

Institution: Arts University Bournemouth
Unit of Assessment: 34 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
Title of case study: Hard Times - photographic exhibition by Paul Wenham-Clarke, St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, 3 March – 30 June 2011
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This research impacted on two of the most important social and political issues to face western governments: joblessness and homelessness. Twenty photographic images and texts showed and described the circumstances of <i>Big Issue</i> vendors, some rough sleepers and some in temporary accommodation, trying to cope through the worst recession in decades and often feeling ostracized by society. Shown in London and Birmingham and cascaded across the media, it reached a wide audience. The impact of the exhibition and its aftermath consists in alerting and informing viewers/readers concerning the plight of joblessness and homelessness in the UK.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Paul Wenham-Clarke was the sole researcher. During the period of the research January 2008 – December 2010 he held the position of Senior Lecturer in the School of Media and Performance at Arts University Bournemouth.</p> <p>Wenham-Clarke's research took him on a journey to locations mainly hidden from public view. He researched where people slept rough or in temporary accommodation within and without cities. This was not intended as a survey and therefore the sites and individuals represented were selected with qualitative impact in mind. The research involved not only identifying appropriate locations and individuals but also importantly working to win the confidence of the subjects he intended to photograph and gaining their consent.</p> <p>The research for <i>Hard Times</i> developed from an earlier successful project: <i>When Lives Collide</i> which examined the impact of fatal car accidents on relatives of survivors. This research was commenced in 2004 and, was given financial support (£110,000) by the Green Flag motoring organisation. The images were exhibited in 2006. The project subsequently developed further and continues to be debated as well as to generate spin-off publications and events.</p> <p>http://www.whenlivescollide.co.uk/</p> <p>As with this earlier project, <i>Hard Times</i> addresses how human beings cope in extreme adversity. One of the challenging things for this research was to steer a subtle and disciplined route between the arresting image likely to have the greatest impact and therefore the greatest potential to change attitudes and the risks of the image being understood as prurient or voyeuristic. The research highlighted the fact that unemployment and rough sleeping involves people of all ages, both male and female, is an issue that is not only confined to London and it made people see and understand what it meant to individuals. The research underpinning <i>Hard Times</i> revealed the stories of <i>Big Issue</i> sellers, showed that they 'have lives' and gave them voices.</p> <p><i>Hard Times</i> involves research in the conventional sense of identifying a set of issues and responding to them in ways that are intended to move the ground of public debate. It is also, however, practice-led research involving testing out composition, medium and mode of delivery. A further aspect of the research touches on methodologies of oral history: selected quotations from interviews with the subjects accompanied the images. For example Bryan Row, having served as a gunner in the Royal Navy stated 'I have served my country yet some people still say "get a job" or "tramp". Among the important findings of the research are that selling the <i>Big Issue</i> can provide a route out of the poverty trap: Kim, who had squatted in a derelict hotel, saved the money for a deposit for a rented flat and by the time she was photographed was working as a chambermaid and studying accountancy.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>1. Wenham-Clarke, P. (2011). Project profile: <i>Hard Times</i>. <i>Image</i>. No. 413. pp. 38-42.</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

(HEI can supply on request)

2. BBC News. (2011). *Big Issue photographic exhibition celebrates 20 years.*

Available from : www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-12804251. [Accessed 29 April 2013].

3. Parkes, D. (2011). Getting to the heart of the Big Issue. *The Birmingham Post*. [online]. 15 September. Available from:

www.birminghampost.net/life-leisure-birmingham-guide/birmingham-culture/birmingham-art/2011/09/16/getting-to-the-heart-of-the-big-issue-in-homeless-photography-exhibition-65233-29421809/ [Accessed 29 April 2013].

4. BBC South Today. (2011). BBC1. 28 March. [Television]. (HEI can supply on request)

5. Mroz, A. (2011). Street life. *Times Higher Education*. 3-9 March. pp. 14-15. (HEI can supply on request)

6. The Association of Photographers. (2010). *27th Photographers awards book*. London: Association of Photographers. (Listed RF2)

4. Details of the impact

Art has been a tool in campaigns against homelessness by Shelter and other organisations (Ken Loach, *Cathy Come Home*, 1966 and *The Crisis Commission*, Somerset House March-April 2012). Peter Welch, Trustee of the Big Issue Foundation had seen Wenham-Clarke's *When Lives Collide* (2006) a photographic exhibition (see, for example, Williams, D. (2006). Horror images put road deaths in focus. *The London Evening Standard*. 5 January). As a result he asked Wenham-Clarke to undertake a series of photographs exploring the lives of *Big Issue* sellers. With the financial crash of 2007 sponsorship for the show evaporated but Wenham-Clarke decided to continue as he had become intrigued by the research questions posed: fundamentally how to do something new about the familiar problems of homelessness. Recognising that the homeless were almost invariably represented on the street, Wenham-Clarke decided to challenge the stereotypical image by treating *Big Issue* sellers as individuals who went 'home' at night. He persuaded the Trustees that *he* would decide who should be photographed and how. To this end, he went out to find the vendors in London, Wolverhampton, Bristol, Birmingham, Bath, Bournemouth, and Shrewsbury. He talked with them and invited them to participate in the project. Interviewees had to be willing to tell him about their lives and to take him to where they were living. Wenham-Clarke also researched in the *Big Issue* headquarters at Waterloo identifying individuals and patterns of experience. The underpinning research was thus essentially sociological. The research itself comprised the photographic practice and the interviews which elicited the statements that accompany the images.

Impact was registered in the fact that the research was taken up by St Martin-in- the-Fields. The church's pioneering work with homeless people dates back to the First World War when Vicar Dick Sheppard opened the doors of the church to soldiers leaving for and returning from the front. *The Big Issue* was launched on the steps of St Martin's in September 1991. St Martin's work with homeless people continues to provide specialist support for 200 homeless and vulnerable people every day and night. *Hard Times* was exhibited at St Martin's as *The Big Issue* 20th anniversary event. Guests at the opening included Jon Bird, founder of The Big Issue and actor Simon Callow. The catalogue was designed by Neil Leonard of Arts University Bournemouth which contributed half the costs of printing. Entry to the exhibition was free with visitors invited to make a donation.

The nature of the impact was specifically the consequence of the combination of photographic image and the choice of biographical details transmitted in texts incorporating the 'Subjects' own words informing viewers of the subjects' recent histories. The empathetic and insightful visual presentation of the individuals themselves raised awareness of a major and continuing social problem in an advanced western economy. It also impacted on the individuals themselves who thus became beneficiaries: it gave them a sense of empowerment to communicate beyond the street. The research brought together photographic practice and oral history and thus impacted on the following communities:

(i) the *Big Issue* sellers who were photographed and quoted and who were empowered and inspired.

(ii) the wider community of homeless and jobless for whom a powerful advocacy was made through visual and verbal media.

(iii) the general public for whom it was an illuminating and educative experience and who may, as a result, have a more accurate understanding of the problems of unemployment and homelessness

and, most importantly, the connection between them.

The impact commenced with the opening of the exhibition (3rd March 2011) and is on-going. The exhibition opened in St Martin in the Bull Ring, Birmingham (16 September 2011) and was also shown in Bournemouth Libraries (September 2012) and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery (2013). Wenham-Clarke was invited to organise a similar exhibition in Greece where homelessness has for the first time become an issue as a result of the euro crisis.

Further impact was supported through a campaign by Rewired (a creative communications agency) who conducted a PR campaign on a pro bono basis for the Big Issue as part of its charitable and corporate responsibility programme; to raise regional awareness of the Birmingham Hard Times exhibition. Coverage was secured on regional television and radio, including a ten minute interview on BBC WM; further coverage was secured in regional news websites and trade websites, and in regional print media. The PR campaign reached over 1.4 million people.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

(i) The Association of Photographers. (2010). *27th Photographers awards book*. London: Association of Photographers. pp. 126-9.

-corroborates claim for diverse media coverage: images from the exhibition attracted the highly prestigious Gold Documentary Award with free copies of the book sent to ad agencies and creatives throughout Europe.

(ii) Baty, P. (2011). Campus- Round Up. *Times Higher Education*. 3-9 March. pp.14-15.

-corroborates claim for diverse media coverage.

(iii) BBC Culture Show (2011). BBC2. 2 June. [Television].

-corroborates claim for diverse media coverage.

(iv) Briggs, J. (ed.) (2011). *Street scenes. The Photo-grapher*. Sept/Oct. pp. 26-35.

-corroborates claim for diverse media coverage; magazine for the British Institute of Professional Photographers.

(v) Burgoyne, P (ed). (2011). Editorial. *The Creative Review Photography Annual*. p. 57

- corroborates claim for diverse media coverage. The magazine has a wide circulation and is the foremost publication for the creative industries.

(vi) Corroborating statement from the Chief Executive, The Big Issue Foundation

- corroborates claims for empowerment of Big Issue sellers; advocacy to the wider community of homelessness and the jobless through visual and verbal media; public understanding of the connection between unemployment and homelessness; challenges to stereotypical images of homeless.

(vii) Corroborating statement from the Editor, Image Magazine – corroborates claim for change in public perception of homelessness; illuminating experience; challenges to stereotypical images of homelessness.

(viii) Parker, M. (2011). The Bigger Picture. *The Big Issue*. 7-13 March. pp. 14-15

- corroborates the claim that sellers were empowered and inspired and perceptions challenged.

(ix) Corroborating statement from Executive Director, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Ltd – corroborates claim for number of visitors; impact of personal quotes from the Big Issue sellers. The statement also details an unintentional legacy of expanded display space.

(x) Rewired: Case study on Hard Times (Creative communications agency)

<http://rewiredpr.com/casestudies/hard-times/#>

-corroborates claims for PR regional campaign reaching 1.4m people.