary art. Whereas in the North East and North West, there are huge number of buildings but the ... (unclear 00:53:43) contemporary art market, is very, very modern concentric, so there's a mix there.

That's what's so brilliant because actually everyone gets (unclear 00:53:59) to do, the research is there and the Art Council, if they need you as well. So it's kind of, well (unclear 00:54:09) in a way, as an artist, you need that great commission, and everyone is pleased with the work or genuinely have a reaction or a collector, but those people don't line up, if geography is involved. So that would (unclear 00:54:27) to doing the (unclear 00:54:28) at the end was to try and get the work into a certain environment.

Although the academy infrastructure of mine was more prevalent, it wouldn't be in a historic house.

I: That's interesting because that follows up as a ... I'll just tell you in a minute about the rest of our project because I think, I mean it tells in my question agenda, we've been talking for nearly an hour, I don't know

whether there is anything else you want to add in, anything else I haven't asked you about that you think is important, that you would like to say about this area of practice.

I mean obviously we can come back and talk later and hopefully you'll be involved in quite a lot.

R: I think, for me, really obviously (unclear 00:55:20) but not in this area, it's because central management say we don't charter and it's quite far way, so the property has much more freedom for creative control of diversity that there maybe would be in a lot of other organisations (unclear 00:55:42).

I: Okay, than a gallery situation?

R: Yes, or these are telling art in hospital is where it gets (unclear 00:56:00) making decisions (unclear 00:56:04) I'm up for that too, I've got clients who speak to me first.

I: And in our experience, obviously people who, National Trust staff, are very passionate about the properties they work, not just staff but volunteers as well, obviously, are very passionate, aren't they about their particular property and site and they know it, they know every stone and every tree and they've got that real ... they seem to have that real feel, obviously some people move around, as you say and that's really useful, for the growth of this practice, for those key people to move around different properties and take that knowledge with them. But yes, I think that's something we've found.

I mean we could probably wrap up the interview section here, but I could just tell you that, as I said, we're halfway through our project, so next year, although our commissions are there at the moment and finish in September, November. Next year we're doing a conference, a two-day conference here at Newcastle University, I think it's the 29-30th July next year.

We're about ... in September we'll be announcing that on our website and doing a call for papers and things. So, I mean we would hope that's something you might want to contribute to, I mean we might come back to you on that, in some other way or whether you want to respond to a call for papers and be part of that conference, would be fantastic for us.

Also just it would be my interest in your Leaving Home exhibition, is that also we're doing, in parallel, alongside the conference, we're also doing an exhibition here at the Hatton Gallery, as part of Newcastle University, about the commissions that we've done. So we're thinking through that process of obviously we've done site-specific commissions of different kinds, how do we represent them in some way or review them in some way or something in this gallery space.

So that's something that's emerged actually, a bit more strongly out of our project recently.

R: I think it's hard to do that.

I: **It would be interesting to have your take on that, when we're happening, when we're working on it. Are you happy to leave it here, Matt, [P]for now, is there anything else you wanted to say or any questions for me?**

R: No, that's great, [I] have you got everything you need from me, at the moment?

I: **I think I have, I've got to the end of my agenda, I'm aware that the sound quality has been a bit scratchy, so I'm hoping ... I've got my two recorders, I'm hoping I've captured what we've said. I've made some notes as well to match up with that. So it might be that I want to come back to you at some point and maybe clarify some points, perhaps, later, if that's alright.**

R: Of course, not a problem at all and can I say thank you for organising (unclear 00:59:11) every year, I appreciate how clear everything has been.

I: **Okay, great, thank you and I've got some of your ... the other thing I'm asking people is if there's any publications you can send me but I think actually I've got ... there were three publications to do with the Unravelled project, which are quite substantial, which I've got and I have read some of that material, which is good but if there's anything else you think of that you think I should have or look at, then please get in touch.**

R: Yes, there was a fourth annual one that came out of the first show and if you want to send me your address, I'll try and dig a copy out for you and send that over.

I: **Okay, that will be great. That's great, thanks very much, [P] t, it will be good to keep in touch anyway, I'd like to learn more about what's happening in Sweden and that project you mentioned sounds very interesting, your Stockholm, we'll follow up on that, maybe that will be something to talk about at the conference.**

R: Well hopefully. Can I just ask, [I], what's brought you to this area of investigation?

I: **To me, personally or the project?**

R: Yes.

I: **Me personally? Well my background is, I'm fairly new to the university environment, I've just actually, in the last month or so, I've just completed a PhD here at Newcastle about –**

R: Congratulations.

I: **Thank you. It's about ... I've done it part-time over a number of years, so it's about public art in Newcastle, Gateshead and about whether you can think about it in terms of a collection, how it's interpreted in an institutional way and how it's audience, so I've done quite a lot of work around that.**

But that PhD came out of, I used to work at the Arts Council office here in Newcastle in the Visual Arts team, in a little unit which was called Commissions North, at the time, which was really about developing artists, visual arts commission, artists commissions in all sorts of different environments, some of them public art, some of them were heritage, I suppose. We did an early project with the National Trust at Craggside and also it was corporate commissioning as well.

So I come from a visual arts background and originally, I was a practitioner myself but then I've moved into other things. So it's through the Arts Council, then I did a bit of freelance, consultancy and small agency stuff around artists commissions, temporary and permanent commissions around the North East.

So that's how I morphed into the university thing and then I worked with people ... I mean I'm working on this contemporary art and heritage experience project, that's my most substantial piece of work but I also work with other people in the Fine Art Department on developing and working on different AHRC bids as well. So I'm a visual arts portfolio person.

R: It sounds like a perfect fit.

I: It's great, I really love this project, I have to say, it's really good and seeing ... coming from this public art thing and how heritage ... it all overlaps and I'm fascinated by how art works, I mean what do they do and what's that process because obviously I've done that myself but somehow it's still a puzzle, I don't quite understand it from an artist point of view about what artists think they're doing in that scenario, what it means for the audiences, what are the other agendas going on.

So, that's fascinating and I've always ... my interests have always been really in arts practice that doesn't happen in the gallery sector, that happens in other sorts of environments. So yes, it's a great project for me and it's a good opportunity for me to develop writing and other sorts of things. So there will be other outputs, book chapters and articles and that kind of thing, hopefully as well.

R: Brilliant, I'm delighted for you.

I: Thank you, really nice to speak to you, [P], that's been great, thanks a lot, thanks for your contribution.

R: Thank you and good luck with the project.

I: Thank you, we'll keep in touch, thanks.

R: Thank you, bye.

I: Bye, bye.

[End of Recording]