

**Beyond *The Angel of the North*:
Museology and the public art cityscape in
Newcastle-Gateshead**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which museological ‘collections thinking’ can generate new knowledge of public art’s material and cultural afterlives within a time of increased institutional and academic interest in the aftercare and everyday use of public art. Taking Newcastle-Gateshead (the home of the UK’s best-known public artwork, *The Angel of the North*) as a case study, the thesis asks: what happens if we examine the public art cityscape through the concepts and management principles applied to museum collections? How might consideration of the commonalities and tensions between museum and city-based collections offer new understandings of permanent public artworks, and what is the relevance of this for their future presentation and management? In bringing these museological paradigms to bear upon public art production this thesis generates new understandings of the character of city-based collections and the dynamics of the audience-artwork encounter as enacted within the urban cityscape.

The thesis addresses the relevance of ‘collections thinking’ to public art in four ways. Firstly, examining the temporal dimension, the Newcastle-Gateshead public art cityscape exists as an unintentional collection, one that has ‘crept up’ on the city over a 55-year trajectory of commissioning activity. Looking back into this timeline, permanent public artworks are shown as essentially time-vulnerable in both their physical materiality and their valorisation. Secondly, looking across the cityscape, a speculative typology of the city’s public artworks is presented. This suggests that the Newcastle-Gateshead collection is representative of most forms of permanent public art practice, but can also be situated within a distinctive Northern-English culture of post-industrial artistic production. Expanding further on the spatial dynamic of collections, the thesis explores the comparative value and significance of public artworks both within and outwith their relation to geographically-rooted notions of site and place. In doing so it suggests alternative ways of constructing value around public art, particularly in relation to artistic authorship and long-term ‘use-value’.

Thirdly, ‘collections thinking’ engenders an original investigation of institutional interpretive practice around public art production. This analysis shows that

Newcastle-Gateshead's public artworks are firmly mapped within an 'interpretive cartography' of artistic intention, materiality and sense of place. Finally, through an analysis of public art audience's in-situ 'arts talk' (Conner 2013) the thesis argues that public art meaning-making exists in the balance and tension between three factors: the potentialities of the artwork; audience-held domain knowledge; and crucially the specific 'in-the-moment' contexts of the encounter.

In examining the post-commissioning phase of public art production through these cycles of interpretation and audiencing, and in reevaluating the relevance and potential of museological thinking for public art practice, this thesis offers an extension to the existing interdisciplinarity of public art research and a way of rethinking the long-term management and curation of public art.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Justification and intent of this research

This research explores the legacy of public art commissioning and the ways in which museological thinking around collections and their interpretation can deepen our knowledge of the material legacy and cultural afterlives of public artworks. The research is situated in a time of increasing institutional and academic interest in the aftercare and everyday use of public art, and ongoing debates around the relative values of temporary and permanent forms of public art practice. Stimulated partly by my own past professional experience within the public art commissioning sector,¹ this study contends that ‘collections thinking’ brings a new dimension to this existing discussion by focusing attention on the ways in which permanently-sited public artworks are presented and encountered across the contemporary cityscape. This thesis argues that examining public artworks, and audiences’ experiences of them, at a ‘collection’ level contributes to a better understanding of the long-term cultural impacts of public art production and potentially, to an improved and broader use and valorisation of these artworks over time.

In 2015, the issue of public art afterlives was highlighted in a national campaign² launched by Historic England to stimulate professional and popular interest in the cultural value and material vulnerability of post-war public artworks. This project had several strands, including a major exhibition (‘Out There’ at Somerset House, London); recommendations of artworks for heritage listing; a national campaign to locate ‘lost’ public artworks; and the publication of specialist conservation guidance. Interestingly for my study, which takes Newcastle-Gateshead as its primary research site (see section 1.5), along with 41 other public artworks nationally, three sculptures

¹ Between 2003-10 I worked as Commissions Officer with Commissions North (CN) at Arts Council England North East. Established in 1999 CN brokered and supported artists’ commissions within new buildings and public spaces across the region. As part of this unit I supported the development of a portfolio of public art commissions with a range of public and private-sector organisations, including local authorities. This experience was taken forward into later freelance work with Inspire Northumberland and Newcastle-based public art consultants Grit & Pearl LLP.

² ‘Public Art (Sculpture) 1945-85: Designation, Exhibition and Guidance’ was a national project ‘to promote the value and protection of fixed sculptural artworks in the public, civic, communal and commercial domains’ (Historic England 2015).

in Newcastle-Gateshead were officially given Grade II listed status as part of Historic England's project.³ Interest in the issue of public art aftercare and conservation goes beyond just the UK. Internationally, it has been addressed in the USA's national campaign, 'Save Outdoor Sculpture!' (SOS) established in 1989 by Heritage Preservation: The National Institute for Conservation and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and more recently in leadership taken on this subject by The Getty Conservation Institute (as reported in Doss 2016b). As well as conservation concerns, the future ownership of permanent public artworks has also been raised as a key issue, as demonstrated in the vocal UK campaign formed in 2011 to prevent the sale of 'Old Flo' (Henry Moore's 1957-8 sculpture *Draped Seated Woman*) by its owner Tower Hamlets Council.⁴

This focus on the aftercare and sometimes problematic lives of public artworks after their 'unveiling' (Zebracki 2016: 80) is also an emerging theme within recent academic literature. This was demonstrated in three 2016 publications: a special edition of the international journal *Public Art Dialogue* addressing 'The Dilemma of Public Art's Permanence'; Stevens and Lossau's book *The Uses of Art in Public Space*; Cartiere and Zebracki's *The Everyday Practice of Public Art*. More recently this theme has been further developed in Zebracki and Palmer's (2018) edited volume *Public Art Encounters*. While these texts are certainly illuminating in their exploration of the afterlives of individual public artworks, including their ongoing reception and use by public audiences (a theme which is also central to my study), the potential for investigating the actual processes of audience 'meaning-making' or for framing public artworks as a 'collection', are not explicitly raised in these publications. It is in these two hitherto neglected areas of research that my introduction of collections thinking and my empirical examination of public art

³ These were: *Parsons' Polygon* (David Hamilton 1982-85); *Spiral Nebula* (Geoffrey Clarke 1962); and *Derwent Walk Express* (Andy Frost 1986) (Historic England 2016b). A smaller touring version of the 'Out There' exhibition was also shown at Bessie Surtees House, Newcastle (8 September-23 December 2016).

⁴ Stored for safe-keeping at Yorkshire Sculpture Park for many years, and the subject of protracted legal argument, in 2017 'Old Flo' was eventually returned to London. However, rather than returning to its original location on the Stifford Estate in Hackney, the sculpture was re-sited at Canary Wharf (Brown 2017).

interpretation, from both institutional and audience perspectives, seeks to make a specific contribution.

One of the reasons for this gap in current research is the way in which public art has been traditionally defined in opposition to museum practice: i.e. as art that is produced and encountered 'in public', beyond the aesthetic, curatorial and interpretive confines of the ('white cube') art gallery. It may seem paradoxical therefore to position my own investigation of public art practice in relation to museological concepts. One of the aims of this thesis is to argue that, on the contrary, by bringing museological perspectives into the public art field, new and useful insights into public artworks and their potential futures may be generated. The possibility and value for this type of cross-disciplinary research, especially in relation to interpretation and the audience experience of public art, is specifically supported by cultural geographer Tim Hall in his article *Artful Cities* (2007). Here, he notes the extensive work on audience and object interpretation and display already carried out within the museums sector but not yet drawn into public art examination. As one of the few writers to make explicit connections between these two fields,⁵ Hall's comments offer a direct stimulus for the museological orientation taken in my research study.

Following from these institutional differences, the 'collection' descriptor is not one that is commonly used in relation to public art, at least in the UK. In my early research for this study I found only five UK locations which publicly communicated their public art holdings in these terms: Cardiff, Folkestone, Glenrothes, Harlow and Milton Keynes. This concept does seem to be gaining ground at a national level however, with Historic England making specific recent reference to a national 'post-war' public art collection and Arts UK (in partnership with the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association) speaking of a national public sculpture collection that bridges museum and outdoor artworks (Art UK 2017). Claiming public art in collection terms is much

⁵ US museologist Hilde Hein also creates parallels between the museum and public art practice in her book *Thinking Museums Differently* (2006). Her argument goes in the opposite direction to my own study, positing that public art (specifically in its 'new genre' form) provides a positive role model for the development of the socially-engaged museum.

more common in North America where many cities, towns and regions promote themselves as having 'public art collections'. An internet search I conducted in 2017 found over 40 such examples in the USA, as well as 13 in Canada and 12 in Australia. Similarly, the public art literature and the sector itself rarely speaks about interpretation or interpretive practice, which are core activities in museum practice. As I found in my own professional activity within the sector, energies and resources are generally concentrated on public art *commissioning* rather than in the ongoing presentation of, or audience engagement with, public artworks post-production. As my review of the literature in Chapter Two will show, while this is a well-defined subject within museological literature, matters of interpretation have only been touched on in one or two public art-related studies.

In this thesis, I use the term public art 'audiencing' (derived from Fiske 1992; Rose 2012) to investigate audience engagement and experience as a dynamic encounter between audience and artwork. Many commentators (including: Hall & Robertson 2001; Massey & Rose 2003; Senie 2003; Knight & Senie 2012) have remarked on the continuing scarcity of research and critical literature around this subject. In the US, art historian Harriet Senie has been arguing for a better understanding of audience responses to public artworks since the early 1990s (e.g. see Senie 1993). The continuing importance of this issue is evidenced by the publication, in 2012, of a special issue of *Public Art Dialogue* which was dedicated to the subject of audience response (*Public Art Dialogue*, 2:1, March 2012). In their editors' statement for this issue, Senie and Krause Knight observe that despite the now widespread presence of public art within the contemporary cityscape, we still have very little understanding of how public artworks are 'received' by their audiences, 'initially, as well as over time' (Knight & Senie, 2012: 1). Perhaps in response to these earlier calls, there has been a growth in academic interest in the subject of public art audiencing in recent years, with Quentin Stevens (see Stevens 2012; 2015; Stevens & Lossau 2015; Stevens & Franck 2016) and Martin Zebracki (see Zebracki 2012; 2015; 2016; Cartiere & Zebracki 2016; Zebracki & Palmer 2018) being particularly active in this area. Most of this writing has concentrated on individual artwork case studies (often of more controversial artworks) rather on public art audiencing at a city-wide collection level, as offered in my own study. There has also been a stronger focus in this new

literature on ergonomic and embodied encounters with public artworks rather than on audience interpretation and meaning-making *per se*.

Having set out my justification and intentions for this research, this introduction chapter now sets out a definition of the type of public art focused on in this study and explains the reasons for locating the research in Newcastle-Gateshead. The chapter then proceeds to an introduction to the key museological concepts that inform my investigation, further outlining the significance of my study to the field. It concludes by formally setting out the study's Aims and Objectives and the organisational structure of the overall thesis.

1.2 Definition of 'public art' used in this study

While the practice of commissioning civic public statues and memorials has a much longer history, the term 'public art' or 'art in public' was first introduced in the 1960s. In the UK the first formal use of the term has been traced to John Willett's 1967 study of the visual arts in Liverpool, *Art in the City* (Cartiere & Willis 2008; Miles 1997). In the same year, a new fund for public art commissions was introduced by the US National Endowment for the Arts (Miles 2008). Initially, mainly used in relation to outdoor sculpture and architecture-based artworks, contemporary public art has since evolved to cover an increasingly broad range of artistic practice. Reflecting on current terminology, Cartiere (2016) identifies no less than fifty potential forms and alternative terms for 'public art':

Public sculpture, art in the public realm, social practice (SoPra; social practitioners), socially engaged, relational aesthetics, relational art, intervention(ist), situationist, community based, grassroots, new genre, participatory, dialogical (dialectic), **art in public spaces, public art architectures**, spatial relations, eco art, **environmental art, land art, site works, environmental works**, installation, performative, social exchange, collaborative/cooperative, cultural exchange, cultural production (cultural producers), experiential, time based, durational, community engaged, social

ritual, expanded practice, viewer directed experience, temporal work, monument and counter- monument, **memorial, site specific, place specific, commemorative**, social architecture, impermanent art actions, placemaking, space conversion, activist art, labor based practice, happenings, social cooperation, art in social contexts ... and public art (*ibid*: 457, my emphasis).

Cartiere's typology represents a rich mix of practice, encompassing commissioned and material forms of public art with temporary, performative, socially-engaged and less officially-sanctioned artist-generated public realm activities. However, in exploring the long-term physical legacy and cultural impacts of public art production, it is the more permanent material forms of public art practice (highlighted in bold in this quotation from Cartiere) that are the focus of my own research investigation. Concentrating on this narrower range of practice, my study follows a definition of public art that is close to that set out by Historic England in its 2016 guide, *Post-War Public Art: Protection, Care and Conservation*:

Public art is defined here as fixed artworks which members of the public are able to access and appreciate. Works may be sited in the public, civic, communal or commercial domain, in semi-public or privately owned public space, or within public, civic or institutional buildings. Artworks which form part of the structure or decoration of buildings may also be categorised as public art (Franklin 2016).

'Fixed' in Franklin's definition connotes material artworks which have a permanent physical presence (although, as we shall see in later chapters of this thesis, this permanency may be more of a presumption than a reality). As outlined here and as my discussion of findings in Chapter Four and Five will show, this narrower focus still encompasses a diverse range of art forms and artwork settings.

1.3 Key museological concepts of collection and interpretation

The concepts of 'collection' and 'interpretation' are considered together in this thesis to focus attention on the aftercare and afterlife of public artworks. These are long-term and legacy aspects of public art practice that have historically been under-resourced and overlooked within the sector, which is primarily focused on public art production and advocacy work. While concepts of collection and interpretation and their relevance to the public art field will be discussed in more depth in my literature review in Chapter Two and in subsequent discussion chapters, I introduce them briefly here to indicate the ways in which these key concepts, as drawn from the museological literature, are employed in this thesis.

1.3.1 Collections and collecting

While collections and collecting are part of a broad social practice (Ambrose & Paine 2012; Elsner & Cardinal 1994; Martin 1999) and are part of a wider field that encompasses the libraries and archives sectors, they are also fundamentally associated with museums and professional curatorial activity. The museum is commonly seen as the pinnacle of the collection concept. In exploring the notion of collection in the context of permanent forms of public art, this thesis draws strongly on understandings of collections and collecting presented by the influential museologist Susan Pearce. Pearce has written on this subject since the 1990s and was one of the first theorists to propose that museum collections, as well as individual museum objects, were valid entities for scholarship in their own right (Pearce 1998).

Going back to the etymology of the word 'collection' takes us to the fundamental idea of 'a gathering together' of things or objects and the way this grouping might be seen 'as a whole'.⁶ This understanding is at the basis of Pearce's own conceptualisation where she speaks of the collection as being an intentional assemblage which in some way becomes 'more than the sum of its parts' (Pearce 1992: 7). Museum

⁶ Source: <http://etymonline.com>

collections contain all sorts of material objects, and these objects enter the collection through many different routes. Collections are often built 'in fits and starts' and via multiple acquisition relationships (bequests, donations, loans and acquisitions), all bringing their own sets of constraints and obligations (*ibid*: 120-21). Collections may be scattered among other objects or occupy their own designated space; they may be large and important or small and disorganised (Pearce 1995: 27). Collecting activity is often purposeful and sometimes systematic but Pearce suggests that collections can also 'creep up on people unawares' (1992: 49). As she later states: 'Objects [...] may spend time as part of a miscellaneous [...] accumulation before their potential collection-hood is perceived' (1994: 21). Here, we might think of collections as being on a scale from the 'proto' and 'in-the-making' to the purposeful and established, the latter usually being guided by formal collections policies and nationally-recognised management protocols. In applying museological thinking in my own study based in Newcastle-Gateshead, it is public art's potential for collection-hood, rather than its current management as a formally-conceived public art collection, that is the core subject of discussion.

Pearce (1992; 2004) writes that all collections, whether organised through traditional disciplinary strands or in their more raw and unpackaged form, have their own characteristic shape and growth patterns. While the collection's outer shape is tangible and visible (in the collected objects and their display), its inner pattern or history is largely hidden. For Pearce, to understand a collection we need to examine both aspects (2004: 3). Importantly, Pearce writes that in becoming part of a collection, objects can be said to make a crucial transition from their ordinary and 'secular' state as objects in circulation and use, to the 'sacred' and durable state of the collected object (1992: 66; 128). Once in a collection, objects are not only safely preserved and conserved, they also gain new cultural status as representative objects, a selected example of a specific category of things acquired for the collection on the basis of their 'perceived' aesthetic, historic or scientific value and significance (*ibid*: 7). Drawing from Pearce's work, we can say that any collection has: a unique biography – in terms of the way it has been accumulated, why and by whom; a particularity of content – in terms of the objects it contains; a specific spatial organisation – in terms of its physical arrangement and presentation; and a cultural value – generated and expressed through processes of selection, categorisation and

object care. It is a consideration of these four core collection characteristics and questions arising from these in relation to the particularity of Newcastle-Gateshead's public art cityscape that forms the basis of discussion in this thesis.

1.3.2 Interpretation and interpretive practice

For the philosopher Stephen Davies, interpretation is a 'perennial human occupation', it is what we do when the significance or meaning of an object or external phenomena is not immediately obvious to us (Davies 2006: 109). This applies of course to a wide range of experiences and objects but is particularly important in relation to works of art. While on its own, interpretability is not a 'sufficient condition' (*ibid*: 26) for something being categorised as 'Art', interpretation is a vital element within our conception of something as an artwork. As Meszaros et al. (2011: 35) write: 'Interpretation [...] is integral to the understanding of art. In the postmodern milieu, the "artness" of art resides just as much in its interpretability as it does in the ontology or physicality of the object'. Whitehead (2012) takes a similar view, when he argues that it is the various interpretive practices of the museum/gallery, its acts of 'differentiation, evaluation and narrative' in relation to collections, displays and exhibitions, that in effect *produce* the artwork (*ibid*: 11).

As used within the art museum/gallery, the term 'interpretation' can be considered in three aspects (see Fig.1.1). First, and to take the narrowest conception, it is the mix of interpretive technologies, texts and activities ('textual' aspect) that accompany and contribute to an exhibition or display (aspect A). Typically, in an art gallery context, these include resources such as explanatory wall panels, visual timelines, object labels, interactive and digital displays, and visitor-held audio and printed guides. Curator-led exhibition talks and tours, and active use of gallery custodians as informal exhibition guides may also be included as forms of 'live' interpretation. Over the last decade, art museums have been increasingly interested in expanding their interpretive offer, leading to a proliferation of new experimental projects and programmes (e.g. as explored in Farnell 2015).

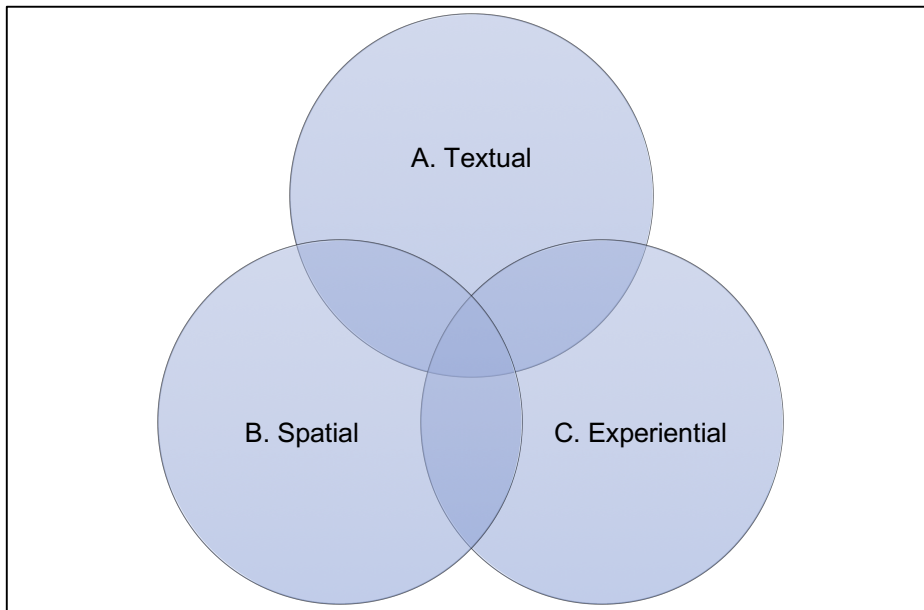


Figure 1-1: Three interlocking aspects of museum 'interpretation'

For some museum theorists, 'interpretation' is more widely defined. For Fritsch (2011) and Whitehead (2012) 'interpretation' is a process that is intrinsic across the whole museum experience. Interpretation is 'spatial' as well as textual (aspect B, Fig. 1.1). It is not just the label on the wall, but present within the overall design of the exhibition, the architectural layout of the museum, in the museum's institutional structures, and the organisation of its object collections. As Whitehead writes:

Meaning is worked out by curators, at least for themselves and consciously or not, through the interrelation of various media, from the architectural and decorative manipulation of space, ordering and placing of objects, the appearance, context and content of text panels, the design or absence of furniture and also the curatorial act of actually imagining visitors (2011: 55).

These are the frameworks through which the audience/visitor experience of a museum encounter is shaped. However, as Hooper-Greenhill (2000b) points out, this is not a one-way 'transmission' model of communication. Instead, interpretation or museum 'meaning-making' is 'experiential' (aspect C, Fig 1.1): it is about individual visitor engagement and the variability of these personal encounters.

Following this museological line of thinking and applying it to the field of public art, my study therefore employs a multifaceted definition of 'interpretation' that encompasses the textual, spatial and experiential aspects just outlined. For clarity in this thesis, I separate my own usage of the word 'interpretation' to refer specifically to institutional interpretive practices and resources, (i.e. as generated by public art curators, institutional commissioners and programme managers). This aspect forms the main subject of discussion in Chapter Six. The 'experiential' aspect of interpretation, i.e. the dynamic of the artwork encounter and the 'meaning-making' activity enacted by audiences themselves, is explored under the broader term 'audiencing' in Chapter Seven.

1.4 'Museum' and 'heritage' collections: Two paradigms considered

While drawing substantially on museological theory, this study recognises that the museum is only one collection paradigm within which the subject of public art's afterlives might be framed. As suggested in the recent campaign on public art designation initiated by Historic England (a project that is referenced at several points within this thesis), public artworks and their present realities and potential futures might also be usefully examined from a heritage perspective. Indeed 'heritage' is a very broad categorisation which itself (in terms of tangible heritage) encompasses museum-based collections (UNESCO list of cultural heritage types, cited by Harrison 2010: 12).

Most relevantly in terms of my own study, 'heritage' is an orientation which seems more capable of conceptualising dispersed and in-situ forms of collection, including urban environments, than museological models. In recent decades however, the concept of the physical museum has also expanded and now encompasses open-air museums and place-based collections. Within this the 'ecomuseum' offers a specifically hybrid heritage-museum model. As defined by Davis (2011), the 'ecomuseum' denotes a fragmented and dispersed form of collection, linking and

preserving a whole cultural milieu, environment, and (tangible and intangible) heritage of a given community.

As in the museum, the heritage paradigm is also fundamentally concerned with conservation issues and with the thorny question of cultural valorisation. Issues around systems of value and significance assessment, on who holds the power to choose what to conserve and what not to conserve, are important and shared subjects of debate across both the heritage and the museum sectors. Particularly highlighted in these debates, is the apparent conflict between expert knowledge and practice and the more fluid and experiential social values that might be attached to objects, sites, and places by individuals and communities (Jones 2017). As Jones points out, while aspirations to address and be inclusive of social value are often written into heritage policies, actual engagement with communities on this subject is rare in practice (*ibid*: 24). This question of the cultural valorisation of public artworks is a theme that is threaded throughout much of my thesis discussion. More specifically, my inclusion of audience-based public art research methods within my own study (in this case through the walking interview method) is a deliberate attempt to foreground this question of social value.

Whilst recognising ‘museum’ and ‘heritage’ as increasingly convergent labels three key differences can be noted which have influenced my own adherence to ‘museological’ (as oppose to directly ‘heritage’) lines of thinking within this thesis. The first of these rests on my specific interest in exploring public artworks in their role as ‘Art’ objects. Drawing from my own professional experience, it is this ‘Art’ framing which is most often lost within the institutional rhetoric around public art production, which more often focuses on instrumentalist agendas (especially public art’s contributions to regeneration, place-making and wellbeing). While (as this thesis itself strongly emphasises) artworks are encountered in many environments, not just within the art gallery or museum, it is from within the institutional construct of the museum that the categorisation of an object as ‘Art’ is largely produced and rehearsed (Whitehead 2012). Following from this, it is within the museum (and the museological literature) that most knowledge and expertise on art-based interpretative practice and

on the processes of the audience-artwork encounter and aesthetic engagement is situated.

Secondly, museological preservation approaches are better matched to the nature of public artworks as 'Art', than are heritage-based conservation philosophies. As Douglas-Jones et al. (2016) state, within the heritage paradigm material decay is often perceived as a sign of authenticity, and as a positive aspect of an historic building's or heritage site's aesthetic appeal (*ibid*: 825). By contrast, the museum environment is specifically designed to protect its collections from ageing and decay. While there may be exceptions, e.g. in terms of historical art objects which already bear the marks of time, or in relation to intentionally ephemeral artworks, the aim of the museum is usually to present the artwork in its original state as created by the artist (Wharton 2005). It is in this relationship that an authentic experience of the artwork is usually conceptualised.

Thirdly, 'heritage' can be viewed as a reactive paradigm, a process brought into play only when cultural objects and practices are perceived to be under threat or 'at risk'. It is this argument and language that Historic England has applied in its own post-war public art heritage listing campaign. Although preserved by being brought into a collection, museum objects are not necessarily collected because they are 'at risk'. In this way, the collection concept would seem to offer a broader opportunity for public art's futures than heritage mechanisms. Additionally, as pointed to by Knell (2004), museums may have a more dynamic relation to their collections and to potential deaccessioning than is enacted within the heritage sector, at least in terms of sites, buildings and objects that obtain official 'listed' status. While heritage listing offers a degree of material and cultural protection for a limited selection of the most 'significant' or vulnerable objects, considering public art in relation to the museum collection dynamic seems to be a more proactive and productive route for thinking about the cultural afterlives of a wider constituency of public artworks.

1.5 The research setting: Newcastle-Gateshead 1960-2015

Newcastle-Gateshead, the research site chosen for this study, holds a significant number of permanent public artworks accumulated as a legacy of more than fifty years of public art commissioning. For external publics and academic audiences, the picture of public art in Newcastle-Gateshead has been dominated by the presence and perceived impacts of *The Angel of the North*, Antony Gormley's landmark sculpture situated beside the A1 approach to Gateshead. Not only visually prominent within the immediate landscape, *The Angel of the North* also has a high profile nationally, with a status as possibly the 'most instantly recognizable modern artwork in Britain' (Cameron & Coaffee 2005). During the 20 years since its completion in 1998, *The Angel* has regularly featured in national media lists of the 'Top Ten' public artworks⁷ and UK landmarks, while its physical scale and sense of ambition is used as a reference point for newer public sculptures and commission proposals (e.g. by Harris 2009). However, as my research shows, Newcastle-Gateshead also contains some 200 other permanently-sited artworks. It is this wider and lesser-known Newcastle-Gateshead public art cityscape, *beyond The Angel*, that is the field of investigation in my study. Brought together, these artworks form a representative typology of permanent public art practice: from landmark artworks (*The Angel of the North*) to smaller scale sculpture, murals, memorials, architectural interventions and artist-designed urban realm schemes. These afforded a scale, breadth and richness of public art content that provided fertile ground for my research.

As will be explored in Chapter Four, Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead have independent and contrasting local public art histories. Situated respectively on the north and south banks of the River Tyne in North East England, Newcastle and Gateshead are separate local authority areas and are regarded by many residents as two distinct places. Nevertheless, since the early 2000s, the two centres have frequently been conjoined under the place label 'NewcastleGateshead'. Rather than being an official geographic designation, NewcastleGateshead represents a

⁷ E.g. Moore, R. (2010) 'The ten best public works of art', *The Observer*, 18 April [Online], available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2010/apr/18/10-best-public-artworks-moore>; Gladwell, A. (2017) 'The landmarks that mean you're nearly home', BBC [Online], available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-40485543>.

'symbolic marriage' or 'relational space' created between the two local authorities (Pasquinelli 2014). First invented to promote the councils' joint bid for the 2008 European Capital of Culture, 'NewcastleGateshead' is now an established cultural destination brand. Reflecting this 'symbolic marriage' but to maintain some independence from its directly promotional use by NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI), in this thesis I use a hyphenated version, 'Newcastle-Gateshead', as my research site descriptor. It should also be noted that when using the phrases 'this city' or 'the city', within this thesis, these encompass both Newcastle *and* Gateshead.

In terms of timescale, the six-decade period selected for this study, 1960-2015, reflects Newcastle-Gateshead's specific history of contemporary public art commissioning. This is slightly different from the national 'post-war' public art timeframe (1945-1995) used by Historic England (as set out in Pearson 2016). In their survey volume for the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, which acted as an early resource for framing my research, Usherwood et al. (2000) do not list any Newcastle-Gateshead artworks originated between 1945-1960. Hence the later starting point for my study. Similarly, with the city's most famous public artwork, *The Angel of the North* being installed in 1998, and in consideration of the many public art commissions that have followed this, 1995 would have been an inappropriate cut-off point for this research.

1.6 Aims and objectives

The core aim of this study is summarised in my research question which asks, 'What new insights are produced in applying museological understandings of 'Collection' and 'Interpretation' to the field of public art, and what might these insights bring to scholarship and practice?' Following from this question the project was guided by five main aims and sets of research objectives:

Aim 1: Explore how museological theories and concepts of collection and interpretation relate to the situated context of public art.

- Objective 1.1** Establish the key characteristics of a 'collection' in museological terms.
- Objective 1.2** Critically assess these characteristics in terms of their relevance to public art.
- Objective 1.3** Examine the relevance of museological theory and models of aesthetic experience to the situated practice of public art.

Aim 2: Examine and characterise the public art cityscape of Newcastle-Gateshead as a form of 'collection'

- Objective 2.1** Map and examine the range and character of public art objects present within Newcastle-Gateshead.
- Objective 2.2** Explore the historical processes through which this public art cityscape has been created.

Aim 3: Investigate institutional public art interpretation practice in Newcastle-Gateshead.

- Objective 3.1** Examine the local collection and interpretation contexts and practices through which this public art cityscape is currently presented.
- Objective 3.2** Analyze the institutional interpretative frames and discourses that are represented and foregrounded within these practices.

Aim 4: Explore the way in which Newcastle-Gateshead's public art collection is encountered by its public audiences.

- Objective 4.1** Analyze the audience behaviors that are represented and foregrounded within these encounters.

Objective 4.2 Analyze the meaning-making strategies that are represented and foregrounded within these encounters.

Aim 5: Assess the potentials and limitations of collection-based approach to public art presentation and set out the implications for scholarship, public art and collection practice.

Objective 5.1 Apply analysis from Aims 1-4 to assess the value and implications of a future collection based approach to public art presentation in Newcastle-Gateshead.

Objective 5.2 Apply analysis from Aims 1-4 to assess the value and implications of applying museological theory to the investigation of public art practice more broadly.

Objective 5.3 Propose conclusions and outline a plan for possible future research.

In answering my research question and delivering on these individual objectives my investigation into the material and cultural afterlives of public artworks takes a multi-disciplinary approach. Designed around a visual enquiry methodology (e.g. as elaborated by Rose 2012 and Emmison & Smith 2000:2012), my study incorporates an assembly of disciplinary perspectives and research methods drawn variously from art history, cultural geography, museology and ethnography.

1.7 Thesis organisation

This thesis is organised in eight chapters, starting with this introduction. Chapter Two provides a critical discussion of the literature and theoretical context for the study. Drawing on relevant museological literature, it introduces the study's two key themes – collection and interpretation – demonstrating how and to what extent these concepts have been the subject of exploration within the public art field. Discussion of relevant literature is developed further in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. Having introduced the main theoretical concepts and made the case for applying

these to public art practice, Chapter Three then describes the methodology driving the empirical investigations undertaken during this research study. This includes an in-depth discussion of my approach to data gathering through audience walking interviews (one of the more novel research methods used within this project), the processes used in the qualitative analysis of my research data, and the inherent biases and limitations of the approaches taken.

Chapters Four to Seven contain the discussion of the main findings from my study, making an original contribution to the research field set out in this Introduction chapter and in the literature review. The first two chapters consider the Newcastle-Gateshead public cityscape as examined through the concept of a collection. Taking my lead from Susan Pearce's seminal writing in this field, these two chapters consider public art in the city through two key dimensions: 'collection time' and 'collection space'. Focusing on this first axis, Chapter Four opens the discussion by presenting a chronological account of the process of public art acquisition and accumulation in Newcastle-Gateshead, between 1960-2015, setting this against wider UK and international developments in (permanently-sited) public art practice over this period. Chapter Five continues the analysis by examining the topographical arrangement and typology of public art objects contained within the current cityscape. Exploring questions of collection value and site-specificity it considers the extent to which this public art typology is unique to this city or how far it might be viewed as a differently representative form of public art collection. Having examined the physical and visual character of the public art landscape at the heart of this study, Chapter Six goes on to consider the institutionally-produced interpretive framings through which these artworks are publicly presented. Chapter Seven then switches the viewpoint to look at the reception and interpretation of the city's public artworks from the audience perspective, thus completing the circle of the three-part visual enquiry methodology set out in Chapter Three.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by drawing together issues and overarching themes from the object-institution-audience perspectives examined in the preceding discussion chapters. It reviews the main insights gained from the research and explores their potential implications for both public art practice and existing collection,

interpretation and object-audience encounter (audiencing) theory. It explains how the study's main aim and objectives have been achieved, reflects on the study's limitations and methodology, and concludes this thesis by offering my suggestions of useful avenues for future research.

Chapter 2. Literature and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

Collection and interpretation are core concepts for this research study. Brought together in this thesis, these concepts focus new attention on the post-commissioning legacy and cultural afterlives of public artworks. To provide a critical context for my study, this chapter examines how matters of collection and interpretation have been explored within both museology and the public art field. It identifies areas of crossover between these two sets of literature and points to the gaps in existing research on public art to which this thesis aims to offer an original contribution. In doing so, it builds on the introduction to the key concepts and terms already set out in Chapter One.

Collections and collecting, interpretation and the art 'experience', and of course public art itself, all have extensive literatures of their own. This review is therefore highly selective, focusing on specific issues and theoretical models that have informed and helped shape my project methodology and the discussion of research findings contained in my later chapters. This review is organised in three parts. In the first (section 2.2), I review existing writing on the material and cultural afterlives of public artworks, looking specifically at issues of physical permanence, interpretive practices and public art audiencing. This draws on studies undertaken in the UK, in Europe and the USA. Section 2.3 expands on my examination of the public art literature to consider how audiencing has been examined in the museological context. Here, I focus on hermeneutic theory and thinking around aesthetic experience and the interpretive encounter, drawing on influential models of museum audiencing developed by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), Falk and Dierking (1992) and Bitgood (2013). Understandings of the object-audience encounter examined in this section feed into the discussion of my research findings on public art audiencing explored in Chapter Seven. The third and final section of my review examines how the concept of collection has so far been theorised in relation to public art practice, going on to highlight the areas where 'collections thinking' can generate new insights into the long-term material and cultural impacts of public art production.

2.2 The material and cultural afterlives of public artworks

2.2.1 The question of public art's permanence

Artwork longevity and physical permanence are problematic issues within the public art field, at least in relation to fixed (as opposed to temporary) public artworks. These are concerns that have been recently foregrounded as part of Historic England's 'Public Art (Sculpture) 1945-85: Designation, Exhibition and Guidance' project (Historic England 2015) and in the journal Public Art Dialogue's special issue, *The Dilemma of Public Art's Permanence* (2016). As this journal's Editor states:

Public art is not [...] forever. Although commonly considered in terms of the space it occupies and the place it defines, issues of duration and impermanence, of change and instability, are also key factors in thinking about public art [...] its very designation as public art exposes it to the processual conditions and variable circumstances of public places and space, audiences, and duration (Doss 2016a: 1-2).

As pointed out by Doss, public artworks are part of an unstable cityscape. They may be physically fixed in space but they are also processual objects, subject to the material and social effects of time. As sited objects, the significance of a public artworks are not static or singular but constantly in flux as the cityscape morphs and changes around them (Knight 2008: 123). The original context for the commissioning and siting of an artwork can be lost as earlier urban developments are replaced with new schemes (Doherty 2016; Franklin 2016). Meanwhile, over time, public artworks can simply become forgotten and ignored, slipping invisibly (Senie 2003a: 185) into the general everyday activity and visual confusion of the cityscape.

So-called permanent public artworks are not only vulnerable to these changing physical circumstances, but also to altering perceptions of cultural value and the material threats of vandalism, removal, relocation and destruction (Doss 2016a; 2016b). Weathering, pollution, accidental damage, inappropriate conservation methods and theft⁸ are also noted as specific threats to the longevity of public artworks (Franklin 2016: 8). An artwork's permanence relies not just on its material robustness (a requirement that is commonly built into public art commission briefs), but on 'the degrees of responsibility that different publics are willing to extend, and sustain, on that art's behalf' (Doss 2016a: 419).

Framing these responsibilities within a heritage conservation agenda, Historic England (HE) has advised that public artworks' material vulnerability can be mitigated by regular condition checks, good asset management plans and timely remedial action taken by public art's custodians (Franklin 2016). Taking a culturally valorised approach, HE proposes that formal heritage 'listing' provides a level of physical protection (from removal or decommissioning) for the most interesting and significant public artworks.⁹ As Franklin writes in the guidance produced for HE: 'Listing marks and celebrates the "special architectural or historic interest" of the best of our public art and brings it under the consideration of the planning system, so that it can be protected for future generations' (*ibid*: 13). This type of cultural protection is also argued for by Bogart (2016). Taking a pedagogical view of the value of public artworks she asserts that once accepted into a collection, public artworks should

⁸ Doss (2016b) describes public art theft as a form of 'treasure-making' (*ibid*: 405) noting how the theft of public artworks (particularly bronzes) has increased as the monetary value of metals has soared in recent years. She reports that in the UK theft of metal-based public artworks increased 500% between 2006-09 (*ibid*: 406). She cites several UK examples of this phenomenon: *Reclining Figure* (Henry Moore 1969-70) stolen from grounds of HM Estate and presumed destroyed for metal theft in 2005; *Three Watchers* (Lynn Chadwick, 1960) stolen from Roehampton University; *Two Forms* (Barbara Hepworth, 1970) stolen from Dulwich Park, London.

⁹ Or at least those artworks that fall into its post-war timeframe and definition of historic or post-war public art. To qualify for listing on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) an artwork must have been in-situ for at least 30 years and be of special 'architectural or historic interest' e.g. in terms of its aesthetic, material or technical characteristics, importance in terms of an artist's oeuvre, or its 'capacity to illustrate significant historical, social or cultural developments' (Franklin 2016: 13).

always be preserved for 'public view', even if their subject matter or symbolism becomes controversial or unpopular:¹⁰

notions of aesthetic quality should not determine the importance or worthiness of the sculpture [...] Neither, however, should its political palatability or status as a living civic statement [...] The artifact as embodiment of multiple histories [...] both positive and negative, has much to teach people and should not be dismissed or censored (Bogart 2016: 143).

Bogart is especially critical of projects where local politicians claim public support for artwork decommissioning. For her, permanent public artworks should not be regarded as an 'ephemeral contemporary art phenomenon' whose fate can be decided by an imagined 'community' (*ibid*). Doss (2016b) suggests that consciously-inflicted material threats (artwork defacement and wilful destruction) and the removal of public artworks can be seen as acts of cultural and 'symbolic vandalism'. This is something that typically may happen when artworks become symbolic 'of disputed narratives of identity, ownership, legitimacy, belonging, or control' (*ibid*: 409) or when they are deemed 'offensive' in some other physical or aesthetic way e.g. due to physical obtrusiveness, outmoded style or subject matter (*ibid*: 414). Recalling examples of the destruction of national and civic monuments,¹¹ Doss notes that such vandalism may be enacted both by official (state) bodies and by individuals or protest communities. Such acts have also been directed at more contemporary public artworks, the most infamous case being Richard Serra's 1981 sculpture *Tilted Arc* sited in Federal Plaza, Manhattan. (The sculpture was cut up and removed in 1989.) Calls for this artwork's removal came from two publics: those that found the artwork 'ugly, intimidating, and inconvenient'; and those who used *Tilted Arc* as a focus for a

¹⁰ Bogart's article draws on a case study concerning the politically controversial New York City statue and fountain, *Civic Virtue* (Frederick MacMonnies, installed in 1922). In recent years, there have been several examples of UK campaigns to decommission contentious historical public sculptures especially statues with negative political connotations. The most notable of these was the 2016 student-led 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign calling for the removal of the Cecil Rhodes statue owned by Oriel College, Oxford (see newspaper reports by Scott 2016; Rawlinson 2016).

¹¹ Doss's examples include the destruction of Saddam Hussein statues during the 2003 Iraq War and popular acts of protest against Confederate Monuments in southern US states (Doss 2016b).

politically-motivated campaign against US state art funding (Doss 2016b: 414). (A full account of the '*Tilted Arc* Controversy' is given in Senie 2002.)

Whilst this removal and destruction of public artworks is a concern for some public art professionals and commentators, for others, the discourse of 'forever' preservation (e.g. as promoted by HE's public art 'listing' campaign) is part of a retrograde paradigm. Curator Claire Doherty (2016: 15) has called specifically for a 'shake up' in notions of permanency and the life expectancy of public artworks. She argues that the valorisation of long-term durability is misplaced and that artworks of a limited timescale can have greater long-term cultural impact than permanently-sited works (Doherty 2016: 15).¹² With capacity and funding for ongoing care and maintenance of physical public artworks being a key issue, especially for increasingly cash-strapped local authorities, Doherty suggests that the lifespan of existing artworks could also be legitimately reviewed (*ibid*: 11).

Although seen as a last resort in terms of artwork preservation, the possibility of public artwork relocation is an approach that has also been recognised and supported by Historic England. Franklin (2016) gives examples where the relocation of post-war public artworks has been negotiated as part of site redevelopment programmes or when (potentially steal-able) artworks have become too valuable to remain on open display within the public realm.¹³ In addition to facilitating preservation, physical relocation has also been posited as a strategy to both circumvent protest around problematic artworks and to refresh their contemporary interest and relevance. Doss (2016b) cites Memento Park in Budapest (also known

¹² Doherty's curatorial work with durational public art practice echoes a much earlier call for a 'more passionate commitment to the temporary' urged by Patricia Phillips (1989: 297). This approach was specifically foregrounded in Doherty's New Zealand project 'One Day Sculpture' (2008-09), an extended public art exhibition where 20, 24-hour-long sculptures were installed in a number of different locations over a nine-month period (see Doherty & Cross 2009).

¹³ Examples given are: *Fleet Mural* (Dorothy Annan, 1960, Fleet Building, London). Listed Grade II in 2011 in advance of building's redevelopment the mural was relocated and reinstalled in its original sequence in the Barbican in 2013, with support of City of London Corporation, English Heritage and the 20th Century Society; *Family Group* (Henry Moore 1948-9), originally sited at the entrance to Barclay School, Stevenage the sculpture was moved to the interior school reception in 2010 after an attempted theft (Franklin 2016: 20).

as the Hungarian Statue Park) as an example of the removal of contentious artworks (in this case now discredited Communist-era statues) to safe new locations. While allowing for material preservation and continuing public access to these artworks the Memento Park approach has conversely also been criticised for depriving these statues of their ideological and historic context (critiques of the Memento Park project are given in Turai 2009; Clements 2011; 2018).

A more recent contemporary creative approach to public artwork relocation is evidenced in 'The Hot Wire' programme for the 2017 'Skulptur Projekte Münster' (SPM).¹⁴ In this (fifth) iteration of SPM, several sculptures from the Münster contemporary public art collection were temporarily swapped with artworks from the neighbouring town of Marl. Initiated in a spirit of adventure, the intention of this project (as described by Elben 2017) was to generate fresh interpretations and relationships between the artworks and their new locations and to refocus and refresh public perception of the relocated works. While there is not yet any evidence available on the actual impact of this type of project on audiences, 'The Hot Wire' approach suggests that given the curatorial impetus and necessarily resources to support temporary relocation, fixed public artworks may not be as fundamentally rooted in site as they may at first appear.

While the studies and projects reviewed here have engaged usefully with the issue of public artworks' material longevity, and have suggested some strategies for spatial re-presentation, so far there has been little academic exploration of the interpretive practices used to support and mediate the public presentation of these artworks. It is to this more neglected topic that the next section of my review now turns.

¹⁴ 'Skulptur Projekte Münster' (SPM) is a city-wide decennial celebration of contemporary public art held in the German city of Münster, North Rhine-Westphalia. SPM has been held every ten years since 1977, resulting in a substantial collection of permanent public artworks.

2.2.2 Interpretive practice in public art

Exploration of the public art literature reveals only a handful of references to institutional interpretative practice in this field. There are certainly no studies on the scale of Hooper-Greenhill's or Whitehead's work on museological interpretive practice (see Hooper-Greenhill 2000b; Whitehead 2011; 2012) cited in my Introduction chapter. Similarly, other academics and researchers focusing on institutional art interpretation practice do so only in relation to the museum and gallery environment (see e.g. Farnell 2015; Fritsch 2011). Whilst there is a parallel body of literature on interpretive practice in outdoor built heritage and landscape contexts (see e.g. Tilden 1957; 2007; Veverka 2011a; 2011b), interpretation in relation to artworks sited within the public realm is not a subject yet considered in either the heritage or museum-based interpretation literature.

Although not concerning 'public art' per-se, Warren's (2011; 2012) research on the interpretation of open air artworks at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is the most relevant of the studies identified in this part of my review. It examines institutional interpretive practices at YSP including the influence of on-site signage, interpretative panels, visitor maps and website content on audience' experience. Warren notes several aspects of interest to my research including the resistance to on-site interpretation on the part of some YSP curators. As she explains, on-site interpretive resources within the park are quite subtle and discreetly placed so as not to interfere too directly in the audience-artwork encounter. Focusing on the resources provided for James Turrell's 2006-07 permanent installation *Skyspace*, sited in the old deer shelter at YSP, Warren reports how while seemingly encouraging of open responses these texts position the artwork's readings firmly in relation to the authority and intentions of the artist. In the case of *Skyspace*, this authority is further reinforced by the physical 'rules' by which the artwork may be visited, e.g. through timed visits and admonition to visitors not to use their mobile phones, smoke or picnic within the artwork (*ibid*: 92). Similar admonitions (and notably, the ways in which visitors will often disregard them) have also been observed in relation to public memorials (see Stevens 2012; Stevens & Lossau 2015).

Gressel is one of the few commentators to explicitly reference the presence and influence of interpretative material on the audiencing of public artworks. In her (2013) post for the blog *Createquity*, she observes that while in the mid-2000s there was little effort or investment in interpretation practice in this field, this position has changed significantly in recent years. She provides evidence of a strong level of investment in digital interpretive resources by US-based public art agencies. These include downloadable audio guides, smartphone apps, and use of on-site QR codes which direct visitors to further content. Designed for use in advance of and during a public art visit, these new platforms 'allow people to easily find, learn about, and interact with public artworks' (*ibid*: 15). While Gressel comments only on the US experience this is also a growing area of activity in the UK. Recent notable examples of UK digital public art interpretation projects include: 'Decoding Art', a pilot project commissioned by Manchester Art Gallery 2009-11; QR codes incorporated into on-site signage for the Folkestone Artworks collection from c.2014; and 'Talking Statues' (see Dodd et al 2015) a series of smartphone-initiated audio animations of public statues in Leeds, London and Manchester, developed by performing arts company Sing London c.2014.¹⁵ Gressel (2013; 2016) goes further to suggest that these digital platforms could also be used intelligently and reflexively to better understand public art audiences, their reactions and responses to individual works, and for wider evaluation studies.

As indicated in this part of my review, institutional public art interpretation practice is a subject so far largely unexamined in either the academic or professional literature. There is, however, a much more substantial body of research-based writing emerging on the question of public art audiencing, i.e. on how these artworks are encountered within public space. It is this more substantial set of studies that my next section will now go on to examine.

¹⁵ The 'Talking Statues' initiative has since been expanded to Dublin, Chester and Bedford (see <http://www.talkingstatues.co.uk>). 'Talking Statues' was developed in partnership with Antenna International and the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, University of Leicester, supported by the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts.

2.2.3 Public art audiencing

As pointed out in my Introduction Chapter, there has been a longstanding call (from Hall, Senie and others) for more research into the understanding of audience encounters with public artworks. In response to this, there has been a surge of new academic literature on this subject in the last few years, most of which has been published since I started my PhD research. Where earlier studies (as commented on e.g. by Hall & Robertson 2001; Hall 2007) had usually focused on the evaluation of public art activity against intentional (commissioner-led) and often instrumentalist agendas, one of the key arguments made in this new literature (much of which examines the longer term afterlives of public artworks) is that public artworks gain their meaning through ongoing everyday audience use and embodied interaction.

Franck (2015) writes how these varied and multiple uses may be ‘completely or partially independent of the work’s intended meaning, affirm or extend the meaning or intentionally resist it’ (*ibid*: 184). Franck (*ibid*) and Stevens and Lossau (2015) distinguish between two broad categories of audience use of public artworks. First, ‘symbolic’ uses where use is wholly or, in part, a response to the representational capacities of the artwork; and second, ‘performative’ uses which are embodied and multisensory. Based on his own extensive observations of public art audiencing (much of this focused on memorial-based artworks), Stevens (2015) argues that many performative uses are almost purely ergonomic: functional interactions between audience and artwork at a basic physical level, e.g. as a convenient surface to sit on, or as a play space. Observing audience interactions with Anish Kapoor’s 2006 *Cloud Gate* in Chicago, Stevens (*ibid*) indicates that it is through the combination of the artwork’s obvious visibility, its (highly reflective) materiality and its specific conditions of spatial display, that audiences are actively encouraged to explore the sculpture: walking around it, posing, taking photographs, etc. Stevens & Franck (2016) refer to such combined symbolic and performative behaviours as ‘engaged spectatorship’, where public art’s meaning is drawn both from ‘occupying, experiencing and acting’ and by ‘seeing and mentally reflecting’ (*ibid*: 139). The walking interview methodology used in my own research study (methodologies are

described in detail in the next Chapter) allowed opportunity for the observation and capture of both types of engagement.

Importantly, for the authors discussed so far, this engaged spectatorship and its varied interactions are understood as activities that can go beyond intended or officially sanctioned public art uses. As Stevens and Lossau (2015) argue, this represents:

a shift in power dynamics away from an artwork's sponsors and makers, who intend specific 'functions' and manipulate audiences so that they will perform what the artwork prescribes [moving] the locus of attention and power to the public, who find their own purposes in the aesthetic objects and experiences presented to them (*ibid*: 5).

Noting similar observations in his own research on public art engagers, Zebracki speaks of a continuing tension between actual audiencing and institutional expectation (2015: 167). These tensions and accompanying acts of interpretive affirmation, extension and resistance (as noted by Franck 2015) form a key theme in the discussion of my own findings on public art meaning-making in Chapter Seven.

Moving away from purely observational studies and taking a broader socio-cultural approach to his analysis, for Zebracki, these engagement activities are part of a continuum of physical, mental and co-productive audiencing that he sees as essentially agonistic in character. For him, this agonism (a concept he draws from Mouffe 2008) is a fundamentally democratic plane that 'offers room for potential conflict and open, ardent dialogues [...] around public art and its objects' (Zebracki 2016: 63). This type of 'ardent dialogue' is readily evidenced in Zebracki's own research projects and other case study accounts, for example in Senie (2002) and also MacNeill (2012). As with these studies, much of this research focuses on the reception of controversial public artworks. As Senie (2003a) notes, controversy

(particularly when taken up or initiated by the media) often plays a strong role in creating audience awareness of and interest in public artworks. Beyond this framing of controversy, which often focuses on the artwork's inception and its initial unveiling phase, Senie writes that 'most public art slips into the urbanscape without a ripple, often ignored by its immediate audience' (*ibid*: 185). Although Newcastle-Gateshead does have some history of public art controversy (most notably around the initiation of *The Angel of the North*), most of the artworks considered in my own study are of a quieter nature than those examined by many other public art researchers. Whilst these artworks may encourage a less 'ardent dialogue', they are still the subject of agonistic engagement (as will be shown in my own discussion of audiencing in Chapter Seven).

Based on his own review of the earlier public art literature (e.g. Selwood 1995; Massey & Rose 2003; Sharp et al. 2005) and the wider cultural studies field, Zebracki (2011) lists five attributes that are assumed to influence audience perceptions of public artworks. These are: (1) educational background; (2) familiarity with the artwork and with visual art in general; (3) fit between the artwork and its siting; (4) its relative sociableness (or inclusivity); (5) its meaningfulness, in terms of its narrative or commemorative powers. These attributes are drawn together in Zebracki's broader concept of public art and audience' 'proximity', the idea that:

the closer a person's cognition, spatial use and familiarity, aesthetic acceptance (in terms of perceived appropriateness), social appropriation and attributed meaning regarding the public artwork and its place, the more the artwork and place will affect him/her, either in a positive or negative way (*ibid*).

This idea is developed in later work by Zebracki where he suggests that public art engagement is strongly influenced by the audience's aesthetic and moral perceptions (especially on the appropriateness of physical forms or imagery within a given site) and their more general views on the purpose and socio-economic and cultural value of the artwork and of public art activity more broadly (2012). Although, as Massey and Rose (2003) have argued, it is not only the audience who determines this quality

or level of engagement with public artworks. There is an acknowledgement that, although the audience's symbolic, embodied and agonistic interactions and interpretations may often go beyond an artwork's original intentionality, they are also bounded by the unique material, sensory and representational 'potentialities' of the artworks themselves.

It is this complex interface between an artwork's material, physical and representational potentiality, its spatiality (in terms of its siting and setting) and the audience's interactions with these factors, that Chapters Five and Seven of this thesis specifically aim to illuminate. Although being enacted in a very different environment and not described in the same terms, the findings from these existing studies into public art engagement have some overlap with theories of the visual art encounter produced within museological literatures. As I will aim to show in the next section of my review, museum models take consideration of artwork audiencing to a deeper structural level than has been examined in the public art studies so far discussed.

2.3 Museological models of the artwork-audience encounter

There have been many attempts at theorizing the object-audience encounter within the museological literature. Three of the most influential models, all of which focus on experiential, person-centred and hermeneutic aspects of this encounter are introduced here as being most pertinent to the analysis and conceptualization of public art audiencing produced through my own research study. While only the first of these models is specific to encounters with artworks per se, all provide useful insights. I start my review with an examination Czikszentmihalyi and Robinson's model of the 'aesthetic experience'.

2.3.1 The Model of Aesthetic Experience

In Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's formulation (1990), aesthetic experience operates in the space of interaction between the artwork and the mind of the viewer. As with other 'self-rewarding' activities, aesthetic experience is seen as a form of 'flow' or 'optimal' experience, i.e. occurring within a temporarily heightened state of consciousness and attention. Although the stimulus for this experience may be different, the underlying structure of the experience is the same. It is this structure (as examined and developed in their case through research with art museum curators), that forms the basis for Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's model.

For these authors, the aesthetic experience is considered as having four dimensions: perceptual, emotional, intellectual and communicative (Fig. 2.1). As in Massey and Rose's understanding of audience engagement with the 'potentialities' of public artworks (introduced in section 2.2.3), the first two dimensions are strongly linked to reactions to the artwork's visual and material elements; the third to the form or iconography of the work (its internal visual 'codes' and 'meanings'); and the fourth to interaction with the perceived intentionality and expression of the artist/maker (Whitehead, 2012: 14).

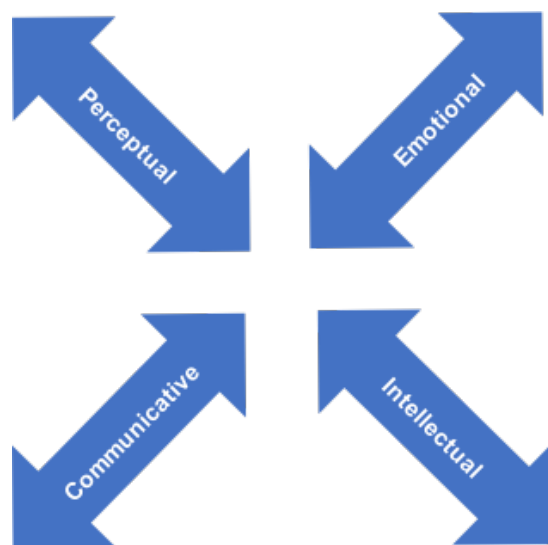


Figure 2-1: Four dimensions of the 'Aesthetic Experience' (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson 1990)

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson observe that in their study experiences of artworks were plotted dialectically across all four dimensions. However, it was the perceptual dimension (responses to the visual and physical sensory features of the artwork) which was often prioritised and most clearly articulated. Emotional responses, both positive and negative, were also very important for Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's respondents. Although their research cohort was split over the relative importance of emotional and intellectual engagement, access to knowledge was considered a vital prop for the artwork encounter. Knowledge allowed the viewer to position the artwork within wider culture, history or in terms of artistic intention and oeuvre. (This knowledge factor was also highlighted by Zebracki as an important element within the 'proximity' of audience engagement with public artworks, as discussed in section 2.2.3.) Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's fourth dimension of aesthetic experience, communication, has a strongly durational quality, with many of their respondents emphasising differences between immediate reactions and the longer term 'exchange of thoughts and feelings that occurred over time', through remembrance and through multiple exposures to the artwork (*ibid*: 62).

In speaking of the aesthetic experience in terms of 'flow', Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson seek to emphasise the dynamic relationship between the visual and intellectual challenges presented by the artwork, the skills of the viewer and the conditions of the encounter. As they write:

The relationship between challenges, skills, and the attentional dimensions of the flow experience does not have [a] strict temporal sequence [...] rather it is dialectical, a spiral if you will, in which new skills open up new areas of challenge [...] In the encounter with the aesthetic object, attention will be fully focused only when the challenges and skills are in balance. And completing the cycle, but at a higher level, this very focusing of attention develops new skills (*ibid*: 118-19).

In other words, the aesthetic experience is a hermeneutic encounter in which the level and type of challenge presented will be different for different viewers and for different artworks. Importantly, this encounter has the capacity to change over time,

as the viewer accumulates further aesthetic experiences and concomitant development of perceptual, emotional, intellectual and communicative skills. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson refer to this as ‘informed experience’ (*ibid*: 152). As stated in the quote above, the balance between challenge and skills is crucial within this process of interaction. Some degree of overlap between artwork affordance and viewer ability is essential in terms of initial and continued engagement. This is a subtle dynamic. If challenge and skills are too well-matched the artwork will hold little interest, while a complete mismatch means there is no point of entry for the viewer. In Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson’s model, to maintain its hermeneutic potential an artwork must always retain some element that is beyond the viewer’s current skill range.

2.3.2 The Contextual Model of Learning

While Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson focus primarily on the immediate dynamic of the aesthetic encounter, Falk and Dierking’s ‘Contextual Model of Learning’ (1992, updated 2013) takes a more expansive view of the object-audience encounter. Their model encompasses not just the relationship between the aesthetic affordances of the object and the personal skill-set of the museum visitor, but also the wider sociocultural and environmental context of the encounter. As in Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson’s model, extended temporality is a key dimension of museum experience.

Fig. 2.2 sets out the three facets of the museum visit experience as described in Falk and Dierking’s model, organised in terms of personal, sociocultural and physical contexts. Here, ‘personal context’ is understood not just in terms of the skills that might be brought to an object encounter but as a unique and perhaps more ingrained combination of an individual’s ‘prior experiences, interests, knowledge, motivations, beliefs and values’ (*ibid*: 33). These might be gleaned from a variety of sources and media. Together, these attributes create the agenda for the museum visit and the personal lens through which individual object encounters will be framed.

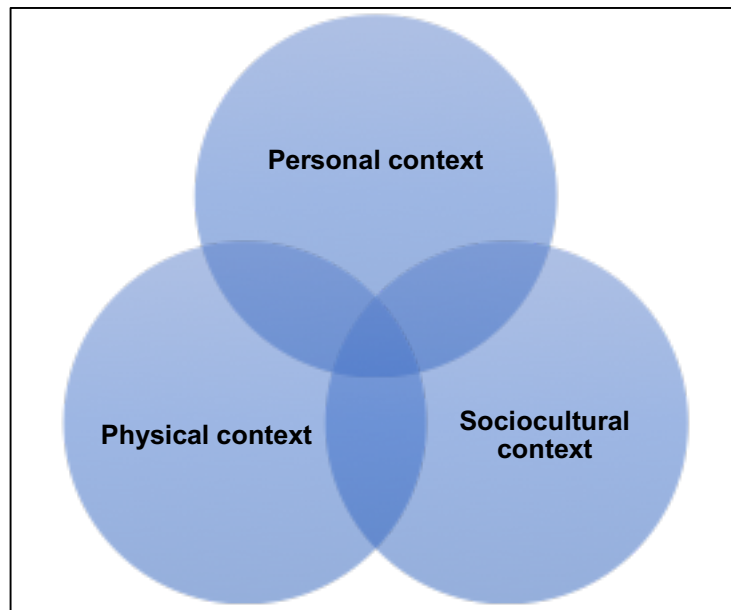


Figure 2-2: Three facets of the museum visit (Falk and Dierking 1992; 2013)

‘Sociocultural context’ meanwhile, concerns both the cultural perceptions of visitors of the museum (as an institution) and the social interactions that may shape the character of the visit itself. As Falk and Dierking note, cultural background and the social context of the visit can play an important part in initial perception-building. The third facet in this model is the ‘physical context’ afforded by the museum building, its architecture, layout and ambience, and the design of its displays, exhibitions and interpretive resources. (For Whitehead, as noted in my Introduction chapter, these physical contexts are considered part of the wider interpretive environment of the museum.) Falk and Dierking conceive of the individual’s museum experience and the learning this enables as occurring at the intersections between the three contexts. They note that while separately delineated within their model, in reality these elements are largely inseparable.

As Falk and Dierking state, the museum experience is a dynamic and ‘situation-specific’ interaction (*ibid*: 29) which needs to be understood both within the moment and in longer time:

The visitor’s experience can be thought of as a continually shifting interaction among personal, sociocultural, and physical contexts. A convenient [...] way to think about this model is to consider experience, of which a key part is

learning, as being constructed over time as the individual moves through her sociocultural and physical world; over time meaning is built upon, layer by layer (*ibid*: 29).

As emphasised by these authors and in line with Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's concept of 'informed experience', these 'layers' of experience, learning and meaning-making are not just accrued but are themselves fundamentally interactive. Earlier layers influence those that follow through what Falk and Dierking refer to as a continuous series of 'feedback loops' in which individuals actively shape, and are shaped by, their environment (*ibid*).

2.3.3 The Attention-Value Model

Rather than focusing on the hermeneutic qualities of the object-audience encounter Bitgood's 'Attention-Value' model (2013) examines the way in which museum visitors' attention and interest is initially captured and how this capture can then lead on to fuller engagement. His model is based on two premises: first, that visitor attention is essential to an exhibit's or exhibition's success; and second, that 'perceived value' is the core motivation for visitor attention (*ibid*: 12). Value in this context is defined as a ratio between an individual's perception of the usefulness, satisfaction and benefit likely to be gained through a museum visit, divided by the cost of this activity in terms of time, effort or money spent (*ibid*).

For Bitgood, visitor 'attention' is a three-stage process or continuum between initial capture of interest, through to focus and deeper engagement (as indicated in Fig. 2.3). He argues that without initial capture, engagement and the sense of flow, learning and the satisfaction that follows from close and sustained attention-giving cannot be achieved. His model is therefore devised as a tool to enable museum professionals to better understand the process of visitor attention-giving and to help them promote what he calls 'engaged attention' in museum visiting.

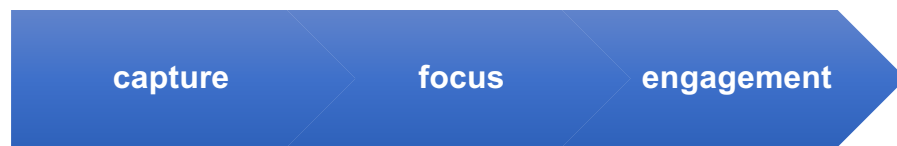


Figure 2-3: Three-stages in the visitor attention process (Bitgood 2013).

Bitgood (2010) identifies these different stages with specific and observable visitor behaviours. For him, stopping, approaching, touching and looking at an exhibit are all indicators of 'capture'-stage activity. 'Focus' stage is identified with longer, but still fairly brief (seconds only) durations of viewing or touching. Crucially, for Bitgood, 'engagement' stage attention is discursive rather than purely visual or embodied, involving, for instance, the reading of exhibition labels, and discussion with others about the content of, and one's feelings about, the exhibit.

In Bitgood's model, attention-giving relies on two essentials: detection and value-association (*ibid*: 65). Detection happens at the 'capture' stage, and is largely dependent on sensory stimuli and museum conditions, including exhibit sight-lines, the visitor's physical proximity to displays and objects, and sensory distractions. Interestingly for my study on audience engagement with artworks in the public realm, Bitgood highlights a raft of features which detract from or interfere with visitor attention-giving. These include sensory and information overload, visual or noise distraction, and psychophysiological factors such as fatigue, low energy, and satiation. Whilst these may be managed and alleviated in the museum, such distractions and interferences are normalised within the environment of public art audiencing.

Bitgood's second and third stages of the attention process, 'focus' and 'engagement' are more voluntary and value-driven facets, involving visitor choice (attending to one exhibit or object rather than another) and the individual's personal interests and agendas Bitgood refers to these factors in terms of 'person-setting' variables, which

combine personal, environmental and social factors associated with the museum visit (see Table 2.1).

Table 2-1: Person-setting variables influencing visitor' attention and value (after Bitgood 2013).

Person-setting variables	
Personal	e.g. knowledge, interests, energy-levels
Setting	e.g. influence of museum architecture, design of physical exhibits
Social	e.g. interactions with companions or museum staff

As with Falk and Dierking's contextual model of audience engagement, personal agendas (or 'personal context') play a key role in determining the potential value or benefit/cost in engaging with an exhibit or object. While these personal agendas cannot be 'managed' by museum professionals, Bitgood states that museums do have a responsibility to improve conditions for developing 'engaged attention'. This can be achieved, Bitgood argues, through good museum and exhibition design (including orientation and wayfinding) and the provision and good placing of interpretive prompts and resources. While my own research study examines a very different exhibiting environment than Bitgood's museum model, questions of orientation (through signage and interpretive resources) and initial attention capture are, as the discussions in Chapter Seven will show, equally of relevance in understanding public art audiencing.

In summarising Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, Falk and Dierking and Bitgood's work on the aesthetic encounter, contextual learning and visitor attention, it is clear that there are some strong overlaps between the three models and with aspects of the public art literature on audiencing explored in section 2.2.3, especially in terms of Zebracki's findings on the role 'proximity' plays in public art engagement. Although all three models explored here are concerned broadly with museum visitor experience and object engagement, each has a slightly different focus. Brought together, they point to a conceptualisation of the audience-object encounter as being fundamentally: 1) multi-dimensional, involving personal, perceptual and physical factors; 2) dynamic and durational and thus open to development and change; 3) individualised and situation-specific; 4) voluntary and value-driven. I have taken

some space to explain these museological models in this section, as they have been essential to the shaping of my own analysis and thinking on the audience encounter with public artworks. I will return to a discussion of these museological models and how they relate to my empirical investigation of public art audiencing in Newcastle-Gateshead in Chapter Seven.

2.4 The relevance of ‘collections thinking’

As already mentioned in my Introduction chapter, while it is common practice in the US to promote public artworks in terms of regional or local collections, this descriptor is not often used in relation to public art in the UK. In both US and UK-based public art literatures, there is very little discussion of public artworks as a collection, either on a theoretical or management-level. To date, the most substantial interest shown in this topic is in two public art-focussed special issues of the US-based *Collections: A Journal for Museums and Archives* published in 2008. In her Editor’s introduction to the second of these issues, Decker writes that while public art encompasses a broad category of objects and approaches, and thus cannot be covered by a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model of ‘conception, creation, and installation’, ‘all public art is part of a “collection,” that is, its genre as a class of categorization’ (2008: 8).

Where Decker’s statement provides an opening for collections thinking in relation to public art, Senie¹⁶ (writing in the first of the *Collections* special issues), outlines some of the problems and implications of framing public art as a collection. She notes that ‘there is much about public art that does not fit easily into the museum [collection] paradigm’ (2008: 143), worrying that too close an association with the collection label could serve to ‘tame’ the possibilities public art practice (at least in its commissioning phase) rather than to expand them (*ibid*). One of the first factors of difference highlighted by Senie, is the way in which public art programmes have their roots in

¹⁶ Harriet Senie is one of the major academic commentators on public art practice in the USA, writing extensively on this subject since the early 1990s. She was the Founder (and until 2017 Co-Editor) of the international journal *Public Art Dialogue*.

public 'legislation' (e.g. 'percent-for-art' schemes)¹⁷ rather than in a conscious 'collecting' mission 'with specific collecting goals and long range plans', and formal 'deaccessioning provisions', as might be expected in the museum. Secondly, Senie suggests that museum collections grow more strategically, building on strengths and gaps in holdings, whereas public art 'collections' usually begin with only a few works and develop in an ad hoc fashion. A third difference, is the way that museums and public art programmes are arranged spatially and in relation to site. With museum-housed collections 'there are no issues of site, save for the existing space of the building and its grounds'. Here, collections 'are arranged by culture, nationality, chronology or some overarching principle' (Senie 2008: 143). This principle is not usually available in the public art environment where artworks are commonly produced as stand-alone pieces. Each commission is 'considered only in and of itself and its immediate environment' and in primary relation to only 'local needs and references (aesthetic, historical, etc.)' (*ibid*). Last, in her set of comparisons, Senie notes how public art programmes and museums seemingly have 'diametrically opposed' relationships to audience engagement:

If public art were thought of as a collection an education component targeting various audiences with specific programs would be considered a necessity. Ironically, public art programs are typically involved with community input before and during a commission but do nothing to gather or influence audience response after installation. Museums follow a diametrically opposite process: they purchase art based on curatorial advisement and engage the public only after they own or borrow it (2008: 144).

Senie states that this ongoing (post-commissioning) focus on audiences and education activity is one of two key areas where she thinks public art could usefully borrow from museum collection practice. The second way in which public art 'should always be treated as part of a collection' is in relation to interpretation and

¹⁷ Widely used in North America but less consistently in the UK 'percent for art' is planning-system based scheme whereby an agreed percentage of the cost of a public or private sector capital building project (usually up to 1%) is reserved for art and craft-based commissions.

documentation practices. Senie writes that all public art programmes could benefit from having their own 'dedicated educators and archivists' (*ibid*). As I have shown earlier in this review (section 2.2.3), this question of 'audience response' to public artworks is one which is beginning to receive much greater attention, at least from the academic research community. The question of public art education and interpretation is (as shown in section 2.2.2) far less explored in the literature, although one which is beginning to expand within the sector especially in relation to digital forms of interpretation.

Senie's summary of the differences between museological and public art approaches is clear and valid, but her concern that the collection label might constrain public art practice, rather than expand it, seems less apt when thinking about long-term issues of public art's cultural and material afterlives and aftercare. The aim of the third part of this literature review is therefore to draw out specific areas of 'collections thinking', beyond those practice features already pointed to by Senie, which provide new avenues for considering public art in the framework of a collection. These ideas will be brought into the discussions of my own research findings in the central chapters of this thesis.

Four key themes found in the collections literature will be highlighted in this part of my review. First, and starting at the most abstract level, I consider the relationship between the 'collection' and concepts of object value. Second, looking more at collections management practice, I review alternative frameworks of value and significance assessment used within the museum sector. Taking my lead from the foundational museological writing of Susan Pearce, sections three and four look at temporal and spatial aspects of object collections: their accumulation, organisation and display. These sections provide a specific theoretical context and background for my first two thesis discussion chapters (Chapters Four and Five).

2.4.1 Collection objects and the politics of value

Collecting and collections are closely linked to issues of selection and value. As Pearce states, once within a collection, an object becomes a representative object, acquired for the collection for its 'perceived aesthetic, historic or scientific value' (Pearce 1992: 7). Further, objects can attain new value by being brought into a collection and, as we will see later in this section, object value may also change over time. Within a public museum framework collection-hood also brings a whole raft of new processes to bear on collected objects. Institutional perceptions of object value are core to this environment and to the variety of museum activities and procedures that make up collections management: from display design and exhibition-making, to interpretation and marketing, conservation regimes, disaster planning and decisions made on deaccessioning and disposal.

Pearce writes that: 'Choice' is at the heart of the collecting process; a word which expresses its special dual nature as selection and as the allotment of value, whatever form of value this may take' (1995: 27). These object choices, whether they are made by popular collectors or professional museum curators, are part of a 'politics of value', where objects are valued against socially-accepted traditions and parameters (Pearce 1995). In the museum context, Pearce suggests that the valorisation¹⁸ of all material objects can be plotted in relation to two axes: allocated a position between the 'authentic' and 'inauthentic', on the one hand, and between 'masterpiece' and 'artefact' on the other (see Fig. 2.4).

Above the horizontal line, in this diagram, we have the high value categories of 'authentic' masterpieces and artefacts. For Pearce, authentic objects are those that carry an emotional and moral weight – objects that we sense as being true to themselves: the 'genuine' article. A 'masterpiece' has a heightened authenticity, carrying what Pearce calls 'the burden of excellence' (1995: 291). The authentic

¹⁸ Pearce uses the word 'valuation' in her 1995 text. In this thesis I follow more recent scholars (e.g. Arijs 2013) in using the alternative 'valorisation' to denote the process of ascribing object value.

masterpiece quadrant of the model thus contains all the objects that curators would recognise as Art, or as particularly 'fine' examples of craft or applied art.¹⁹

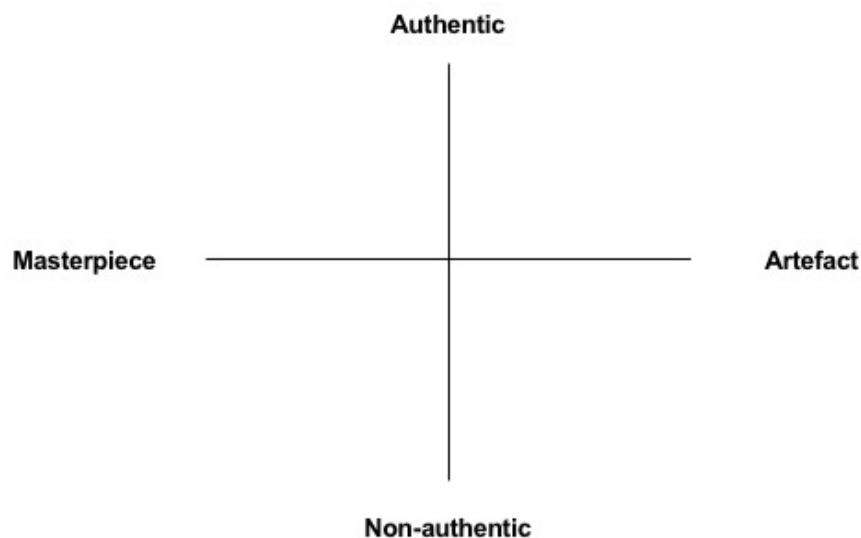


Figure 2-4: Collection valorisation axes (based on Pearce 1995: 291)

Authentic 'artefacts', for Pearce, are those objects (typically those held within social history, anthropological or archaeological collections) that have not achieved masterpiece status, but which still hold a certain sense of cultural sincerity and genuineness (1995: 293). Pearce writes that rather than adhering to notions of excellence, the value of these objects is based more on their collective 'knowledge' value (*ibid*).

Below the line in Pearce's diagram are the lower value objects. These are material artefacts that may still have authenticity in themselves, but which 'are rendered inauthentic' through a collection process that tries to turn them, and usually to elevate them, into 'something which they are not' (*ibid*). For Pearce, such collections might fulfil an emotional or psychological need but fail in terms of ideological or knowledge-

¹⁹ Thinking about museums broadly, rather than just art museums, Pearce suggests that 'exquisite' natural objects might also fit within this 'masterpiece' category.

value (*ibid*: 294). Also below the line, are the class of objects that Pearce labels the ‘spurious masterpiece’. Like ‘true’ Art, these objects have been created to perform a symbolic rather than a practical role, but, in this case, they play a principally commodified and commercial role. Later in her text, Pearce suggests that for many audiences, contemporary artworks might also be relegated to this ‘spurious’ masterpiece quadrant. As Pearce observes, this system of object valorisation is rich with inherent cultural biases and assumptions, both about the nature and perception of ‘excellence’ and ‘authenticity’ and our understanding of the ways collections are used in knowledge production.

Reflecting shifts in museum practice leading away from a traditional focus on the object towards a much more audience-centred role, Keene (2005) proposes a different form of object valorisation from that discussed by Pearce. Putting the intrinsic qualities of the object to one side, Keene argues that value should centre instead on the object’s informational, personal or social use within a collection (as suggested in Table 2.2).

Table 2-2: Collection object values – contrasting approaches (Keene 2005)

Intrinsic values	Use values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic (beauty) • Spiritual (religious or other association) • Symbolic (as a representation of something) • Historic (as evidence of the past) • Authenticity (as genuine object) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research (by academics, practitioners, communities) • Education and learning • Memory and identity work • Creativity (object as inspiration for) • Enjoyment (personal pleasure)

For Keene, the collection is a store of cultural capital from which new cultural value is generated only through its use. Museums play, or should play, a lead role in increasing the cultural value of their collections. Specifically, Keene argues, museums can do a lot to increase the use value of non-displayed collections, including reserve collections and objects held in museum storage (*ibid*: 25). As she writes: ‘Museums can increase the cultural capital that their collections represent by

adding to what is known about them through research, by documenting them, and by a high standard of collections management and preservation' (*ibid*: 161).

Before the museum can do this work on improving and stimulating new use value, it needs to decide on which collection objects hold most potential in terms of cultural capital and new value creation. To pursue this problem, in the next section, I examine different models and markers for collection value and significance assessment that have developed and trialled within the museum sector.

2.4.2 Assessing collection value and significance

The question of who holds the authority to discern the value and significance of collections and collection objects is a key issue within the contemporary museum. Once seen as being led by the expert connoisseur (a key player in the model of valorisation set out by Pearce), museum curators, visitors and communities are now all recognised as participants and potential collaborators in this valorisation process. In today's museum, understandings of the value of a collection object and, stemming from this, its meaning-making ability is negotiable, contingent and increasingly plural (Hooper-Greenhill 2000b: 139).

With the aim of generating a better evidence base for understanding, managing and developing their collections and making the process of valorisation more transparent, some museums and curators have initiated their own tools for assessing the individual and relative value of objects in their care. While developed in the context of specific collections and in very different disciplinary fields, from transport museums (Wickham 2004), to archaeology (Mouliou & Kalessopoulou 2012) and historic photographs (Arijs 2013), there is much crossover between these models. This suggests that such assessment processes could have applicability across collections more broadly, although, to my knowledge, none of these models have been applied so far to public art collections.

To provide some detail on these schemes, Wickham (2004) lists 20 possible criteria that could be combined to generate an object's overall value and significance 'ranking' within a collection. Intended to be assessed collaboratively by different disciplinary experts, these criteria range from the practical and resource-related, e.g. an object's physical condition and 'fitness for display', to: available level of background history; assessment of educational value; historical significance; rarity, originality, and 'Wow factor' (2004: 226). Reed's scheme (2012) (developed by researchers at University College London in collaboration with Renaissance East Midlands) offers 'thinking tools' that are similar in a large degree to Wickham's list but which include the new category 'exploitability'.²⁰ This is defined as an object's capacity for use within or perhaps also beyond the collection, including its ability to inspire creativity, its use in profile raising or its economic potential (*ibid*: 4-5). Designed as a grid, Reed's assessment tool allows these categories to be reviewed from different geographic and stakeholder perspectives. These perspectives range from the international to the locally-specific, and include consideration of an object's actual and potential significance to different communities of interest, as well as its value to the museum itself.

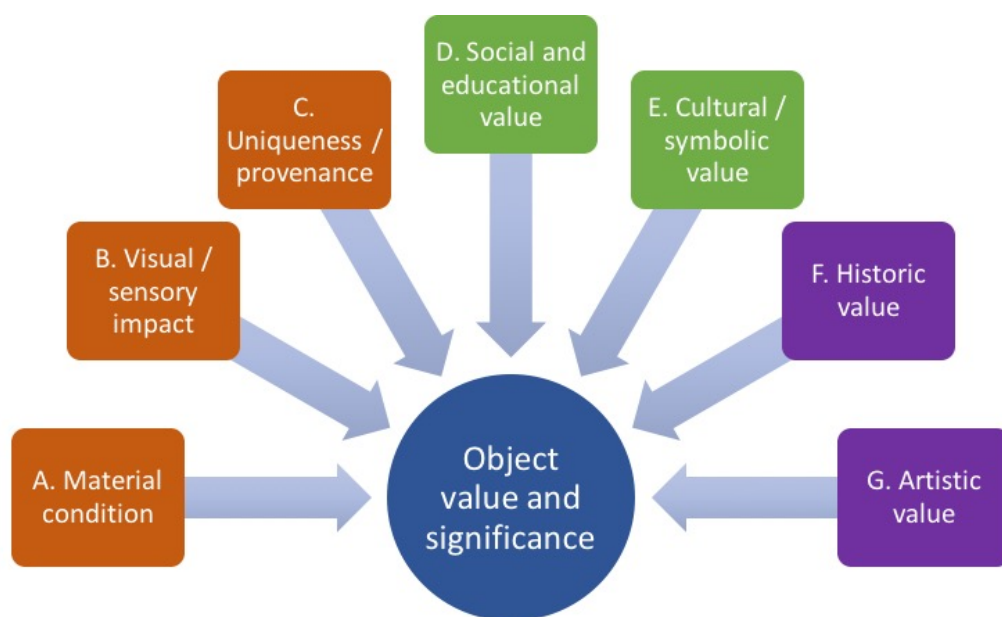


Figure 2-5: Common criteria for assessing the value and significance of museum objects.

²⁰ The other headings in Reed's (2012) model are: provenance or acquisition; rarity or uniqueness; visual and sensory impact; condition and completeness; and historical meaning.

Drawing on the examples mentioned above and an international review of similar schemes conducted by Arijs (2013),²¹ Fig. 2.5 sets out seven common areas of object value and significance assessment criteria used within the museum sector, highlighting criteria of most relevance to art collections. Reflecting Arijs's analysis, I have separated these into three groupings. First, starting from the left side of the diagram, we have criteria related to the material and 'artifactual' characteristics and potential of the object: (A) its physical condition, including its fitness for display and any conservation requirements; (B) its visual and sensory impact, including the technical quality of its making and relative innovation; (C) the object's uniqueness or rarity, as an example of artistic production or in its form and imagery, and the depth of information available on its provenance, acquisition history or 'chain of ownership' (as indicated by Reed 2012).

Next, in the centre of the diagram we have a group of criteria relating to the object's 'use value': i.e. its social and educational value, including as a resource for specialist and academic research (D); and (E) its broader cultural and symbolic value, both to geographic and interest communities and to the museum itself. Reed's concept of the object's 'exploitability' would also fit into this group, as might simple audience 'enjoyment' (an important 'use' value put forward by Keene 2005). The third and final set of criteria correspond to what Arijs refers to broadly as 'heritage values'. In my diagram, these assessment criteria are separated into two categories: First (F), the object's historic value, e.g. in relation to an individual, place, event, activity or historic process (Reed 2012); and second (G), artistic value. Closely related to questions of the object's provenance and rarity (C), assessment criteria in this category include consideration of artistic authorship and the relationship between the object in question and the artist's wider output. As with any theoretical schema, there are overlaps between these criteria and categories and many subtleties and differences in the way that museums and individual curators might address such assessments.

²¹ Arijs' review includes work conducted by the Getty Institute in the late 1990s-early 2000s (as reported on by Mason, 2000), the Australian scheme 'Significance 2.0' (Russel & Winkworth 2010), the UK's 'Reviewing Significance 2.0' (Reed 2012) and a recent model used by the Dutch Ministry of Culture (Versloot 2013).

As Reed stresses, object value and significance assessment is not a quick or 'tick box' exercise (2012:3). It requires considerable investment in terms of museum staff time and especially in overtly inclusive versions of these schema, e.g. as advocated in the 'Revisiting Collections' model²² (Museums Libraries and Archives Council 2009), additional input from visitors, communities groups and individuals from outside the museum sector.²³ The relevance and potential applicability of this type of framework to assessments of public artwork values is one of the topics discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

Having explored the issue of collections and their value, this review now moves on to consider two other fundamental concepts that are at the heart of collections thinking (as initiated by Pearce): the question of the collection's relationship to time; and lastly, in this literature review, the question of the collection's spatial arrangement.

2.4.3 Collections and time

As accumulative entities, collections have a special relationship to time and as Pearce writes, especially to our notions of 'now' and 'then' (1995: 235). For Pearce, time is one of the two key axes of the collection concept. (The second axis, the spatial dimension of collections, is examined in section 2.4.4.) Accumulated over years and decades collections are, Pearce contends, both products and records of collecting activity: they give 'tangible form and content to the experience of time passing' (*ibid*: 236). Collections are not just 'memorials of time past' they can also have a structuring role, serving 'as rites of passage which help us through periods in our lives, and create distinctions between one period and the next' (*ibid*).

²² 'Revisiting Collections' was launched in 2009 by the UK Museums, Libraries, Archives Council and the Collections Trust as a methodology to help museums and archives 'open up their collections to public scrutiny, explore multiple layers of meaning and significance and capture new knowledge and perspectives in catalogues and documentation systems'.

²³ The Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) was abolished and its functions transferred to Arts Council England and National Archives in 2010.

Pearce states that once within a collection objects are simultaneously of the past and of the present. The material nature of objects means that they have a literal capacity to 'carry the past physically into the present' (1995: 170). While objects always have the capacity for re-use and contemporary reinterpretation, they also 'always, carry with them the characters they acquired in their original and subsequent contexts' (*ibid*: 236). Indeed, Pearce asserts that it is this ability to carry their past forward in time that gives collected objects their interpretive eloquence and power (*ibid*).

Beyond their 'now' and 'then' quality, collection objects also have a presumption of longevity. They are a material and cultural legacy to be passed on to future generations. As Pearce observes, museum collections hold a special status in this regard: museums often being seen by private collectors as the ultimate depository for their collections, ensuring that these are officially recognised and preserved (Pearce 1995). Thus, museum collections sit in a privileged position at the top of the collecting tree, marking the apotheosis of an object's 'translation into the class of heritage material, of sacred durables' (1992: 66).

This presumption of the permanent safekeeping of collection objects is challenged in some more recent museum thinking. Knell argues that in the 21st-Century museum, with its increased focus on learning, personalised meaning-making and digitisation, physical objects are no longer as central as they once were to the museological project of knowledge creation (Knell 2004: 2). He argues that to be sustainable, museums need to fundamentally reconsider their attitude to 'the whole cycle of acquisition, retention and disposal'. In other words, museum professionals need to rid themselves of the idea that collected objects must be kept 'in perpetuity' (2004:16). We have seen in section 2.2.1 of this literature review, that these are ideas that are also gaining some ground in the public art sphere (e.g. as advocated by Doherty 2016). Knell warns that while all collection objects are things from the past and will themselves become older still (and perhaps as a result increase in rarity value), 'the fact that something is old is [...] no reason to keep it [...] 'age' and 'survival' are false idols. Objects must have other values aside from age which gives them worth' (*ibid*: 32). As Knell points put, collection object valorisation and re- valorisation is (or should be) an ongoing project: 'values are constantly altered by new finds (locally and elsewhere), changes in knowledge, losses due to neglect or decay, the

introduction of fakes and forgeries into the market place, the loss of sites, conservation restrictions on collecting, new academic research and disciplinary beliefs' (2004: 25).

Knell argues that instead of focusing on acquisitions, museums need to redefine collecting as a dynamic flow where: 'material can flow in, but it can also flow out' (*ibid*: 17). As Hooper-Greenhill has written: 'The great collecting phase of museums is over. The post-museum will hold and care for objects, but will concentrate more on their use rather than on further accumulation' (2000: 152). The possibility that art museums could rethink their philosophy to prioritise the audience interaction with artworks in their collections over artwork conservation needs is one also put forward by Barker & Smithen (2006).

2.4.4 Collections and space

Just as collections have a temporal structure, Pearce (1995) writes that they also have an essentially spatial nature, a sense of the 'here' and the 'there'. Typically, the museum collection contains ex-situ objects: we might talk of the 'here' of the museum acting as the repository and venue for displaying objects taken from other places (the 'there'). For Pearce, collection space is also fundamentally about the juxtaposition and comparison between different objects: between objects of the same type and disciplinary classification; and between objects from different classifications. Pearce suggests that it is through such spatial and conceptual juxtapositions that the collection attains its knowledge-generating power:

Notions of how one piece will 'fit' with another [...] is frequently implicit in the collecting process [...] It is a common experience in all kinds of collecting that suddenly, when seen in juxtaposition to other pieces, an object shines out with a hitherto unrecognised significance, which may entail a fresh evaluation to many other pieces and relationships' (*ibid*: 255).

In other words, it is through the spatial arrangement of objects and the comparisons and connections generated between them (by a collector and a collection's viewers),

that much of the collection's meaning and significance is created. As Pearce points out, this is especially the case in systematic collections, where the focus is very much on disciplinary knowledge generation, rather than on other kinds of (more emotional or aesthetic) satisfaction (*ibid*). In this way, 'collected objects are shorn of their significance if they are separated from their fellows' (*ibid*: 256).

Creating spatial (and therefore also knowledge, emotional or aesthetic) relationships between objects, is also at the heart of any exhibition-making activity and museum collection display. For Pearce, exhibitions and collections are intertwined and interdependent activities (1992: 136): the exhibition is 'the opus which demonstrates the work of the collection and curation, and the creation of the lattice of reference and interrelationship which the collection constitutes' (*ibid*: 139). Crucially, exhibitions are also opportunities to re-examine collection relationships and to generate hitherto unnoticed and unrealised connections between their constituent objects. Often this might include the bringing together of objects from different collections with the aim of creating new exhibition narratives. This is an activity that relies on the portability of collection objects: a condition that might be regarded as the antithesis of public artworks which are usually seen as essentially fixed in terms of their physical site. Beyond exhibition-making, these processes of reinterpretation and redisplay are also applied across whole collections, e.g. as in the reorganisation of the Tate collections for the opening of the new Tate Modern in 2000 (analysed in Whitehead 2012), and more locally to my own study for the redevelopment of the Great North Museum: Hancock in 2009 (see Paddon 2014) and Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery (2017).

Drawing specifically on the literature on museum collections, this part of my review has so far been dominated by the idea that collections reside specifically within a physical museum building. In this model, objects are collected from various places in the world and are gathered together and presented in a new location which is fundamentally separated from the object's origins or everyday uses. Loureiro (2012) observes, however, that since the 1980s, the concept of the museum object has broadened to also include in-situ collection and preservation, a model which more directly matches understandings of public art practice. References made to Historic England's recent project to give listed status to selected post-war public artworks (as

already cited), could be seen as practical steps towards the musealisation and in-situ collection-hood of public artworks. Davis (2011: 19) notes that such movements towards extensive in-situ preservation and heritagisation can lead to (negative) accusations that the whole environment is turning into a museum. As I found in my own research, this potential musealisation of public artworks is something of a contentious issue in the public art field (a topic that I will return to in Chapter Four of this thesis).

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided the background and theoretical context for examining public art's afterlives within the museological framework of a collection. It identified the material and cultural afterlives and 'forever' nature of permanent forms of public art production as being a problematic issue within the field. Recent debate around this issue seems to be orientated around two perspectives: one which positions public artworks as inherently processual and unstable entities while the other pulls public art towards a preservationist agenda. Set between these two positions, some emerging arguments are made for revisiting the problem of permanency through processes of artwork relocation. In thinking further about public art's cultural afterlives, this review has shown that while there has been a recent surge in academic interest in audience engagement with public artworks, there has been almost no research to date on institutional interpretive practice around public art, either in terms of the narratives produced or the use of such resources by public art audiences. This issue was thus highlighted as a specific gap in the public art literature and one to which my study aims to make a specific contribution.

Analysis of the wider literature shows that public art audiencing is conceived as an essentially agonistic activity. Two main research perspectives were identified in my review: one focusing on the 'symbolic' and discursive uses of public artworks and the other on 'ergonomic' or embodied interactions. A significant idea (offered by Zebracki) is that 'proximity' (of audience familiarity, awareness and interest) is a key component in such engagements. This finding from the literature was a key influence on the decision to recruit local (resident) audiences for the empirical audiencing

research element of my study. In the literature, concepts of agonistic audiencing are balanced by observations (e.g. from Massey & Rose) that audience engagement is also limited by the affective and representational ‘potentialities’ of the artworks themselves. The conclusion here is that although individuals’ artwork responses and interactions can vary widely, artworks are not open to an unlimited set of (symbolic and ergonomic) interpretations. It is this perspective that forms the basis of my own exploration of the spatial, material and representational typology of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection in Chapter Five.

The later sections of this chapter considered key concepts around the audiencing process and collections thinking within the museological literature, pointing to the ways in which these ideas would be used to elucidate public art practice as discussed in the remainder of this thesis. Here, I introduced three influential models of the audience-object encounter developed by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, Falk and Dierking, and Bitgood. Together, these were highlighted as providing a useful toolkit of concepts for reflecting on the multidimensional, durational, situated and essentially voluntary dynamic of public art-audience engagement (as further elucidated in Chapter Seven of this thesis). The final part of my literature review outlined the core features of a ‘collection’ from a museological perspective, as understood by key theorists in this field (with special attention given to the writing of Pearce) and examined how public art literature has so far evaluated ‘collections thinking’ as an organising structure for public art practice. This part of my review led me to conclude that while collection-hood is not an embedded function within the UK public art sector, and for some may be antithetical to the supposed freedoms offered by public art practice, ‘collections thinking’ does provide a useful conceptual platform for addressing the problem of the material and cultural afterlives of permanent public artworks. Focusing specifically on matters of collection value and its assessment, processes of in-situ collection accumulation and the spatial relations between collection objects, the museological theory introduced in this review forms the basis for the examination of my research findings in Chapters Four and Five.

Before proceeding to these core themes and the central discussion of my study, I will first describe the overall design of my research project and the methods used for my data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3. Research methodology: A visual enquiry

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the rationale for the research design and methodological approach taken in addressing my research question and the aims and objectives of the study. The chapter is organised into four main sections. Section 3.2 explains the overall philosophical approach to my research design, which focuses on a visual enquiry methodology. Section 3.3 provides details of the different methods used for collecting my research data, including an extended section on my use of walking interviews which is a relatively innovative method of data collection in public art research. The processes taken to analyse my research data and to progress from raw data to the generation of findings and conclusions are described in section 3.4. The final section concludes this chapter by addressing ethical and validity issues related to my study (3.5).

3.2 Methodological approach and research design

In terms of its philosophical stance, this research project is orientated towards social constructionist understandings. As defined by Burr (2015), this is a position which attempts to take 'a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves'; that recognises that 'all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative'; and that these understandings are 'sustained by social processes' and actions (*ibid*: 2-5).

From this position, the study takes the view that practices of public art interpretation and audiencing are constructed through social discourse. My research design and methodology are premised on the understanding that these discourses can be examined: 1) at an institutional level, through the media and language of public art

interpretation; and 2) at an audience level, through processes and activities of audience-artwork engagement and 'arts talk' (Conner 2013).

Further, my study makes two main ontological assumptions. First, that 'public art' can be examined as a defined genre of contemporary art practice and that public art can exist as a specific category of things within the cityscape. Second, that concepts of 'collection' (at least in terms of physical objects) are largely defined by museological practices as opposed to notions of collection that might come from the archives and libraries sector. In other words, while recognising convergence between these sectors, this study conceives collection objects as material and sensory entities which in addition to being recorded, catalogued and categorised are also intended for public presentation through physical display.

3.2.1 A visual enquiry methodology

The exploration of material public artworks, their situations of visual display, their interpretive framing and audiencing, were core components of my research study. Accordingly, my research design was premised on a visual enquiry methodology. In other words, a methodology that focused substantially on the investigation of visual subject matter (two- and three-dimensional public artworks) and of visual experience (public art audiencing) and that used visual data, including photographs and multimodal texts as material for analysis.

While non-visual qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and textual analysis, were also central to my study many of the decisions made about the research design were informed by contextual readings on visual methodologies. Gillian Rose's writing had a strong influence on my choice of research design. Rose observes that academic interest in visual research is 'philosophically, theoretically and conceptually diverse' (2012: 19). This view is supported by Pink who describes visual methodology as a 'post-disciplinary' field of practice spanning many different scholarly interests (2012: 4).

Within this diversity, which cuts across arts and humanities and social science approaches, two distinct bodies of methodological literatures on visual research can be distinguished (Rose 2012). The first is concerned with the study of visual images and objects and the situations of their production and reception (investigations of 'visual culture'), while the second focuses on using the visual as a research tool e.g. the use of researcher or participant generated photographs, maps, etc. as study data (often referred to as 'visual research methods'). Rose goes on to offer a holistic schema for visual research that draws on both traditions. Providing a foundation for my own research design Rose's schema is set out in some detail in section 3.2.2.

Taking a similarly cross-disciplinary approach to Rose (2012), Emmison & Smith (2000) use the expansive term 'visual enquiry' to describe a methodological field that encompasses not just the study of images but also the broader analysis of what might be referred to as 'the seen and observable' (*ibid*: ix). This includes the observation of others' practices of looking and of the socio-cultural situations and environments in which visual acts, images and objects are encountered. For Emmison et al (2012) such situations and environments might variously include: media sources (such as newspapers and advertising); three-dimensional visual data (including architectural and urban settings, objects and physical traces); 'lived' visual data (i.e. observable human interaction); 'living' forms of data (e.g. self-presentation and uses of personal space); and digital data. Among these situations and environments, and significantly for my study, Emmison et al (*ibid*) single out public statues and monuments, their syntax of display and the observable human behaviours that exist in and around these objects, as potentially rich subjects for visual analysis. This suggestion provides an obvious cue for my own research study on the presentation and audiencing of public artworks in Newcastle-Gateshead.

3.2.2 Sites and modalities for investigation and analysis

In her introduction to critical visual methodologies, Rose (2012) sets out a core schema of 'sites', 'modalities' and suggested research methods for interpreting visual images and objects. Reflecting the diversity of the field (and the broad approach identified in 'visual enquiry'), Rose suggests that there are three 'sites' at which

images make meaning and at which visual material might therefore be usefully investigated (*ibid*:19).²⁴ These are: (1) the ‘site of production’, i.e. the circumstances in which the image was made; (2) the site of the image or object itself, i.e. its visual content; and (3) the site of the image’s audiencing, where the image/object is encountered or used. Rose further suggests that at each of these sites, visual images and objects can be considered in terms of three ‘modalities’ (as summarised in Table 3.1).

Table 3-1: Sites and modalities for researching visual images (after Rose 2012).

Site / Modality	A. Technological	B. Compositional	C. Social
1. Site of production	<i>How made?</i>	<i>Genre?</i>	<i>Who by? For whom? When? Why?</i>
2. Site of the image/object	<i>Visual effects?</i>	<i>Composition?</i>	<i>Visual meanings?</i>
3. Site of audiencing	<i>Circulation?</i> <i>Display?</i>	<i>Viewing positions?</i> <i>Relation to other images/objects?</i>	<i>How interpreted?</i> <i>By whom? Why?</i>

The first of Rose’s modalities is the technological. This focuses on the visual effect of the image/object: how it was made and how it is displayed or circulated. The second modality is the compositional. This is concerned with the design, genre and viewing possibilities offered by the image/object. The third modality is that of the social: the image/object’s meaning, purpose and interpretative possibilities. As indicated in Table 3.1 Rose’s (2012) schema thus suggests nine zones for potential investigation and analysis, all of which could be applied to public artworks, their production and audiencing. She observes that it is relatively rare for studies of visual culture to range

²⁴ In the latest edition of this book (2016) Rose also sets out a fourth site for potential analysis: the site of the image’s ‘circulation’. In other words, the routes and processes through which images might move between their sites of production to their various sites of audiencing. As Rose suggests, consideration of this fourth site is particularly relevant to the presentation of digital images and the way in which physical artworks may be remediated through photography. While not explicitly highlighted in my research design this site of ‘circulation’ is one that I touch on in my discussion of the visual content of public art interpretive resources in Chapter Six.

widely across these zones, suggesting that 'most are driven by their theoretical logics to concentrate on one site in particular' (*ibid*: 42).

As Rose's original circular map of this schema implies, these different aspects (sites and modalities) are to a large extent interrelated and overlapping. For example, in my own study it is difficult to see how the concept of a 'public art collection' can be considered without an exploration of the individual artworks (the visual 'sites') within it. Or, how the interpretation and audiencing of public artworks can be investigated without some discussion of their iconography (their compositional modality), their materiality and physical display (their technological modality), and some understanding of the purpose of their creation (their social modality). However, in thinking through Rose's schema, and in focusing specifically on questions of public art collection and interpretation my study focuses more on the technological and social modalities of public art production and audiencing than on detailed investigations of the compositional modality of individual public artworks. Additionally, it should be said that in examining matters of production, this study is less interested in investigating originating activity involved in the commissioning and creation of a public artwork (although these are referenced in some parts of my thesis discussion). My key focus, instead, is on the more specific 'site' of curatorial post-production, i.e. the ongoing presentation of public artworks within the cityscape.

3.3 Methods used for data collection

My research materials included both naturally-occurring and researcher-generated data. 'Naturally-occurring' data is defined as data which derives 'from situations that exist independently of the researcher's intervention' (Silverman 2011: 274). For Silverman, the ability to use this type of data is one of the real strengths of qualitative research and is especially useful in helping to establish the character of the phenomenon being studied (*ibid*: 17). In my project, this type of data included institutionally-produced interpretive texts (such as public art maps, guides and

webpages) and the physically sited artworks that make up the Newcastle-Gateshead 'public art collection'.

Beyond this body of found material, my study used two types of researcher-generated data. The first being qualitative interview data in the form of audio recordings and transcripts from my meetings with public art curators and managers in Newcastle-Gateshead and from the walking interviews conducted in the city with public art audience members. The second type comprised observational field notes and visual data in the form of documentary photographs of the public artworks and the artwork sites, and annotated Google maps constructed from my own site visits and from the participant walking interviews. The following sections describe my rationale and procedure for using these different data collection methods and indicates the role this material has played within the overall research project.

3.3.1 Research database and document analysis

To provide an initial set of data and a tool through which an overview of the city's public art 'collection' and its components and characteristics might be constructed, details of 240 individual artworks were gathered and catalogued. These included both extant and decommissioned artworks sited in Newcastle-Gateshead between 1960-2015. Research findings from the analysis of this database are examined in Chapter Five.

A wide range of resources were drawn on to develop this research database. The first of these was a substantial archive of public art interpretive materials produced by Newcastle-Gateshead-based public art commissioners that I had gathered during my professional work in the public art sector. Some of this material went back to the late 1990s-early 2000s. Over the timeline of my project, this archive was updated with more recently produced publicly available print and online resources and my own photographic documentation of onsite artwork interpretation panels and label plaques gathered during my fieldwork visits (described in section 3.3.4). The national survey directory (Usherwood et al. 2000) produced by the UK's Public Sculpture and

Monuments Association (PMSA), which features a full section on artworks in Tyne and Wear including contemporary works in Newcastle-Gateshead up until 1999, was also a key supplementary source for this initial research phase.²⁵ Secondary to these two sources, was a collection of historic Newcastle-Gateshead public art strategies, policies, catalogues and reports. As well as providing information for my database, these were also used to inform my wider understanding of the history of public art commissioning in Newcastle-Gateshead (examined in Chapter Four) and to prepare the agendas for my interviews with the city's public art curators and programme managers. Having this array of different documents to refer to, produced by different bodies and in different time periods, allowed the possibility of factual cross-checking between different resources, thus allowing me to construct a reasonably robust catalogue raisonné of the city's post-1960 public art 'collection' (as it was c.2015).

Following the conventions used in other public art databases, including that developed nationally by the PMSA, relevant categories of information captured at this initial mapping stage were: artwork title; name of the artist; completion year; artwork location; name of the commissioner (or current custodian); and, if relevant, the name of the commission programme that the artwork was generated within (see Appendix A).

My collection of public art interpretive materials played a double role within my research study. As Finnegan (2006) suggests, their usage was both 'direct' and 'indirect': firstly being employed in terms of factual content (to build my public research database, as just described) and secondly, as a source for deeper textual analysis i.e. examining the way this 'factual' content was presented and produced within the text (*ibid*: 143). The aim of this second stage of analysis was to understand these interpretive materials as a specific cultural output (Davis 2008: 56) of public art production. Here, I followed an understanding of documents as being part of a field or network of action that engages with producers, users and use settings (Prior 2003:

²⁵ The full national database is available online at <http://www.pmsa.org.uk/national-recording-project/nrp/>. In July 2017 PMSA announced a major new National Lottery funded partnership with Art UK to complete and update the national database and its *Public Sculpture of Britain* publication series. This work is currently being delivered by a network of national volunteers.

2). In other words, I aimed to examine not just the content of the document (in its multimodal form) but also to consider its social functions for both its institutional author and the reader. Specifically, I was concerned with the interpretive frames and discourses set up within the text and the invitation these texts proposed to their imagined or 'implied' reader (Iser 1978). Findings from this detailed document analysis form the basis for my discussion of public art interpretive framing in Chapter Six.

While institutionally produced documents formed the main body of textual material used in the research, other types of document including public art media coverage and commissioned artists' own websites were also considered as potentially relevant material for the study. Early exploration showed that these sources could have comprised rich sources for study and analysis. While recognising that artists are essential to public art production and that the press media is an active agent in the public interpretation of public artworks, it was decided that, in line with my research objectives, neither of these two bodies of material would be included in my final research design. In exploring post-commissioning concepts of public art collection and interpretation, as set out in my research question, it was decided that this study should focus more specifically on institutional, curatorial and audience perspectives than on those of the producing artists.

3.3.2 *Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used method of qualitative data collection. They play a particularly central role in studies 'concerned with investigating people's experience and perspectives' (Hammersley 2013: 67). Here the interview can be regarded as a kind of 'professional conversation', one which is guided by the researcher's topic of interest but which aims to encourage participants to talk about their experiences and viewpoints through their own words and ideas (Braun & Clarke 2013: 78). As Hammersley (2013) and Kvale (2007) point out, interviews and their resulting data can be used in a number of ways. Depending on the aim of the study they might be used variously and often simultaneously (Hammersley, 2013) as a source of witness information (on a specific event or

situation), as an opportunity for participant self-reflection, or as a source for analysing underlying participant attitudes and perspectives. All three of these aspects and purposes of the interview played a role in my research study.

In whatever way interview data is used, it is important to understand the qualitative interview as an interaction and co-construction between researcher and participant (Hammersley 2013; Kvale 1996). This is an interpersonal dialogue where the personality of the researcher themselves acts as the 'research instrument' (Gillham 2001: 4). As such, the qualitative interview brings with it certain dangers especially in terms of researcher influence (asking leading questions), interviewee reactivity (saying things he/she thinks the researcher wants to hear), and the erosion of professional distance between researcher and participant. In the constructivist model of the research interview (Kvale 1996: 159), the elimination of such potential biases is deemed neither possible nor necessarily desirable. Instead it is a matter of recognising and being reflective of these issues within subsequent analysis and discussion. This is the approach I have taken in the use of interview data in my study.

My study employed two qualitative interview formats involving two different sets of research participants: office-based interviews with Newcastle-Gateshead public art curators and commissioning programme managers;²⁶ and mobile (walking) interviews with public art audience members. The procedure for the walking interviews is described in detail in section 3.3.3. This current section now goes on to describe the rationale and process for the office-based interviews.

²⁶ As background for this research project interviews (and site visits) were also conducted with public art curators and programme managers in three UK cities/towns which were identified as actively promoting themselves as holding 'public art collections': Cardiff, Folkestone and Milton Keynes. While these interviews informed my understanding of the potential for public art collection-hood, my study did not seek to make detailed comparisons between Newcastle-Gateshead and these other public art cityscapes. This set of interviews was not therefore included in my main data analysis for this thesis.

The aim of my Newcastle-Gateshead curator/programme manager interviews was to investigate the culture of public art production within the city from the perspectives of its main institutional commissioners and through this, to explore local attitudes to public art curation, interpretation and collection practices. As suggested by Kvale (2007), these interviews were also used to factually augment and sometimes to annotate research data collected through other aspects of my fieldwork. In some of these interviews, print-based interpretive materials collected and analysed elsewhere in the study served as prompts for the conversation, stimulating valuable insights into how these materials were institutionally generated and used.

Following the initial research used to compile the Newcastle-Gateshead public art database, the decision was made to focus my interviews on the three most active institutional producers of public art in the city, namely: Gateshead Council; Newcastle City Council; and Nexus ('Art on Transport'). The question of who might act as key informants for my research was not necessarily a clear issue. While Gateshead Council had an established Public Art Curator who had been with the organisation for nearly 30 years, Newcastle City Council had had a rolling sequence of public art officers and at the time of my interviews had no post with that specific role. Instead, the responsibility for public art curation and commissioning had been devolved to members of the council's urban design and planning teams. Additionally, several freelance public art curators, arts consultants and advisors had also historically played a key role within individual commissioning programmes over this period. As a starting point for this element of the research and working primarily from my own previous professional knowledge and contacts a list of primary informants was drawn up. As the interviews took place, this list was then broadened to include other informants suggested by some of the interview participants themselves. All the individuals I targeted accepted the invitation to participate in the research.

Ten interviews were conducted and audio-recorded as part of the study between May 2014-Nov 2015 (see Table 3.2). Two of these were double interviews, each involving two participants.

Table 3-2: Summary of key informant interviews.

Name	Job title / Public art role	Organisation	Date	Duration
Peter Davies	Former Visual Arts Officer (1974-92)	Northern Arts	08.05.14	81 mins
Mara Helen Wood	Curator	University of Northumbria Gallery	17.04.15	50 mins
Huw Lewis	Corporate Manager for Customer Services and Communications / manager 'Art on Transport' programme.	Nexus	17.05.15	81 mins
Anna Pepperall	Public Art Curator	Gateshead Council	19.05.15	88 mins
Jen Douglas	Public Art Assistant	Gateshead Council	19.05.15	joint interview (as above)
Michael Crilly	Former Urban Design / Public art lead	Newcastle City Council	26.05.15	74 mins
Ian Ayris	Team Manager, Urban Design and Conservation	Newcastle City Council	26.05.15	55 mins
Ben Smith	Historic Environment Officer	Newcastle City Council	26.05.15	joint interview (as above)
Andrew Rothwell	Team Manager, Arts and Culture	Newcastle City Council	11.06.15	45 mins
Germaine Stanger	Independent Curator	Tyne and Wear Development Corp / Gateshead Garden Festival	21.07.15	63 mins
Richard Broderick	Former Public Art Officer	Newcastle City Council	20.08.15	61 mins
Matthew Jarratt	Former Commissions Officer	Commissions North / Arts Council England North East	17.11.15	82 mins
			TOTAL = 10 interviews	TOTAL = 680 mins

The interview agenda built on themes and ideas identified as part of the literature review work on collections and interpretation practice undertaken in the earlier stages of the study (and subsequently developed in Chapter Two of this thesis). Each interview was designed to draw out institutional and the participants' own professional understandings and positions in relation to the post-commissioning aspects of public art presentation, including their approaches to object care, public art interpretation and audience engagement. The interview guide (see Appendix B) developed for this part of the study took a 'funnel' approach, designed to ease the participant into the main topics for discussion. The advice from the methods literature being to begin with broad and open questions and then to narrow the interview towards the main issues of concern to the research. After a verbal restatement of the research and interview aims, the interview started with a set of opening questions that asked participants to describe their own role in relation to public art in Newcastle-Gateshead. As terminology was part of the subject of the interview, and thus to try to avoid influencing participant responses unduly, it was only in the last stages of the interview that the term 'public art collection' itself was introduced.

In addition to desk-based interviews, my research also used mobile walking interviews to investigate the ways in which public artworks were audienced in the city. As this is a relatively innovative method for public art research, the next section provides an extended discussion into the theory and usage of this method of data collection and describes the specific processes used to conduct the walking interviews undertaken in my study.

3.3.3 *Walking interviews*

Mobile walking interviews were the data collection method chosen for the audiencing element of my research project. The purpose of these interviews was to elicit rich data on public art audience members' personal responses to, and knowledge and interpretations of, a selection of public artworks located in the Newcastle-Gateshead cityscape. In focusing on the city's public artworks as the focus and route for the walking interviews, this method has a correlation with visual research methods that use visual elicitation as a stimulant for researcher-participant conversations.

Conducted in-situ rather than at a distance, walking interviews or 'walking probes' (Hein et al. 2008), allow the interviewer and interviewee to use the immediate physical environment as the prompt for discussion, rather than relying secondary sources such as photographic images. In this way, walking interviews provide opportunities for participants to 'show' rather than merely to 'describe' their experiences (Clark & Emmel 2010: 2).

The walking interview has been described as a hybrid of participant-observation and interview (Jones et al., 2008). One of the clearest and most cited definitions of the method is provided by US ethnographer Margarethe Kusenbach (2003) in her description of the 'go-along': 'When conducting go-alongs, fieldworkers accompany individual informants on their 'natural' outings, and – through asking questions, listening and observing – actively explore their subjects' stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment' (*ibid*: 463). In other words, the 'go-along' is phenomenological in approach. It is a research tool designed to understand experience from the participant's viewpoint. Although inevitably there is a tension between the 'naturalness' of the experience and the presence of the accompanying (and questioning) researcher. In walking-along-with, the intention is to shift the power dynamic of the interview process from being researcher-driven to being largely participant-led (at least within the given framework of the research study).

Proponents of the walking interview argue that this method is a particularly useful for exploring everyday experience and for understanding the social, sensory and emotional aspects of our encounters and interactions with space and place (Carpiano 2009; Jones et al. 2008). Kusenbach argues that pure observation of 'natural environments' on its own is limited because it cannot reveal what is going on in people's minds: their 'concurrent experiences and interpretations' (2003: 459); while traditional 'sit-down' interviews take informants out of the natural environment, preventing them from engaging in the 'natural activities' the researcher wishes to explore (*ibid*). Pink (2007: 250) goes further, to suggest that in 'walking with' research participants, the researcher can gain access to an 'empathetic' and 'embodied' i.e. 'emplaced' understanding of the experience of place, as it is practiced and created 'in

the moment'. For Degen and Rose (2012) and Kusenbach (2003), the process of walking-and-talking-with can also be revealing of participants' personal perceptual memories and individual spatial biographies, showing how people map their present experiences of place with memories of previous visits and by making comparisons with other places that they have been to. As such, the walking interview can be viewed as having an affinity, not only to the 'mobilities' paradigm but also to wider research interests in the phenomenology of place (Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003; Pink, 2007) and psychogeography (Middleton, 2011).

Thinking on a more micro-spatial scale, as 'in-gallery walk-alongs' or 'accompanied visits', walking interviews have also been employed as a qualitative research method within some museum and gallery audience studies (Hooper-Greenhill & Mousouri 2001b; MTM London 2013; Gröschel 2015). In this context, the walking interview may also be considered as having a special methodological value for museological discussions on the embodiment of the museum visit and object-visitor engagement, e.g. as described in recent work on 'museum materiality' (Dudley 2010; 2012) and writing on the pedestrian choreography of the museum visit (Leahy 2012). For Leahy, the experience of museum 'looking' cannot be separated from the experience of museum walking. For her, 'walking choreographs visibility within the museum' (2012: 75). Although public artworks exist in a very different 'scopic regime' (Rose, 2012) to that constructed by the museum experience (i.e. that of public space and everyday experience), the findings of my review of the public art audiencing literature (Chapter Two, section 2.2.3) indicate that both these aspects – materiality and embodiment – are of equal concern for investigations of audience' encounters with public artworks.

In investigating the audiencing of public art works in Newcastle-Gateshead, my research study therefore sits somewhere between these discourses of space/place exploration, and the more contained micro-geography of the museum visit. While the public artworks that I investigated in this research study were physically fixed and static, their audience and practices of audiencing was primarily mobile. Carrying out audience interviews as live explorations undertaken in the actual research site, rather

than as retrospective or remote discussions relying only on photo documentation, was therefore an important aspect of my own research methodology.

In the study, ten walking interviews (including a pilot interview) were organised and conducted over a three-month period between April and June 2014. As Table 3.3 shows, twelve people were involved as research participants in this element of the research study. The participants were all self-identifying 'interested' public art audience members, recruited through an open public call rather than through a process of 'purposive sampling' (Bryman 2012). Although some socio-cultural data was captured in my interviews, and I did aim to involve a range of age groups and gender in my study, sampling on this basis was not deemed a core requirement.²⁷ Instead recruiting participants who might generate an 'authentic' understanding (Silverman 2011: 44) of the audiencing experience was a more important objective. Similarly, in my aim to examine audience members' 'public art talk' and to explore participants' personal histories of encounter with the city's public art collection, I was more interested in talking with public art engagers than with 'non-engagers'. On this point, it could be argued that, as each interview route included at least some artworks that participants had not previously visited or noticed, my participant group did, in effect, contain both engagers and non-engagers at an individual artwork level.

The call for research participants was principally advertised through a print and email flyer (Fig. 3.1). Several complementary routes were used to promote the call: the distribution of printed flyers at cultural venues and information points in Newcastle-Gateshead, including the two main public libraries, St Mary's Heritage Centre (Gateshead), The Lit and Phil, Tyneside Cinema, Shipley Art Gallery, Hatton Gallery, and Newcastle University; personal invitation to participants of formal public art walks organised by Gateshead Council; and circulation via Gateshead Council Public Art

²⁷ The effects of social difference e.g. class, ethnicity, gender, religion and ability/literacy, on the public art encounter is a newly emerging area of research, as highlighted in Zebracki & Palmer (2018). Earlier studies, including by Zebracki, indicate that 'proximity' and artwork familiarity is a more important factor in public art audiencing than social difference (2011). However, it should be noted that 'proximity' with public artworks is also linked to an individual's cultural capital, their mobility and wider usage of the cityscape: factors which are themselves influenced by issues of social difference. While, as will be shown in Chapter Seven, individuals' perspectives on the artworks encountered varied widely in my study, the overall profile of participants included in my walking interviews (as indicated in Table 3.3) constituted a fairly-limited social grouping in this regard.

Team to its e-list of people who had attended previous visual art workshops and public art events.



Figure 3-1: Research project flyer used to recruit my walking interviews participants.

Each walking interview lasted between 30-90 minutes, visiting up to ten artworks on a route negotiated individually with each participant. Five interviews took place in Newcastle and five in Gateshead. Two of these were double interviews (i.e. involving the researcher plus two participants who had requested to undertake the walk as a joint activity). One interviewee took part in two separate walks on different dates. Table 3.3 provides a summary of the walking interviews and their participant profile. (To maintain participant anonymity the names of the participants have been changed in the Table and in this thesis text). Short biographical sketches of the walking interview participants are provided in Chapter Seven (section 7.2).

Table 3-3: Summary of my audience walking interviews.

Int. no.	Project name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Years resident or working in city	Duration (mins.)
1	Alison	F	51	solicitor	28	35.39
2	Ben	M	76	retired computer programmer	24	78.91
	Carol	F	63	retired music teacher	29	
3	Daphne	F	73	retired secretary	73	83.41
4	Eddie	M	51	computer programmer	51	112.43
5	Frank	M	56	retired language teacher	7	94.06
6	Greg	M	31	architecture graduate	31	84.53
	Hilary	F	30	pharmacist	5	
7	Ian	M	not given	NHS consultant	not given	77.33
8	Frank	M	56	retired language teacher	7	61.58
9	Jackie	F	52	not given	51	76.23
10	Karen	F	not given	retired librarian/civil servant	all her life	68.00
No. = 10		F = 6 M = 5	Age range: 30-76	Total interviews (hours) = 13	Average interview = 77 mins	

The design of these interviews drew on models of aesthetic experience and museum visiting and hermeneutic theory outlined in my literature review. Specifically, the interview structure reflected Falk and Dierking's understanding that cultural experience is situated in personal contexts and evolves both within the moment and in longer time: 'over time meaning is built upon, layer by layer' (2013: 29). As with the office-based interviews, an interview agenda was drawn up to act as a framework and guide for the walking interviews (see Appendix C). This was structured in two main parts. Part one consisted of general introductory questions which asked about

the participants' current occupation, their length of residence (or employment) in the city, and their age. It also asked them to list their leisure and cultural interests and to describe their 'interest in public art'. Part two consisted of questions to be used as prompts during the public art walk. These aimed to draw out the participants' reflections on their everyday relationship with the artwork and/or their immediate responses to each artwork visited along the chosen route.

The decision about which artworks to visit was discussed in pre-interview (telephone) conversation with each participant, with the aim of incorporating familiar works into a route that would be feasible within the interview timescale. This was balanced with my aim to cover a range of different sites and artworks across the set of interviews. Over the ten interviews, a total of 55 artworks were visited. 24 artworks were visited over more than one interview, allowing me to build up a complex picture of their audiencing generated from the perspectives of multiple participants. The findings from these participant walking interviews form a core part of the analysis and discussion of public art audiencing provided in Chapter Seven.

Each interview was recorded using a small and unobtrusive digital audio recorder fixed with a noise reduction microphone. The interviews were then transcribed by myself into Word from the MP3 files. Where relevant to the research questions, non-verbal elements of the interview and embodied interactions with the artworks were recorded in my transcripts. Some notes on background noise or on-site conditions were also included within the text as reminders of the ambience and sensory environment surrounding the artwork visit. Although a full conversation-analysis method was not used within this research project, the transcripts did aim to represent the performative nature of the interview and in particular to allow for a recognition, within the data analysis, of the 'researcher effect' on the conversation. Each individual walking interview, as performed on the day, constructed its own socially enacted interpretive encounter and it was this quality that the transcripts aimed to capture and record. Using my mobile phone, GPS tagged photographs were taken of each of the artworks as they were visited. Reference images of the artworks and photographs of participant-artwork interactions were included in the interview transcripts as an *aide memoir* to the conversation. Similarly, each interview transcript

also included a Google map indicating the walking route taken and the position and order of the visited artworks. (Sample pages from one of the walking interview transcripts is included in Appendix D.)



Figure 3-2: Map showing locations and order of artworks visited in Walking Interview Six.

Walking Interview Six, for example, visited eight artworks located around Newcastle city centre and Graingertown. Our route (as shown on the map in Fig. 3.2) started with the *Spiral Nebula* sculpture sited within the Newcastle University campus and ended at the *Grainger Dedication* pavement panel near Grey's Monument. Building on the variety of chosen routes (some of which overlapped), the overall set of walking interviews was inclusive of a wide range of public art forms and artwork settings. As I will now go on to describe, in addition to and partly in preparation for the audience walking interviews, I also carried out my own mobile observations of the city's public art collection.

3.3.4 Observational fieldwork

On-the-ground visits to individual public artworks sited in Newcastle-Gateshead formed an important part of my research design. As with the walking interviews already described, these visits were vital in grounding the research in relation to the material and visual presence of the artworks (the 'public art collection') under investigation. Although pre-existing documentary photographs of these artworks were also referred to, these images could only give a very partial account of the artworks as they might be encountered within the cityscape. While most methods texts speak of observational research in terms of capturing data on human behaviours (the 'audienicing' element of my study), the term observation is not usually connected to researching static objects. This kind of combined observation, aimed at generating grounded accounts of individual artworks and their on-site audienicing, has been quite widely used in other public/outdoor art research, most notably by: Warren (2011; 2012) at Yorkshire Sculpture Park; Stevens, (2012) at Berlin's Holocaust Memorial; by Degen et al. (2008) in Milton Keynes; and by Senie (2003) in New York City.

Because of my proximity to my main research setting (Newcastle-Gateshead is my adopted home town) and the extended part-time status of my PhD study, the observational element of my data collection was episodic and often opportunistic in its organisation. Although some observation and site visit activity was concentrated into more focused phases, this observational fieldwork was probably the most unstructured part of my data collection process. Nevertheless, this approach, which drew on my dual position as researcher and member of the everyday Newcastle-Gateshead public art audience, was highly valuable in enabling me to reflect on my own habitual encounters with the public art collection that I was investigating. It also gave me the opportunity to document the public art cityscape across a range of viewing conditions, seasons and weathers.

Following the early phase of document-based research and the population of my public art collection database, I set out on a series of exploratory site visits designed to reacquaint myself with the public art landscape of the city, and particularly to visit those artworks that I had read about but had not actually 'visited' or seen before. In most cases journeys to these artworks and sites were undertaken on foot, by bicycle

or by public transport, sometimes following publicly promoted public art maps or interpretive guides (e.g. the *Gateshead Art Map* or the *Public Art in Public Transport* booklet produced Nexus). Sometimes the rationale for these early stage visits was more pragmatic, choosing artwork locations and short routes that were designed to fit in as part of a professional working day or built into a leisure activity. For example, artwork visits to Newburn Riverside and Newcastle Business Park were designed to fit between consultancy meetings I was having in the vicinity, while an observation visit to artworks along Gateshead Quayside and the Derwent Walk were incorporated into an afternoon cycle ride. These visits were not purely based on convenience. Ethnographically, they were part of my agenda as a 'participant-observer' to consciously mirror the way in which public artworks are experienced within everyday routines rather than as a visit-mode activity. (The difference between 'everyday' and 'visitor'-mode public art encounters is a theme that will be explored further in Chapters Six and Seven).

To record these artwork visits, field notes were made at each site. These notes were primarily descriptive and 'naturalistic' in their content (Foster 2006, p.57). Many of my field notes from this period focus on the navigational, visual and sensory aspects of my artwork encounter rather than on detailed physical descriptions of the artworks themselves. Rose (2012) uses the term 'compositional analysis' for detailed looking at and analysing art objects (their visual and expressive content, colour, composition) something that my own site visits and field notes only briefly touched on. In many cases, the descriptive aspects of the site visits were recorded photographically.

On occasion, the timing of my observation visits coincided with spontaneous moments of physical artwork interaction initiated by members of the public (e.g. see Fig 3.3, Right). Interactions of this type captured during my observation sessions included acts of play, tactile handling and posing. These types of public art interaction have also been recorded by other public art observers including by Senie in her street studies of public artworks in New York City (undertaken in the late 1990s-early 2000s) and more recently in Quentin Stevens' research into the 'ergonomic' uses of public memorials (e.g. Stevens 2012; Stevens & Franck 2016). At some sites, my

photographs also recorded the physical traces left by previous interactions and audience behaviours (Fig 3.3, Left).



Figure 3-3: Traces and incidents of public art interaction: Left, graffiti on *The Angel of the North*, 16 June 2013; Right, boy playing on *Sports Day*, 4 September 2012.

Alongside these self-generated site visits, I also acted as a participant-observer at a small number of externally-organised public art events. These included a programme of public art walks led by Gateshead Council's Public Art Curator, an annual public art tour organised by the Friends of the Shipley Art Gallery and heritage walks containing a public art element which were led by Newcastle City Guides. Over the course of the project I participated in five such tours some of which were audio recorded. In summer 2013, I also attended a large-scale on-site public celebration event marking the 15th 'birthday' of *The Angel of the North* (organised by Gateshead Council). Observational data and reflections generated through these organised tours and site visits (captured in photographs and field notes) were used as a background for my main investigation of public art audiencing (undertaken through the walking interviews) and informed my commentary on broader issues around the afterlives and aftercare of the city's public art collection. Audio recordings of curator commentaries also provided some source material for the historical narrative of public art production in the city set out in Chapter Four. Having described the

methods used for collecting my research data, the next section now explains the analytic processes that generated the research findings and led to the themes explored in the discussion chapters of this thesis.

3.4 Methods used for data analysis and integration

As shown in the previous section, and as is typical in qualitative research (Creswell 2014: 185), my study drew on multiple sources and data sets. Wolcott (1994) argues however, that the real skill of qualitative research lies not in the gathering of data but in the processes of *using* it: how to transform it into an intelligible and meaningful account. He proposes that in qualitative research this can be done through an iterative process of description, analysis and interpretation, often achieved through the writing process itself. As Creswell points out, this is very different from the process of most quantitative research where 'the investigator collects the data, then analyses the information, and finally writes the report' (2014: 195).

The qualitative methods literature (e.g. Boulton & Hammersley 2006; Creswell 2014) suggests that this process of data transformation can be broken down into distinctive stages. Although it should be noted that qualitative data analysis is also an organic and reflective process, where the staged activities of entering, coding, analysing and interpreting data are intertwined and overlapping (O'Leary 2010; Creswell 2014). Fig. 3.4 sets out the stages through which a typical thematic analysis might proceed, indicating the importance of the feedback loops between interpretation, theme generation, coding and data organisation. While recognising the messier realities of research and data analysis in practice, and acknowledging the important role played by thesis writing itself, this was roughly the route taken from raw data to research conclusions in my own project.

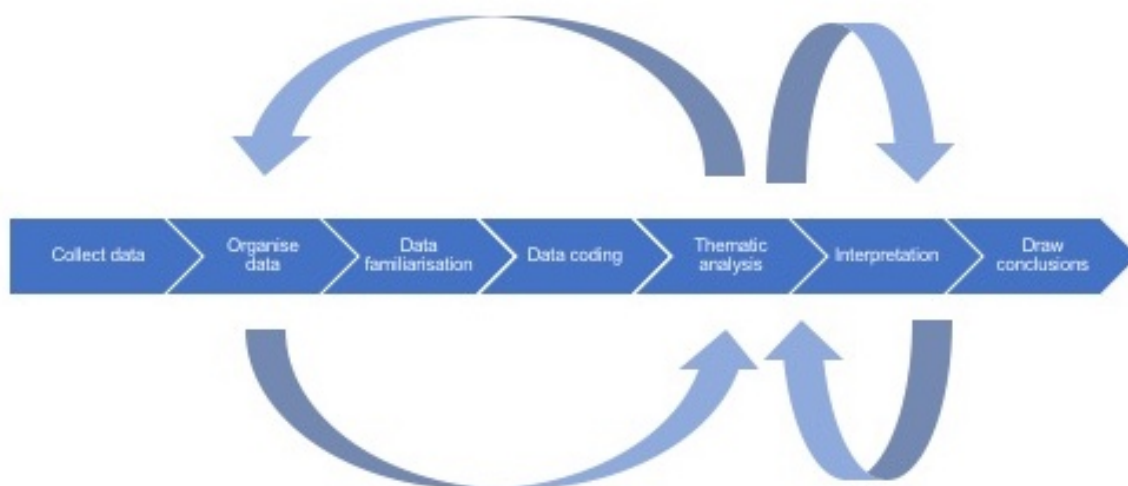


Figure 3-4: Process of reflective analysis (after O'Leary 2010).

In the next sections, I set out my approach for analysing the two main types of data collected in my research project: thematic analysis (for qualitative interviews) and discourse analysis (for texts used in public art interpretation). In both cases, these methods were taken more as a strategy for analysis than applied as a strict set of rules to be followed.

3.4.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of qualitative data analysis (QDA). It is closely although not exclusively associated with processes of 'grounded theory', an approach first proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which attempts to build theory directly through the examination of data, rather than through the application of theory. As Boulton & Hammersley write: 'The goal of grounded theorizing is to facilitate the more rigorous definition of categories through the process of analysis, rather than specifying at the beginning of the research process [...] what categories are appropriate and how they are to be defined' (2006: 253).

Although my findings were firmly 'grounded' within my research data, in the voices and perspectives of my different research participants and in my observation of the research setting, in order to answer my research question my project also recognised the essential need to move 'between inductive and deductive reasoning' (O'Leary 2010: 261). As O'Leary states: 'Discovering themes is not the only QDA option. You may, for example, have predetermined (a priori) themes or theory in mind – they might come from engagement with the literature; your prior experiences; the nature of your research question; or insights you had while collecting your data' (*ibid*: 261-2). The importance of a priori theory and themes, in the broad terms set out by O'Leary, was a clear element of my research design. As stated in my research question and expanded on in my literature review (Chapter Two), museological theory on collections and models of aesthetic and interpretive engagement held a key role in my project from the outset.

In working with the interview material from my series of desk-based and mobile interviews, my analytic journey closely resembled the process set out in O'Leary's schema (Fig. 3.4). This process began with creation of the interview transcripts. Transcribing these myself (although time-consuming) was an important first stage of data familiarisation. Initially, especially with the walking interviews, transcriptions were created as Word documents. From this, I then started to experiment with NVivo qualitative data analysis (QDA) software, initially using this programme as a place to store, manage and bring together my different data sets – the walking interview transcripts, audio recordings from the desk-based interviews, interpretive documents and observational field notes. Having started my initial analysis of these materials in Word and PDF annotations, I then moved to NVivo as a more convenient tool for coding and generating themes across my data and for accompanying memo writing (to capture questions and note down emerging categories and themes as I worked through my data analysis). I also used NVivo to directly annotate audio files from my interviews with public art curators and managers rather than to fully transcribe them as I had done with the audience walking interviews.

In the qualitative methods literature, there is often a blurring between the definition of 'codes' and 'themes'. A good distinction is made by Braun & Clarke (2013: 224)

where they state that 'a good code will capture one idea' whereas a 'theme' represents more of a 'patterned response' with a 'central organising concept'. Thus, in the process of analysis, the coding of research data gradually builds into themes and categories. Although, as already noted, coding can also be used to group research data according to existing theory and concepts. Boulton & Hammersley (2006) advise that in beginning data analysis researchers should feel free to generate a wide range of categories 'not worrying what the relevance of those categories might be to their intended goal' (*ibid*: 252). Many of these initial codes may be 'relatively banal, others may be rather less obvious and more interesting' (*ibid*: 253). Boulton & Hammersley observe that while it is these more interesting categories that the researcher will probably want to focus on, 'it is rare for such categories to appear immediately or to predominate; and sometimes what appear to be banal categories turn out not to be so at all, while apparently interesting ones prove inapplicable' (*ibid*). The initial coding created from one of my walking interviews, and demonstrating this mix of both banal and more interesting categories, is illustrated in the mind map in Fig 3.5. The initial codes attached to individual extracts from this interview (in this case with my participant Karen) were re-examined against codes generated from other interviews in the series, eventually developing into the themes discussed in Chapter Seven.

One of the critiques of the segmentation and categorisation approach typical of grounded theorisations (see Bryman 2012: 592-3) and especially, perhaps, of QDA software (such as NVivo), is the way that the coding process decontextualises the data segments it produces. It is suggested that this approach is particularly incompatible with studies which are interested in discourse as it fails to allow a sufficient focus on the context in which language is used. Boulton and Hammersley (2006) take a flexible approach to this issue, advising researchers to think carefully about the degree of context that they want to include within their segments of data. This is something that the NVivo software itself allows its users to do by setting how much textual context a data extract will include; a tool that was usefully deployed in my own data analysis.

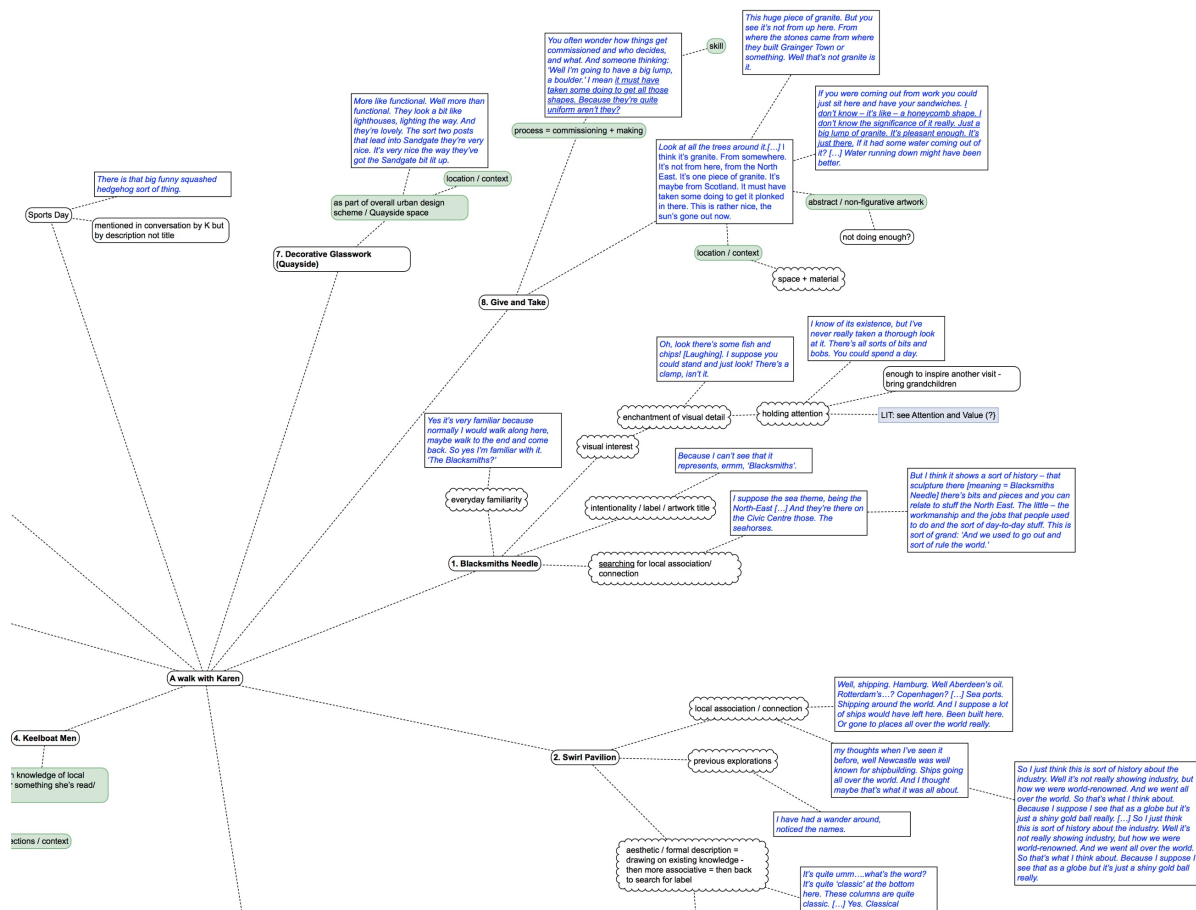


Figure 3-5: Detail of mind-map showing initial codes and categories generated from Karen's walking interview.

While NVivo was used as a central data management and analytic tool for my study, I also moved quite freely between this software and other forms of data annotation and mind-mapping (as illustrated in Fig 3.5). This was particularly helpful in gaining an overview of my emerging codes and themes and thinking through linkages and relationships with my research questions and the relevant museological theory examined in my literature review work (introduced in Chapter Two). With the walking interviews, this process also allowed me to switch viewpoints around different 'cases'. Here, I could group my data both around individual artworks and around the perspectives of different research participants. This enabled me to alternate between the mapping of different participants' experiences of the same artworks and mapping of single participant's experiences across the range of artworks visited during their interview (as in Fig. 3.5). This set of findings and the rich data that they derive from form the basis of my discussion of public art audiencing in Chapter Seven.

3.4.2 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis (DA) 'is the study of language at use in the world' and how language is used 'not just to say things, but to do things' (Gee 2011: ix); it is about analysing communication in context. Prior (2003) states that in relation to the examination of documents discourse analysis goes beyond the exploration of content. Fairclough (2003) supports a critical form of discourse analysis that 'oscillates' between a detailed focus on specific texts and a wider consideration of language as part of a network of social practices (*ibid*: 3). In this method, discourse is centred as a social practice where 'some ways of making meaning are dominant or mainstream [while] others are marginal, or oppositional, or 'alternative'' (Fairclough 2001:4). Unlike analysis that might be performed in a quantitative study (e.g. looking at the frequency of different word use) DA enables the researcher to look more closely and critically at a document's function (*ibid*: 20-21). For Prior (2003), this analysis of a document's social use can be seen as a dynamic between producers and readers. With the documents examined in my study, my investigation of discourse focused on the specific dynamic between institutional public art commissioners and public art audiences (imagined and real).

In my study, DA was used primarily as a tool to explore the language and functions of public art interpretive materials currently available in the city. These included on-site information and interpretation panels, printed guides and leaflets and online resources. Many of these were multimodal texts, combining both words and images (photographs, graphics and maps).²⁸ As Gee (2011: 188) argues, images have their own visual 'grammar' that researchers can analyse. Working with public art interpretive materials within my study, meant not just examining the language and purpose of their written content but also considering their visual meanings as implied within the context in which the materials would be read (*ibid*).

²⁸ Multimodal discourse analysis also has much wider application as the study of written language in combination with other media (sound, music, moving image) and communicative action and interaction (e.g. see definition in O'Halloran 2011).

In pursuing my research question, my analysis focused specifically on the way public artworks in the city were institutionally 'framed' within these resources. This is a form of DA that has been described by Goffman (1974) as 'frame analysis' (this concept is examined further in Chapter Six). As many of the interpretive resources examined in this study were already familiar to me through my previous professional practice and in my own everyday audiencing, DA provided a useful distancing strategy to engender a research-focused engagement with this material. Gee (2011) refers to this as the essential step of 'making strange'. As he writes: 'To do discourse analysis on our own languages in our own culture requires a special skill. We have to make things new and strange that we usually see as completely "normal" and "natural." [...] we have to see what is old and taken for granted as if it were brand new' (*ibid*: 8).

Maxwell (2013: 112) suggests that DA is a particularly useful as a 'connecting' strategy. Instead of 'fracturing the initial text into discrete segments and resorting it into categories, connecting analysis [such as DA] attempts to understand the data [...] in context, using various methods to identify relationships among the different elements of the text' (*ibid*: 112). However, as Maxwell also points out, connecting and categorising strategies also 'need each other to provide a well-rounded account' (*ibid*: 113). This view is supported by Fairclough who states that: 'To research meaning-making, one needs to look at interpretations of texts as well as texts themselves, and more generally at how texts practically figure in particular areas of social life, which suggests that textual analysis is best framed within ethnography' (2003: 16). As Fairclough is keen to emphasise, texts are understood as an 'open' rather than a 'closed' system, i.e. one which might be 'put at risk by what happens in actual interactions' (*ibid*.): namely, in my study, in enacted audience encounters with public artworks and their accompanying institutionally-produced interpretations. Following Fairclough's suggestions, in this study, my account and discussion of public art interpretation in Newcastle-Gateshead is split between two chapters: Chapter Six focuses on multimodal document analysis exploring categories and patterns of institutional interpretive framing; while Chapter Seven looks to the social contexts in which these interpretive texts are used by the public art audience (as evidenced in my walking interviews).

3.5 Overview of research design

Fig 3.6 provides a holistic overview of my research design. Based on Maxwell's interactive model of research design (2013: 5), it provides a summary of how my methodology was influenced by both internal and external factors, including: my personal and professional experience and skills; my research goals; prevailing research paradigms; existing theory and literature; and accepted ethical standards.

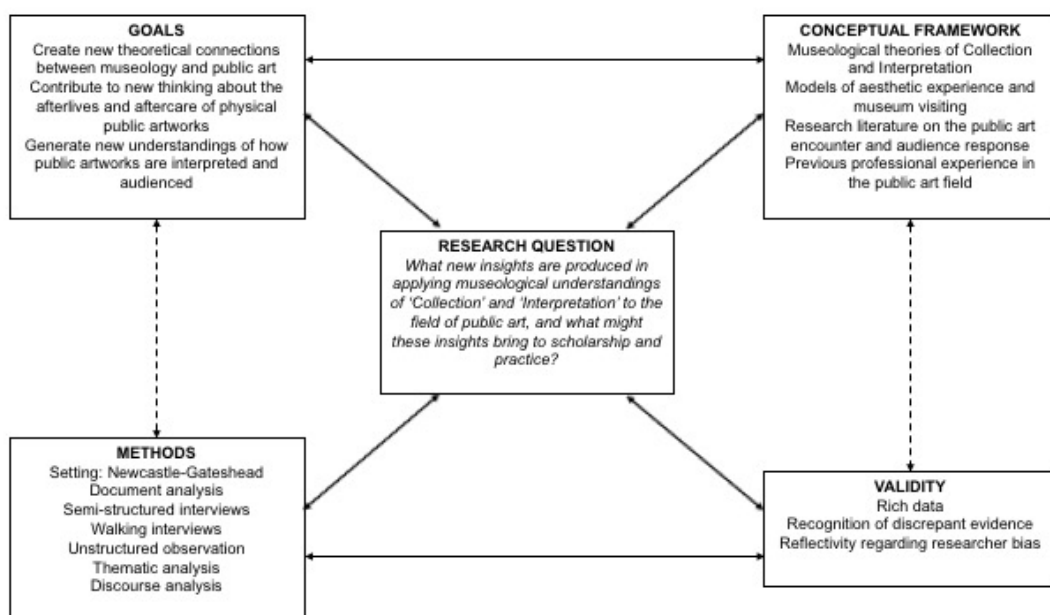


Figure 3-6: Overview of my research design (after Maxwell 2013).

3.6 Ethical and validity considerations

This final section provides detail on the ways in which ethical and validity considerations have been addressed within my research. There were certain ethical considerations that needed to be addressed in my research design and its delivery, especially in relation to the interviews and on-site observation activity. To ensure that my own project achieved required academic research standards, Newcastle University's ethical guidelines for undertaking research were examined in the early

stages of project development.

As will be apparent in the later discussion chapters of this thesis, the anonymity of the walking interview participants has been maintained within this thesis text. In my reporting from the walking interviews, participants have been allocated research names to aid identification across my analysis (as set out in Table 3.3). In both sets of interviews I conducted (with audiences and with public art managers), participants were asked to read through and sign a formal information and consent form before commencing the interview. (A copy of this form is contained in Appendix E.)

As already stated, my research project was conducted as a visual enquiry. The inclusion of images of the artworks under discussion, of their physical sites and sometimes public interactions with and around them, formed an important part of my data analysis. As such, these images also form a core part of my thesis discussion. Image copyright was therefore a key issue for this study. Public artworks are covered differently in UK copyright law from those displayed in museums and galleries. Along with buildings, artworks sited in the public realm can be photographed and reproduced in print or digitally without the copyright owner's (usually the artists') permission.²⁹ It should be noted, that unless otherwise stated, artwork photographs included in this thesis were created by myself for the purposes of the research study. For all other cases, appropriate attributions and permissions for use of images are provided in the accompanying captions.

Maxwell (2013) states that there are two main threats to research validity: researcher bias and participant reactivity (*ibid*: 124). While it is neither possible nor necessarily

²⁹ In using photographs of these artworks in my research I refer to the following statement: 'Under UK copyright law, there is specific statutory provision made for sculptures permanently situated in a public place or to which the public has access. It is one of the clearest exceptions to the basic copyright position (that no-one can reproduce copyright work without the express consent of the copyright owner). Just like works of architecture under UK and US copyright law, outdoor sculptures under UK law can be reproduced two-dimensionally, even be filmed or broadcast/transmitted, without the copyright owner's consent' (Lydiat 2006).

desirable³⁰ to eliminate researcher bias in qualitative research, the influence of researcher' subjectivity does need to be reflectively recognised. In my study, my own biases and subjectivity as a doctoral researcher were set out in the thesis Introduction (Chapter One) and form a necessary part of my research design (as summarised in Fig. 3.6). Reactivity was an issue encountered within the qualitative interviews conducted for this study and especially in the one-to-one walking interviews. Undertaken within the cityscape and sometimes of an extended duration (nearly two hours in one case), these evolved more as a conversation between researcher-participant than as a formal interview. As well as being prompted by the artworks themselves, it was sometimes necessary to use additional provocations to stimulate the interview conversation, particularly (as recognised by Denzin 1970) with the more reticent research participants. To provide a clear record of these interactions, full verbatim transcripts were made of this set of interviews which include my voice as well as that of the participant (see transcript in Appendix D).

The quality and credibility of my research and of my findings and conclusions was, of course, a key concern. Throughout the project and in this thesis text, I have aimed to 'ground' my findings in my research data. This has been achieved through the gathering, analysis, detailed description, discussion and linking of varied bodies of data, as described in the earlier sections of this chapter. As recommended by Maxwell (2013), in conducting my analysis I have sought to be reflective and considerate of discrepant evidence, hedging my conclusions where necessary in relation to the strength of my research findings.

Although recommended by some as a test of validity (e.g. by Denzin 1970), formal triangulation of data findings has not been used in this study. In working with different data sources and with different perspectives and voices, this study instead aims to create an 'assembly' of understandings of the 'situated character of action' (Silverman 2011: 370) around the phenomena of public art collection, interpretation and audiencing. It is these three sites of investigation (Rose 2012), that form the

³⁰ For Maxwell the particularity of the researcher's viewpoint is a key component of qualitative research (*ibid*).

subject matter for the following four central chapters of my thesis. These begin with the discussion of my analysis of the character of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art 'collection' (Chapters Four and Five), proceeding to discussion around its institutional interpretation (Chapter Six), and lastly to its audiencing (Chapter Seven).

Chapter 4. A public art collection in time

Collecting is an essentially spasmodic activity. Acquisition takes place over an extended period, and we feel that this is an intrinsic part of its honesty and sincerity. 'Instant' collections, our instincts tell us, are not true collections at all; in order to be honourable and genuine, collections must have been acquired gradually over the years, and piece or group at a time (Pearce 1995: 253).

It is useful to bear in mind that public art, and the way it is appreciated and valued, has a time dimension. The appearance of a work can alter over time as materials and finishes are exposed to weathering. The cultural significance and meaning attached to a work and the reputation of its artist is also subject to change. These dynamics affect the way in which public art is valued and managed (Franklin 2016: 5).

4.1 Introduction

As introduced in the review of the museological literature in Chapter Two, collections have a special dynamic in relation to time. As stated in the first of the two opening quotations above museum collections are necessarily accumulative, usually built up gradually over an extended period. Further, as Pearce (1995) writes, collection objects (as preserved and cared-for in a museum environment) assume a physical longevity: they become sacred objects, a cultural and material legacy that can be passed on to future generations (*ibid*). Public artworks may share a presumption of permanence with their museum-held counterparts but as Franklin suggests above, being sited within the public realm their materiality and cultural value is more acutely time-vulnerable. It is this set of relationships to collection time, as problematized within the context of public art practice, that forms the focus for this first of my four discussion chapters.

To pursue these themes this chapter is divided into three parts. The first part (section 4.2) provides an historical account of public art activity in Newcastle-Gateshead between 1960-2015. The aim of this narrative is to provide a detailed understanding of the dynamic through which the city's public art 'collection' has been accumulated. Setting these local activities against the wider UK context of public art development this narrative contributes to a characterisation of the Newcastle-Gateshead collection against which later chapter discussions on its institutional interpretation and public audiencing can be situated. Section 4.2 concludes with a summary section setting out the key shifts in public art practice observed across the timeline.

With the growth and history of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art 'collection' explored, the second part of the chapter (4.3) moves the discussion on to consider other key aspects of 'collection time': first, the question of the material and physical longevity of public artworks; and, second, the shifting relationship between time and artwork valorisation. Recognising reservations around 'collections thinking' within the public art sector (previously identified in my thesis Introduction and highlighted in the literature review) the final discussion section (4.4) briefly examines local institutional viewpoints on the concept of 'collection'. Section 4.5 draws out key conclusions from the overall discussion and explains how these will be built on in subsequent chapters.

4.2 Evolution of a public art 'collection' in Newcastle-Gateshead 1960-2015

As already suggested in the thesis Introduction chapter and as emphasised in the quote from Pearce (1995) that opened this chapter collections are usually built gradually. Often the growth of a collection will happen spasmodically, 'in fits and starts', and over many years (Pearce 1992: 120). As will be shown in the narrative to follow the growth of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art 'collection' very much follows this type of episodic approach.

As already stated in my thesis Introduction 'public art' was first labelled as a distinct genre of contemporary visual art practice in the 1960s, the decade in which my overview of the city's public art history begins. In the UK, its institutional and artistic roots can be identified with a growing state and popular enthusiasm for outdoor sculpture, that was a strong feature of the post-war period (Biggs 1984; Pearson 2006; 2016). The 1950s saw a series of large-scale London County Council sponsored open air sculpture exhibitions mounted in London parks, including as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain.³¹ With this new profile and with massive investment going into urban reconstruction in London and across the country this was a period 'unparalleled opportunities' for sculpture commissions (Biggs 1984: 25): a time for making 'brave art for a brave new world' (Historic England 2016: 8). This 'brave' new post-war public art was not always based on commissioning. Initially, and especially outside London, much of this activity was focused on the purchase and siting of pre-existing artworks. This was the approach adopted in some of the early New Town developments, such as in Harlow, which through the establishment of Harlow Art Trust had an active public art programme from 1953. Where public artworks were specially commissioned these tended to be concentrated around 'the more lavish civic and university buildings and office developments' of the period (Pearson 2006: 10). As will be explored in the first section of my historical narrative (4.2.1) this 'lavish' approach to new architectural developments was readily evidenced in 1960s Newcastle-Gateshead.

To give an initial overview of my historical narrative Fig 4.1 summarises the profile of public art acquisitions made in Newcastle-Gateshead in each decade since 1960.

³¹ The Festival of Britain featured more than 30 sculptures and 50 murals by contemporary artists (Historic England 2016a). Biggs (1984) notes that from 1957 ACGB organised a series of touring exhibitions of open air sculpture that went to several UK cities outside London (although not to Newcastle-Gateshead) as a way of stimulating interest in public sculpture commissioning in the regions. In contrast to the London exhibitions Biggs explains that many of these were poorly received locally.

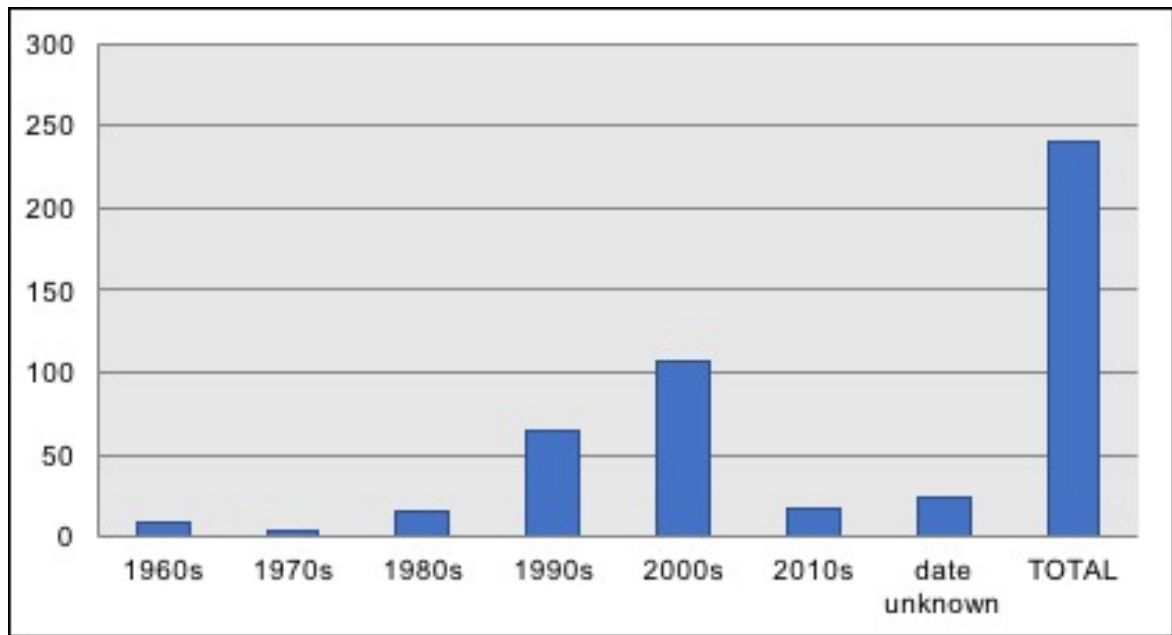


Figure 4-1: Profile of public artwork acquisitions made in Newcastle-Gateshead 1960-2015.

This profile shows very clearly that from a very gradual beginning in the first three decades the city reached its peak of public art acquisition in the 1990s and 2000s. 172 new works were installed between 1990-2009, representing 70% of total number of artworks commissioned for the city since 1960. This explosion in public art activity mirrored that happening more widely across Tyne and Wear and the North East.³² Beach (Usherwood et al. 2000: xxix) notes that in Tyne & Wear, five times as many public artworks were installed in 1990s as in 1980s. By the end of the 1990s the region was reported as having one of the biggest concentrations of contemporary public sculpture in Britain (*ibid*: xx). Fig. 4.1 also shows that the momentum of public art commissioning, at least in terms of the production of permanent artworks, reduced dramatically between 2010-15. Only 18 new artworks were commissioned in this period indicating, as identified in the narrative to follow, a distinct turn away from large-scale commissions towards temporary and community-led projects. To explore this timeline, I have divided my historical narrative into four broadly chronological sections, each one emphasising a different 'turn' or shift in public art activity as identified across these six decades.

³² The profile of public sculpture acquisition in North East England for this period given by Usherwood et al. (2000: xxi), state: 15 sculptures installed in the 1960s; c12 in the 1970s; rising to 35 in the 1980s; and 180 in the 1990s.

4.2.1 Early ambitions and 'guerrilla' projects



Figure 4-2: *River God Tyne* (David Wynne, 1968), one of the most ambitious of the artworks commissioned for Newcastle Civic Centre in the 1960s.

In Newcastle-Gateshead, the 1960s was a decade of major cultural and physical reinvention, one that was especially focused on the implementation of grand visions for Newcastle city centre. Much of this reinvention activity was driven by T. Dan Smith, Newcastle City Council Leader from 1960-65, who was a dynamic and highly influential (and later infamous) figure in Newcastle's development at the time.³³ As well as promoting the transformation of Newcastle through futuristic motorways and new high-rise housing³⁴ Smith was also an enthusiastic promoter of North East culture and a great believer in the social value of the arts (Pendlebury 2001; Vall 2011), including what we would now call public art. For the City Council, this active embracing of contemporary art and architecture was intended as a bold physical demonstration of Newcastle's new civic and regional confidence and specifically its 'progressive and cultured attitude' (Usherwood et al. 2000: 93).

³³ After leaving Newcastle City Council, Smith (1915-1993) was the subject of several high-profile corruption cases related to his business interests and financial dealings. In 1974 Smith was found guilty of bribery and conspiracy and jailed for six years.

³⁴ These schemes were part of Smith's vision to create a new modernist Newcastle as a 'Brasilia of the North' (Pendlebury 2001; Morgan 2009).

This approach was readily evidenced in the multiple artworks and decorative features commissioned for Newcastle's new Civic Centre. Built to replace the city's Victorian Town Hall, Newcastle Civic Centre (now Grade II listed) was designed by the Council's City Architect George Kenyon in the early 1950s. Constructed over a ten-year period the new building was officially opened in 1968. Architectural historian Grace McCombie describes the Civic Centre's design as being 'Scandinavian-influenced' with 'furniture and fittings of the highest quality' (McCombie 2009: 37). Driven to a large degree by the personal enthusiasm of T. Dan Smith, the project included a series of commissioned artworks and bespoke design features to be incorporated into the architecture and the building's interior public spaces. Many of these were by major British artists of the period. These artworks (all of which are still in situ today) included: two large-scale bronze sculptures by David Wynne, *River God Tyne* (on the external wall of the council chamber) (see Fig 4.2) and *Swans in Flight* (in the inner public courtyard); Victor Pasmore's abstract murals in the former Rates Hall (now the Customer Services Centre)³⁵ (Fig. 4.3); a set of illustrative etched glass screens by John Hutton, depicting local myths and engineering heritage; and a series of cast aluminium portals and lighting columns by Charles Sandsbury.



Figure 4-3: *Untitled* (Victor Pasmore, 1963)

³⁵ In 2017, this part of the Civic Centre was in the process of refurbishment as new centre for the North-East HM Courts and Tribunal Service.

As suggested by Usherwood, Beach, & Morris (2000), the lavishness of the new Civic Centre, its modernist design and prominent siting (on a new ceremonial way) and the high quality of its artwork commissions was all part of a campaign to promote a new and confident image for the city and the North East region. As Vall (2011) observes, during the 1960s many London-based politicians and arts bureaucrats saw this part of England as something of a cultural desert: an area 'peopled by former miners' and crude cultural 'barbarians' (Vall 2011: 1). Counteracting this view would be a key purpose for Northern Arts,³⁶ which was established in 1961 with support from the region's local authorities as the first of the English regional arts associations. The grand design of the new Newcastle civic centre, and its incorporation of contemporary art can be identified as one of the first steps towards the reimagining of the North East as a 'site of connoisseur metropolitan culture' (Vall 2011: 1-2). This is a campaign that could be said to have reached its zenith in the early 21st Century with the opening of BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Arts (2002) and The Sage Gateshead (2004).

While the suite of commissions at Newcastle Civic Centre are well-known it is the more hidden sculpture, *Spiral Nebula* (Geoffrey Clarke, 1962) (see Fig 4.4), sited in a quadrangle within the Newcastle University city centre campus, that is the earliest (extant) post-1960 public artwork in Newcastle-Gateshead. As was the most common route to public art commissioning in the 1960s, Clarke's sculpture was precured directly by architect Sir Basil Spence as part of his design of the University's new Herschel Physics Building. The building itself was commissioned in 1956 as part of a major expansion of the university (then King's College, a branch of Durham University) prior to the separate foundation of the University of Newcastle in 1963.³⁷ While relationships with artists were not always welcomed by contemporary architects of this period, Spence was one of the most vigorous in promoting these types of creative partnerships (Historic England 2016a). *Spiral Nebula* was his third collaboration with Geoffrey Clarke, an innovative and much sought after public artist

³⁶ Before 1967 Northern Arts was known as the North East Association for the Arts. As a Regional Arts Board, Northern Arts was absorbed into Arts Council England in 2000.

³⁷ The University of Newcastle changed its business name to Newcastle University in 2006, although the older 'University of Newcastle' title is still used on some formal documents, including its degree certificates.

of his day, who had previously created works for Spence's Coventry Cathedral and his Physics Building at Liverpool University.³⁸



Figure 4-4: Left, *Spiral Nebula*; Right, *Articulated Opposites*.

The other major stand-alone sculptural work commissioned in the city in the 1960s was the bronze *Articulated Opposites* (Raymond Arnatt, 1969) (see Fig. 4.4) created to sit outside the new Swan House building (built 1963-9, and then operating the city's main Post Office). As with the Civic Centre artworks Smith was reportedly one of the main drivers of this commission, which was intended as a celebratory memorial to Joseph Swan the Newcastle-based inventor of the electric lightbulb, after whom the building itself was also named (Usherwood, Beech, Morris 2000).

While apparently following optimistic enthusiasms of the post-war period, sculptures such as *Articulated Opposites* and *Spiral Nebula* could also be seen as attempts to humanise what might otherwise feel like rather stark modernist buildings (Biggs 1984: 25). Willett, writing around the time of these early public art commissions, was particularly critical of this type of architect-led commissioning activity, arguing that

³⁸ Clarke is reported as creating as many as 35 commissioned sculptures in the eleven years leading up to *Spiral Nebula*, which is cited as Clarke's largest public art piece (Newcastle University 2012).

such add-on works were often merely gestures to artistic involvement. For him many such works seemed 'out of place and out of scale' with the buildings they were meant to relate to (Willett 1967: 113). As well as being commissioned to enhance the prestige of the buildings they were immediately set against, and the cultural image of the city more broadly, this 1960s civic engagement with contemporary art (and especially perhaps in Pasmore's work within the more prosaic spaces of the Civic Centre's Rates Hall) could also be seen in a different light: as part of a new democratically-intentioned movement to insert contemporary art into everyday life.

Willett writes of several artworks being commissioned in the 1960s for workplace environments (Pasmore's mural for the refectory in the Pilkington building in St Helens being one such example). As Willett (1967: 100) commented at the time, although there was no 'scientific basis' for the claim, the idea that encountering art in these everyday environments could have an uplifting and beneficial effect was quite widely supported. Pearson (2015) evidences this drive to 'bring art to the people' in an extensive list of contemporary murals created in the 1950-60s for everyday sites ranging from offices, to shopping centres and cafeterias, while Historic England references the 1950s government-driven initiative to place contemporary art in schools and college environments to 'encourage creativity' (Historic England 2016: 16). The London County Council was very active in this new form of art with a social welfare purpose, funding the siting of public sculpture in housing estates, playgrounds and community centres (Whiteley 2003).

Pearson (2016: 11) writes that compared to these early programmes, the 1970s were a much more 'difficult decade' for public sculpture. Artistic experimentation with new sculptural forms and materials often got a poor reception from the public. The 'ill-fated' 1972 'City Sculpture Project' is a high-profile example of this mismatch between the ambitions of contemporary sculpture and public taste during this period (Historic England 2016a). For this project (curated by Jeremy Rees, Director of the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol) a series of new commissioned sculptures by emerging artists were temporarily installed in eight UK cities (including Newcastle) for a period of eight months, with the aim to 'inform and interest people who have become accustomed to more classic forms of sculpture' (Historic England 2016a). However,

while 'it certainly stimulated debate' most of this was negative. While there was an option for each city to retain the sculpture on a permanent basis only one of the 16 artworks were kept in place. Several, including Luise Kimme's *Untitled* installed outside The Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle, were destroyed.³⁹ William Tucker's proposed sculpture, *Beulah*, planned for Newcastle Civic Centre, was rejected by Newcastle City Council before it could be installed.⁴⁰

While only three new public artworks were installed in the city during the 1970s (perhaps partly because of this negative reaction to the City Sculpture Project experiment), the 1970s was an important decade in terms of setting the context for future public art activity in Newcastle-Gateshead. The establishment of 'Art on the Metro' was a major milestone, developing into a long-term (Tyne and Wear region-wide) commissioning programme that in part at least, continues into the present day. In the second half of the 1970s the Tyne and Wear Metro system was in its first construction phase. Built at a time of national economic recession, this was a major and prestige project for the North East of England: the first new light rail public transport system in the UK to be built outside London. The 'Art on the Metro'⁴¹ committee and public art commissioning programme was set up by the Tyne and Wear Passenger Authority in 1977 with strong support from Northern Arts. Its first commission, *Garden Front* (Raf Fulcher, 1978) (Fig 4.5) was an external sculptural installation for the surroundings of Jesmond Metro Station, one of the new stations opened in the first phase of the Metro system development.

³⁹ Kimme's sculpture was nicknamed the 'Creepy Crawly' by the press, while one local resident suggested, in a letter to Newcastle's *Evening Chronicle*, that it should be called the 'Sucker', as a reference to its funding by local taxpayers (although the project was in actuality privately-funded by the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation (Historic England 2016c).

⁴⁰ For a recent re-examination of the impacts of the 1972 City Sculpture Project see Le Feuvre (2016).

⁴¹ This is an ongoing programme now rebranded as 'Art on Transport'.



Figure 4-5: Garden Front (Photo: Public Monuments and Sculpture Association)

As recalled by Peter Davies, former Visual Arts Officer at Northern Arts (1974-1992) *Garden Front* was ‘almost like a guerrilla project...The architects at the station didn't find out about it until it went up. And it went up for £1,800’ (Davies 2014). From this experimental start, the ‘Art on Transport’ would go on to be one of the largest and most sustained public art programmes in the Tyne and Wear region. 20 permanent artworks would be commissioned for the Newcastle-Gateshead section of the Nexus transport system between 1978-2015.⁴² It is interesting to note that the Nexus ‘Art on Transport’ programme predates the formal establishment of London Transport’s ‘Art on the Underground’⁴³ by some twenty years. This was not set up until 2000, although some one-off commissions, such as Eduardo Paolozzi’s famous mosaics for Tottenham Court Road station, were initiated in the 1980s.

⁴² The Nexus ‘Art on Transport’ webpages list 38 permanent artworks installed across the Tyne and Wear system (Nexus 2017).

⁴³ Until a change of name in 2007 this programme was known as ‘Platform for Art’. Beyond these programmes, London Transport’s engagement with arts and artists is traced back to the early years of the 20th Century with Managing Director Frank Pick’s innovative strategy to create ‘an interconnected visual experience’ for the Underground traveller, through graphic art, typography and integrated design across the system (Dillon 2007).

As suggested in Davies' comment about *Garden Front*, the 1970s and early 1980s were an experimental period for public art commissioning in Newcastle-Gateshead. As Davies explained: 'we were looking for artists who could do something intelligently. For little money, or who could use the system' (Davies 2014). As Davies phrased it, these early projects were all about getting an initial 'line in' to different regional public bodies and funding streams. This was a process of strategic relationship-building at which Northern Arts (of all the English regional arts associations) was particularly adept (Vall 2011: 10). Such partnerships were part of a broader move by Northern Arts to open-up new contexts for artists to work outside the commercial gallery system. This was an issue that was especially acute in Newcastle-Gateshead, where the gallery structure for contemporary visual arts was very limited. Growing this creative infrastructure, and building the partnerships needed to do this, was a key objective for Northern Arts (Davies 2014). Generating opportunities for public art commissioning was one strategy for doing this and one that would, with the later arrival of *The Angel of the North*, come to partly define the region's future cultural reputation.

It was in the 1980s that Gateshead Council started on its own project 'to make new public art its special enthusiasm' (Usherwood 2004: 116). As with 'Art on Transport', Northern Arts was an energetic agent in this process, helping the Council, which already had a highly active arts team⁴⁴ to set up its 'Art in Public Places' programme in 1986. As with the 'Art on Transport' project, the aim was to add value to existing programmes, focusing on small scale neighbourhood regeneration and environmental improvement projects. As Cameron & Coaffee (2005) note, from the start Gateshead's focus was also on more 'invisible' and socially-oriented public arts activity, including artists residencies in schools and care centres (*ibid*: 48). It was in Gateshead's Riverside Park (see Fig. 4.6) that the Council's engagement with permanent forms of public art really began (Pepperall & Douglas 2015).

⁴⁴ In 1984 Gateshead Council became the first of the North East England local authorities to appoint an arts officer (Ros Rigby) (as reported in Vall 2011).



Figure 4-6: *Rolling Moon* (Colin Rose, Gateshead Riverside Park, 1990).

Located on a stretch of former industrial land on the west of the Tyne Bridge, this riverside site had long been identified by the Council as a target for regeneration. By the 1980s, the area was earmarked for re-greening and interim development as an inner city 'sculpture park', a place in which to bring contemporary art to a new public (Sharp et al. 2005: 1012).⁴⁵ Perhaps surprisingly, given its urban and industrial location, the curatorial ethos for the sculpture park was highly influenced by work happening at Grizedale Forest in Cumbria,⁴⁶ which was also then under Northern Arts remit (Davies 2014). Grizedale ran an innovative programme of residencies (one of the first of its kind in the UK), where sculptors were invited to develop permanent site specific works within the forest, mainly using locally found natural materials such as slate and wood. Several of the artists commissioned for the first stage of works for the new Gateshead Riverside Park had already worked at Grizedale (Richard Harris, Andy Goldsworthy and Colin Rose) while other Grizedale residency holders,

⁴⁵ Vall (2011) reports that along with the strong leadership given by the Council's arts team and planning department the Riverside sculpture park project also enjoyed strong backing from staff at the Shipley Art Gallery as part of their interest in taking art outside the gallery.

⁴⁶ Grizedale is a working Forestry Commission site on the edge of the Lake District. It was established as the UK's first sculpture forest in 1977, as a collaboration between the Forestry Commission and the Grizedale Society (now Grizedale Arts). The Grizedale sculpture collection and programme (www.grizedalesculpture.org/sculpture/; www.grizedalearchive.org) is now overseen by the national organisation Forest Arts (www.forestry.gov.uk/forestartworks).

including Michael Winstone and Gilbert Ward, would work with Gateshead Council on other commissions (e.g. *Sports Day*, Mike Winstone, 1986). The creative links between Newcastle-Gateshead and Cumbria were close enough in the early 1980s for Les Hooper (an artist and freelance consultant for Northern Arts at this time) to dub the city as 'the urban Grizedale' (Hooper 1984). This label was not meant only in relation to the Riverside Park initiative, but also for the commissions being created for 'Art on Transport': 'Although the surroundings are very different, the situation for the artists has many similarities. The art has to cope with a dominating landscape and pre-ordained set of circumstances; on the one hand the industry and nature of the forest and on the other the business and architecture of an urban transport system' (*ibid*: 158).

Bottle Bank (Richard Harris, 1986) (Fig. 4.7) was the first work commissioned for the Riverside Sculpture Park (the installation of further artworks in the park would follow in the 1990s). While similar in form to some of his work in Grizedale, in Gateshead Harris swapped his forest palette of materials for more urban architectural ones to create a permanent walk-through sculpture built of stone blocks and steel arches.



Figure 4-7: *Bottle Bank* (Photo: Public Monuments and Sculpture Association)

Like several other Newcastle-Gateshead commissions of the period, including some of the 'Art on the Metro' artworks (e.g. *Nocturnal Landscape*, Keith Grant, 1983), *Bottle Bank* was constructed with help from Manpower Service Commission (MSC) trainees.⁴⁷ This partnership with MSC was an important part of Northern Arts early 'use the system' approach to developing a regional infrastructure for commissioning and wider arts development. Although now decommissioned *Bottle Bank* is still regarded as something of an 'emblematic' work for Gateshead, marking the start of the Council's involvement in public art commissioning and cultural regeneration (Vall 2011: 149). As Jarratt (2005: 8) states, the artworks commissioned for Riverside Sculpture Park would 'set a benchmark for subsequent programmes' in the city.

4.2.2 Public art and riverside regeneration

While these public art experiments of the 1970s and early 1980s emerged from a specifically regional context (Vall 2011), by the end of the decade public art commissioning was becoming an increasingly established and centralised institutional practice.⁴⁸ From the late 1980s onwards, the societal, environmental and economic benefits of the arts were being inscribed into Government-led regeneration policy (Pollock & Paddison 2014: 88). These moves coincided with a widespread restructuring of the economy under Thatcherism which was characterised by major cuts in public spending and a new focus on private sector investment. Value for money and instrumentalist arguments around the positive impact of the arts on economic growth, tourism and employment, as advocated by Myerscough (1988) were increasingly foregrounded. This marked a new era of 'policy attachment' in the arts (Gray 2002, as cited in Pollock & Paddison 2014: 88). The new opportunities afforded by regeneration and the need to make a case for the relevance of the arts within this new agenda, was argued in multiple publications of the period, including (as cited in Pollock & Paddison 2014): *The Public Art Report* (Shaw 1988), *An Urban*

⁴⁷ The Manpower Services Commission (MSC) was a non-departmental government body created by Edward Heath's Conservative Government in 1973. It was funded by the Department of Employment (1974-1988). MSC was later replaced by a network of Training and Enterprise Councils.

⁴⁸ Although as Pollock and Paddock (2010) have also argued, public art activity has never been fully 'embedded' into public policy.

Renaissance: The Role of Arts in Urban Regeneration (Arts Council 1987). Most of this new regeneration-led public art activity was linked to the work of the metropolitan local authorities and the new Urban Development Corporations (Selwood 1995). In response to this new agenda, the 1980s was also the decade that saw the establishment of the public art officer posts in many local authorities across the country and the setting up of the first national and regional public art commissioning agencies (Public Art Development Trust, Art in Partnership, Public Art Forum, among others). Drawing on the work of these new regional and national public art organisations and the introduction of new funding models, including ‘percent for art’⁴⁹ (first endorsed by the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1988) and the National Arts Lottery (established in 1994), by the mid-1990s the UK was demonstrating something akin to a ‘public art revolution’ (Pearson 2016: 7). The National Lottery ‘created a radical alteration of the cultural funding landscape’ of England (Gee 2017: 103), especially in terms of the money available for capital arts infrastructure and public art investment. Usherwood et al. (2000: xxiii) report that in its first five years, the Lottery contributed £50m to UK public art projects.

In Newcastle-Gateshead, the 1990 Gateshead Garden Festival is now seen as a pivotal event in the acceleration of public art commissioning in the city (Jarratt 2005; Vall 2011). With a clearly regenerative agenda, this was the fourth of the five UK Garden Festivals held between 1984-1992.⁵⁰ It occupied a 200-acre site on decontaminated industrial land around the Dunston area a mile to the west of the Tyne Bridge. Winning the right to host the Festival was regarded as a major coup for Gateshead and locally the event was viewed as a great success: attracting over 3m

⁴⁹ Borrowed from similar schemes in North America and Europe ‘percent for art’ was conceived by ACGB as a ‘creative’ funding scheme whereby an agreed percentage of the cost of a public or private sector capital building project (usually up to 1%) was reserved for art and craft commissions. In the UK this model was only patchily adopted and not always vigorously or actively argued for by local authorities. In Newcastle-Gateshead, Nexus adopted its own ‘percent for art’ policy in 1996, investing up to 1% of its annual capital programme to support new ‘Art on Transport’ commissions, including the cost of community consultation and education activity, a public art consultant and a full-time assistant post to support the programme (Etchells 2008). As reported by Nexus this ‘percent for art’ policy was ‘technically’ still in place in 2015, although no longer very active (Lewis 2015). Like many other local authorities, Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council have more typically negotiated planning contributions to public art on a project-by-project basis rather than on a fixed ‘percent for art’.

⁵⁰ The National Garden Festivals project was devised by the Conservative Government of the time as a regeneration initiative for former industrial sites. Previous ‘Garden Festivals’ were held in Liverpool (1984), Stoke (1986), and Glasgow (1988).

visitors and bringing in £37m worth of new public and private investment (Vall, 2011: 150). Along with the show gardens, monorail, fun park and outdoor entertainment, contemporary visual art was a major feature of the Gateshead event. The 'Festival Landmarks' programme (curated by Isabel Vasseur) presented more than seventy artworks across the Garden Festival site. It was the largest programme of public art of all the National Garden Festivals.⁵¹ Several of the artists exhibiting at the Garden Festival would be involved in later Newcastle-Gateshead public art commissions.⁵² Although the UK Garden Festivals were criticised by some at the time for their 'kitsch' aesthetic and 'cosmetic' approach to the problems of post-industrial Britain (Miles 1989: 89) the success of the Gateshead Garden Festival, and the important role played by the contemporary visual arts within it, has been widely acknowledged in Newcastle-Gateshead. Here the Festival has been seen as paving the way for the commissioning of *The Angel of the North* and for the wider cultural development of Gateshead Quays (BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and The Sage Gateshead) that eventually followed (Bailey et al. 2004; Jarratt 2005; Vall 2011).

At the same time as these riverside schemes were being initiated in Gateshead, Newcastle was also turning its attention to the redevelopment of its own river frontage. McCombie (2009) comments that while Newcastle town centre had changed quite dramatically in the post-war period, 'the riverside remained unaltered until Byker was redeveloped in the 1970s' (*ibid*: 120). However, it was only with the establishment of the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (TWDC)⁵³ in 1987 that the regeneration of Newcastle's riverside and Quayside and the public art activity that developed out of this programme began to gather pace. These were especially focused on corporate and commercial interests in the post-industrial riversides. As

⁵¹ In addition to 'Festival Landmarks' the visual arts programme at the Gateshead Festival also included more cutting edge contemporary works exhibited in the 1st Tyne International programme, 'A New Necessity', and the contemporary crafts showcase, 'Crafts at Home'. Both these exhibitions were presented in show homes built on the Festival site. For more on the Tyne International see Merrington (2016) and Gee (2017).

⁵² Including: Andrew Burton, Richard Cole, Raf Fulcher, Charlie Holmes, John Maine, Ray Smith, Neil Talbot, Cate Watkinson, Christine Constant, Freeform.

⁵³ TWDC was a city-region wide initiative covering four North East local authority areas: Sunderland, N Tyneside, S Tyneside, Newcastle. Although eligible, Gateshead Council chose not to join the TWDC project, preferring to maintain its own control over its riverside regeneration programme.

Pollock (2017) writes, this was a period in which the concept of the 'creative city' was gaining influence in the UK. Here, city 'skylines, riversides and canal paths' (*ibid*: 3) in the North, the Midlands, Wales and Scotland began to be reconfigured through public art and new iconic architecture. Much of this was done in the name of place-making and the drive to make cities more competitive in terms of private investment and tourism. It was a time when 'public art and urban regeneration developed an almost symbiotic relationship' (*ibid*). Although Gee suggests that this was more a question of aesthetic subservience to economic regeneration than a relationship of equals (2017: 91).



Figure 4-8: Two of the Newcastle Business Park sculptures (both 1990): Left, *Spheres* (Richard Cole); Right, *Lion* (Andrew Burton).

With control over 48km of riversides across the Tyne and Wear area, the regional development agency, Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (TWDC), was 'a major force in the economic and visual transformation of the region' (Beach: xxii, in Usherwood, Beach et al 2000) during the late 1980s and into the 1990s. For Newcastle-Gateshead it was the beginnings of a transition from 'coal city to culture city' (Minton 2003). Early TWDC public art activity included the commissioning of a series of works for a 'permanent riverside sculpture walk' at Newcastle Business Park (see Fig. 4.8). These were previewed at the 1990 Gateshead Garden Festival (on the other side of river from the Newcastle Business Park site) before being permanently installed in and around the new office development and its riverside walkway (Usherwood, Beach, & Morris 2000: 122).

Beyond this project, on Tyneside TWDC's visual (and commercial) transformation of the area concentrated more specifically on Newcastle's East Quayside. During the 1990s, £170m would be invested by TWDC in the area from the Milk Market to the Ouseburn, transforming the derelict quayside into a new riverside promenade with a mix of new business, housing and leisure facilities. Like other TWDC projects (and the activities of other Development Corporations in other parts of the UK), the East Quayside regeneration strategy was very much based on commercial property development. Terry Farrell Associates devised the overall master plan for the project. Adopted in 1992, the East Quayside scheme was completed in 1998 (McCombie 2009: 134). Although Vall (2011) suggests that TWDC's commitment to public art was small at the beginning of the 1990s, its interest and investment in public art grew as the decade progressed. In the end ten public artworks were commissioned and installed along the East Quayside between 1995-1998 (see examples in Fig. 4.9). In their assessment of the East Quayside development at the end of the decade Usherwood, Beach and Morris (2000: 105) described public art as being 'integral to the aesthetic appeal of the area' (Usherwood, Beach, & Morris 2000: 105), further commenting that TWDC 'never passed up the opportunity to promote the size and scope of its public art initiatives' (Beach: xxii, in Usherwood, Beach et al 2000).



Figure 4-9: Two artworks from the East Quayside commission programme: Left, *Siren* (Andre Wallace, 1995); Right, *Blacksmiths' Needle* (British Artist Blacksmiths Association, 1997).

The new focus on the cultural contribution to regeneration meant that the 1990s was a highly productive decade in terms of public art commissioning in Newcastle-Gateshead. Including the East Quayside commissions, as many as 64 permanent public artworks were installed across the city, an expansion in public art development that was part of a wider pattern of growth across North East England. By the end of the 1990s, Usherwood, Beach and Morris (2000: 20) could state that the region had one of the largest concentrations of contemporary public sculpture in Britain. As reflected in the title of this thesis, it is Antony Gormley's *The Angel of the North* that dominates the picture of the city's public art production in this period. Indeed this is the one artwork that continues to define the Newcastle-Gateshead public art landscape (and perhaps 'public art' itself) for many people (Usherwood 2001).

4.2.3 *The Angel of the North and public art of the new millennium*

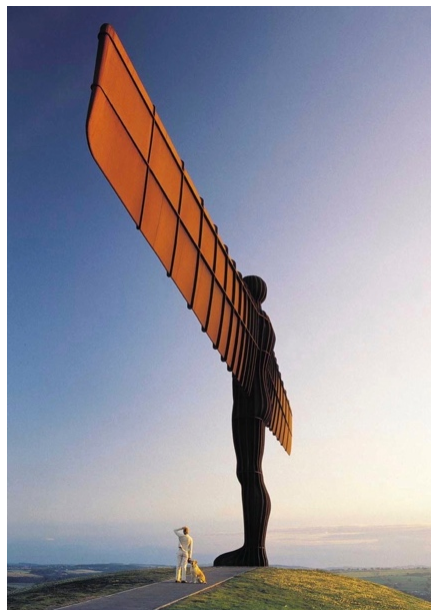


Figure 4-10 *The Angel of the North* (© Graham Peacock).

Nearly a decade of activity went into the delivery of *The Angel of the North* (Fig. 4.10) project (for a full account see Gateshead Council 1998). Reclamation of the former coal-mine site beside the A1 which would eventually become the *Angel* site was first started in 1989, the location having already been identified by Gateshead Council as having potential for a major landmark artwork. With research and development funding from Northern Arts, several international artists were approached by

Gateshead's 'Art in Public Places' panel and invited to submit outline design proposals. These artists included: Guiseppe Penone, Jackie Ferrara, Jonathan Brodsky and Antony Caro.⁵⁴ Antony Gormley was the artist who was finally selected to undertake the project. Based on an earlier gallery work by Gormley, *Case for an Angel* (1990), detailed design work for the sculpture started in earnest in 1994. Following a period of intensive lobbying by Gateshead Council, Northern Arts and others, full funding for the delivery of the project was finally secured in 1996. The £800,000 funding package for the sculpture comprised contributions from the Arts Council Lottery Fund, European Development Fund, Northern Arts and a mix of other arts and private sector sponsors. Fabrication of the *Angel* took a further two years. Installation was completed and the artwork officially launched in June 1998.

At the time of the commission Gormley's design for the *Angel* was quite controversial and divided opinion locally. Usherwood et al. (2000: 57) reported that 4,500 local residents had signed a petition condemning Gormley's proposal. Reportedly (Minton 2003; Cartiere 2008) the turning point in the local emotional response to the *Angel* came later in 1998, when a group of football supporters managed to drape a giant Newcastle United football shirt over the sculpture, an incident which was widely picked up in the local media.⁵⁵ Today, the *Angel* is an ubiquitous and much tamed image used extensively in regional advertising and marketing (as illustrated in Blackman 2014). Indeed, Usherwood (2001) argues that it is in its work as a visual branding image, rather than its supposed story of post-industrial transformation, that the success of the *Angel* really lies.

The public art momentum created by *The Angel* continued into the new millennium, although with some interesting shifts in direction and scale of approach. While

⁵⁴ Source: Angel of the North Information Pack (Gateshead Council, 2003). Reportedly the American artist Claus Oldenburg who had created *Bottle of Notes* for Middlesbrough (unveiled in 1991) was also under consideration for this site (Davies 2014).

⁵⁵ This type of popular intervention has been replicated and referenced in other Angel related media stunts, not all of which have been positively received by Antony Gormley (see www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/10812525/Antony-Gormley-Morrisons-Angel-of-the-North-stunt-shocking-and-stupid.html).

cultural regeneration was now focused most visibly on the city's major new arts venues (BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and The Sage Gateshead), this decade was also the city's most active in terms of public art activity, with over one hundred individual permanently public artworks commissioned and installed. The establishment of Commissions North in 1999, as a specialised unit within Northern Arts (shortly after to become Arts Council England North East), was a contributory factor within this growth, further evidencing the claim made for Northern Arts as 'one of the most energetic of England's ten regional arts boards [in] supporting and publicising works of public art' (Usherwood, Beach & Morris 2000: xxi).⁵⁶ Part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Commissions North's remit was to develop the market for contemporary visual arts commissions within new buildings and public spaces and, especially to create opportunities for artists based in the region. Over its ten-year lifetime (1999-2010), Commissions North generated a reported investment of £13m, mostly from non-arts funding sources, towards new artists' commissions across the North East and Cumbria, including in Newcastle-Gateshead (Commissions North 2010).

In Newcastle-Gateshead, the 'Grainger Town Project' was one of the most substantial public art and regeneration programmes of the new millennium.⁵⁷ The project was focused on the historic centre of the city north of Central Station and running up to Grey's Monument: the 19th Century streetscape originally designed and built by Richard Grainger and architect John Dobson. In the 1990s, this area of Newcastle was in a state of serious urban and economic decline, with over one million square feet of vacant office and retail space and over half of its listed buildings assessed as 'at risk' (Chris Oldershaw, Project Director, in 'Been there, done that', Grainger Town Partnership 2003). While the primary aims of the Grainger Town Project were commercial (job creation, new businesses, commercial and retail development, and finding new uses for vacant properties), heritage conservation works and public

⁵⁶ Of the regional arts boards only one other, South West Arts, had an in-house unit to support public art commissioning (Public Art South West, PASW). As with Commissions North, PASW also closed as part of Arts Council England reorganisation c. 2010.

⁵⁷ The £40million project was funded primarily by English Partnerships and the Single Regeneration Budget, with contributions from Newcastle City Council and English Heritage (Minton 2003).

realm improvements, including the commissioning of public artworks were key parts of the programme.



Figure 4-11: Two large-scale sculptures commissioned for the Grainger Town Project: Left, *Eclipses* (Danny Lane); Right, *Ever Changing* (Eilis O'Connor), both artworks 2005.

Over its life-time (1997-2003), the Grainger Town Partnership (the body set up to deliver the regeneration scheme) committed £1.2m of its funding to the delivery of public art commissions (Jarratt 2005). Its strategic commitment to public art was set out in the Grainger Town Urban Design Framework and in the subsequent Public Art Strategy (produced by Public Arts Wakefield) and in the formation of a Public Art Panel to steer the programme. Although established in 1997, most of the artworks commissioned or purchased by the Grainger Town Panel were not installed until the early 2000s. Some of these projects were still outstanding and uncompleted when the Partnership was wound up in 2003. Remaining delivery of these artworks then passed to Newcastle City Council, who adopted the Public Art Panel set up by the Grainger Town Project and appointed a Public Art Officer (Richard Broderick) to oversee the completion of its commissions.

As stated in its Public Art Strategy, the Grainger Town public art programme was intended to 'reflect, maximise and [...] serve the visual impact of Grainger Town's

existing architecture'. It aimed to commission artworks that were 'bold, radical and contemporary' but still 'in keeping' with the architectural quality of their historic urban setting (Public Arts 1999: 9-10). Above all, 'artistic excellence' was prioritised as a 'primary criterion' for new public artworks (*ibid*: 12). The strategy set out proposals for four layers of artistic intervention in the Grainger Town programme: (1) the integration of artworks within the urban fabric (e.g. into paving schemes and street furniture); (2) bringing artistic ideas into design planning for future phases of regeneration; (3) individual artwork commissions to animate particular locations and to bring national and international attention and audiences to Grainger Town; and (4) the development of a major artwork for Grainger Town. While not all these ambitions were realised (e.g. the desire to see artists embedded within the Grainger Town urban design team), seventeen artists' commissions were eventually delivered.

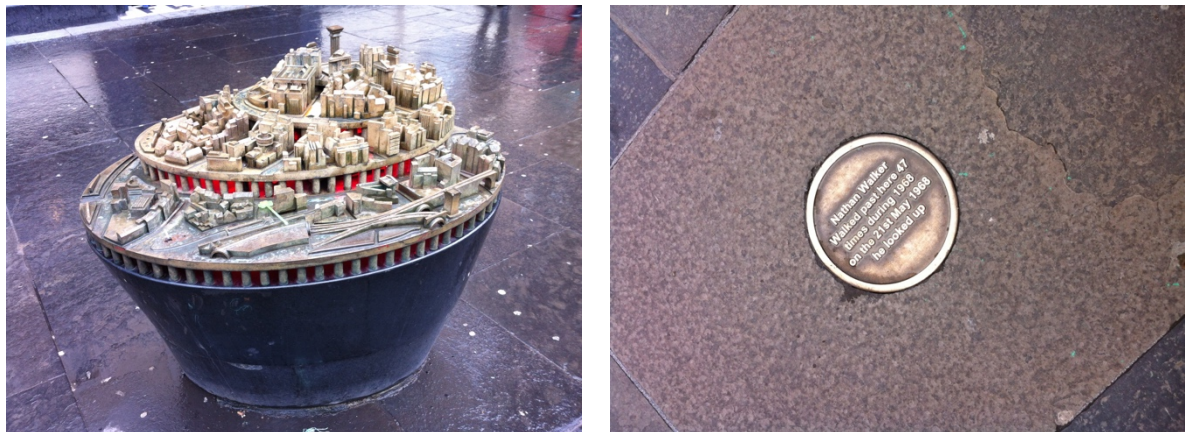


Figure 4-12: Left, *Grainger Town Map* (2003); Right, *Grainger Town Plaque* (2004).

The Grainger Town artworks were quite different in character from those installed as part of the East Quayside development. While it did include two large-scale standalone sculptures (*Elipses Eclipses* outside The Gate entertainment complex and *Everchanging* on Westgate Road near to the historic City Walls, see Fig. 4.11), much of the programme focused on the commissioning of more discrete and integrated (often pavement level) artworks. Many of these, especially those on Grainger Street itself (see Fig. 4.12), are quite playful (e.g. Rupert Clamp's fictional *Grainger Town Plaques* series), while others have a more directly heritage-related narrative element. These include Simon Watkinson's *Grainger Town Map* (a collaboration with artist Tod Hanson) outside Central Station (see Fig. 4.12, Left) and

Head Cubes at Grey's Monument (this artwork referencing an historic lightning strike on the statue of Earl Grey at the top of monument).

From 2000, in Gateshead, the Gateshead Quays development (covering the area around the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, The Sage Gateshead and the Millennium Bridge) and the Council's strategy for town centre regeneration became the two foci for public art commissioning. These developments represented something of a 'new era' for public art commissioning in Gateshead (Pepperall 2008). To support the early inclusion of public art in these schemes Anna Pepperall, the Council's Public Art Curator⁵⁸ (who had previously led on the development and delivery of *The Angel of the North*) joined the technical team designing the public realm for the Quays development, while Gateshead's resident Lead Artist, David Goard (appointed in 2002) worked to develop the public art strategy for the town centre.

As well as highlighting the role of public art in building a new public image for Gateshead, the public art strategy documents produced by Gateshead Council in the early 2000s stressed the contribution of public art to environmental improvement within the town. In addition to encouraging the integration of artworks into key buildings, these strategies also sought to pay attention to 'the social spaces between developments' (Gateshead Council 2006) and especially on developing physical links between the new cultural development on the Quays and Gateshead's town centre. This last ambition representing a recognition that for many people the new cultural infrastructure on the Quays seemed more easily accessible from Newcastle than it was from the centre of Gateshead (see Cameron & Coaffee 2005). Gateshead's public art strategy documents used a range of spatial terms to point to the type of public art commissions they sought to promote, speaking of landmarks, enticements, gateways, focal points and waymarkers (Gateshead Council n.d.; Gateshead Council 2003).

⁵⁸ Before taking the role of Public Art Curator Pepperall was Head of Visual Arts at Gateshead Council (appointed in 1986).

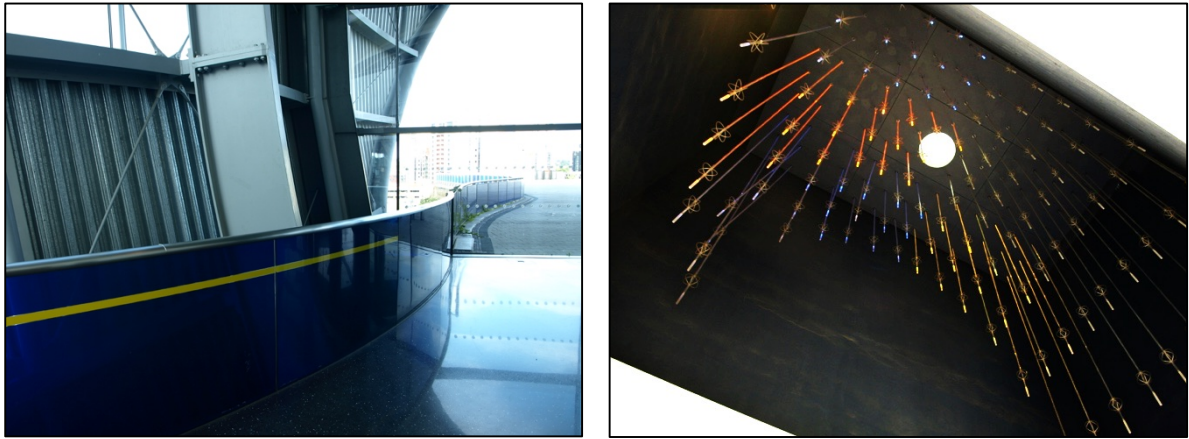


Figure 4-13: Two artworks commissioned for The Sage Gateshead: Left *Ribbon of Colour* (Kate Maestre, 2004); Right, *Star Ceiling* (Jo Fairfax, 2004).

Through this early engagement by the Council, several commissions were incorporated into the architecture and immediate surroundings of The Sage Gateshead (Foster & Partners architects, completed 2004). These include the part interior/part exterior glass balustrade that runs through public concourse of The Sage Gateshead (*Ribbon of Colour*) and a fibre optic light work in the lift area of the adjoining carpark (*Star Ceiling*) (see Fig. 4.13). Following on from these, a series of sculptural artworks were commissioned to provide ‘orientation points’ to the new quayside development and to ‘stitch’ the ‘new design language of the quays into the town centre’ (Jarratt 2005). These new artworks included David Pearl’s roadside *Beacons*, plotted at strategic junctions providing access to the Quays (2004), John Creed’s sculptural screen *Acceleration* (2005) outside Gateshead’s Old Town Hall, Lulu Quinn’s *Threshold* (2003) at the top of Gateshead High Street (see Fig. 4.14). In all, between 2000-2009, 17 new permanent artworks were developed and installed in Gateshead through the Gateshead Quays/East Gateshead and Gateshead Town Centre public art programmes.



Figure 4-14: Two of the artworks commissioned for the Gateshead Town Centre public art programme: Left, *Acceleration*; Right, *Threshold*.

Alongside this profile of public art production around Gateshead Quays, the 2000s also saw an expansion in public art strategy development work, especially in Newcastle. Supported by the interests of Newcastle City Council's Public Art Curator (Matthew Lennon, in post 2004-2009), much of this strategy work was led by artists. These projects included: Dan Dubowitz's *Newtopia* masterplan for the (unrealised) Scotswood Housing Expo, Newcastle (2006-08); Jorn Ebner's public art oriented visual arts strategy for the Ouseburn Valley (2006); and Cath Campbell and Kathryn Hodgkinson's *How art can make a place?*, an arts strategy for the Discovery Quarter, Newcastle (2007). These documents proposed a different flavour of public art development in the city to those that had been represented in earlier commissioning programmes, such as the Grainger Town Project. Ebner's strategy in particular, called for a new approach to public art activity that foregrounded artistic ideas over a site-based commissioning rationale. His aim being to generate 'avant-gardist' artworks that might attract international art audiences as well as appealing to local residents (Ebner 2006). At the end of the 2010s, two further public art strategies were commissioned by Newcastle City Council for the new Science Central development area in Newcastle and as a city-wide strategy for Newcastle (2011-2015). Both of these documents were produced for the Council by local public art consultancy Grit & Pearl LLP.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ This was consultancy work that I was involved in as a Grit & Pearl Associate (2007-12).

If the 1990s were Newcastle-Gateshead's milestone decade in terms of establishing its public art reputation, the 2000s were its busiest, with at least 107 new public artworks installed in the city over these ten years. While activity on the riverside continued, especially in relation to Gateshead's efforts to join up the new cultural venues on the Quays with the urban town centre, public art in the new millennium also began to focus in a new direction: onto (sometimes bold and sometimes quite discreet) artistic interventions into the historic townscape. As will be explored further in Chapter Five, many of these artworks were meant as reflections on the city's built heritage or its natural topography, subjects which expanded on previous projects' more maritime associations of the city with the River Tyne. In sum, the 2000s represent something of a crescendo in public art commissioning in Newcastle-Gateshead, a level of activity which the 2010s have so far failed (c.2017) to match.

4.2.4 A turn to the temporary

Despite the growth in public art strategy work undertaken from 2005 onwards, between 2010-15 only 17 new permanent public artworks were installed in Newcastle-Gateshead. This marks a sharp downturn in permanent commissioning compared to the previous five years, during which 54 new artworks were installed. It is noticeable that this lowering in activity has been accompanied by a loss in infrastructure and strategic leadership for public art in the city in recent years, including the closure of Commissions North (as part of the reorganisation of Arts Council England in 2010) and the discontinuation of dedicated public art officer posts at Newcastle City Council and within Nexus. After 2010 only Gateshead Council retained its specialist Public Art Curator, although in 2017 this post was also ended. We can also see this downturn in permanent commissioning as indicative of wider trends in public art practice, towards more socially-engaged and performative models, and shifts in cultural policy at a government level. From the late 1990s, led by New Labour, the instrumental arts agenda became increasingly focused on issues of social inclusion and the valorisation of arts activity that could enable and demonstrate community participation and empowerment especially within more deprived urban neighbourhoods (Pollock & Paddison 2014; Pollock 2017).

My research interviews with key staff from the three main Newcastle-Gateshead public sector commissioning bodies (conducted in 2015) reflected this new climate. These showed that much of the new commissioning in the city since 2010 had been focused on small scale temporary public artworks and neighbourhood-based projects. While representing a positive acknowledgement of the value of temporary public art practice, for these institutions this move towards the temporary was also a pragmatic choice: based on the smaller scale of available internal budgets and difficulty in accessing external arts funding to support permanent public art production. Commenting on this situation the public art lead officer at Nexus stated: 'There is no budget to produce vitreous enamel type works for £20,000 but we can produce meaningful community projects for £2,000' (Lewis 2015). *Next Stop Byker*, was one such lower-cost initiative: between 2013-15 creating a sequence of six temporary billboards for Byker Metro Station designed by professional artists in collaboration with local community groups. Meanwhile at Gateshead Council, there was a strong feeling that temporary commissions could offer a quite different experience for audiences and could also open up public art opportunities to a broader range of artists, both in terms of art form and levels of professional experience. Pepperall & Douglas (2015) cited *Enchanted Parks* (Gateshead's winter light festival held annually in Saltwell Park) as an event-based public art project that on a local scale did both these things very well.

The downturn in permanent public art commissioning evidenced in Newcastle-Gateshead is roughly in line with national trends on public art activity reported over this period by Ixia,⁶⁰ which has carried out annual surveys of the public art sector in England from 2011. Its 2012 survey reported a marked fall in public art investment between 2011 and 2012: down an apparent 30% in terms of local authority capital projects and private sector spend via the planning system (Ixia 2012). While Ixia reported something of a 'recovery' by 2015 it also noted that 57% of new public art activity in the previous two years had been focused in London and southern England (Ixia 2016). More generally, between 2011-16, Ixia observed that while architectural commissions were still a typical form of public art activity, large-scale public art

⁶⁰ Ixia is the UK public art 'think tank' (formerly known as Public Art Forum). See <http://ixia-info.com>

projects were becoming less common. At the same time there was a marked increase in interest in socially-engaged (community based) practice, and festival and event based public art activity (including 'outdoor arts') (Ixia 2014).



Figure 4-15: Left, *Canon* (Lothar Gotz, 2010); Right, *Halo* (Stephen Newby, 2014).

In terms of permanent public art commissions, the most substantial artworks to come out of the current decade to date are: *Canon* an architectural colour scheme for the refurbished Haymarket Metro Station, commissioned by the Nexus 'Art on Transport' programme; and the recently installed sculptural work *Halo*, commissioned for Trinity Square in Gateshead by Tesco/Spenhill PLC in partnership with Gateshead Council (see Fig. 4.15). During the last five years, additional sculptures and a new artist-designed entrance feature have also been added to the existing artworks in Gateshead Riverside Park. In Newcastle, the City Council has worked with private sector housing developers to leverage funding for a new permanent public art audio trail, highlighting WWII military heritage in the suburbs of Kenton and Blakelaw, as part of its *Secret Bunker North* project. Meanwhile, in the inner city neighbourhoods of Ouseburn and Shieldfield, a series of new mural-based commissions have also appeared (at The Ship Inn by London Police, 2012 being one example), some of these commissioned as part of the new expansion of private sector-led student accommodation developments in the city (e.g. *End of Broadcast*, Red Nile, 2013) (see Fig. 4.16).



Figure 4-16: Left: The Ship Inn mural Right, *End of Broadcast*.

It needs to be noted that while I have characterised Newcastle-Gateshead public art activity post 2010 as moving towards a new focus on temporary and community-based public art, in fact these activities have been a continuous accompaniment to permanent public art commissioning in the city since at least the 1970s. Many permanent public art projects, including those cited in this chapter, have as a matter of course involved elements of community engagement and participation as part of their development and delivery. Over the last 55 years, Newcastle-Gateshead has also been the setting for numerous temporary public art projects and initiatives, the examination of which lies beyond the scope of this present thesis. These include TSWA 3D (1987),⁶¹ the previously mentioned Tyne International (1990), and Visual Arts UK (1996),⁶² during which design proposals for *The Angel of the North* and *The Blue Carpet* were first revealed (for extended accounts of the Tyne International and Visual Arts UK see Gee 2017). Other notable temporary public art activity includes artworks commissioned for the BALTIC pre-opening programme in the late 1990s (e.g. *Tarantantara*, Anish Kapoor, 1999), and more recent generated by NewcastleGateshead Initiative (e.g. *Come Hell or High Water*, Michael Pinsky, 2006),

⁶¹ TSWA 3D was a collaboration between Television South West and the regional arts association South West Arts. 14 artists were commissioned to make temporary artworks across a wide variety of rural and urban sites, including one work for the Tyne Bridge South Tower: Richard Wilson's installation *One Piece at a Time* (Cork 2003; Graham-Dixon 1987). For an account of *One Piece at a Time* and its symbolism for Newcastle-Gateshead see Gee (2017: 38–39).

⁶² As well as presenting several temporary commissions in the city (among these Antony Gormley's *Field for the British Isles*, installed in the empty British Rail Greenfield Depot, Gateshead) Visual Arts UK (VAUK) was also the platform for launching artists' proposals for what would become two of the most major permanent artworks commissioned for the city: *The Angel of the North* and Thomas Heatherwick's *The Blue Carpet* (at the time known as the *N.O.T. Square*). For evaluations of the impact of VAUK see Bailey (2009) and Gee (2017).

the Great North Run Cultural Programme (e.g. *Tornado*, Fiona Banner, 2010) and the 2012 Cultural Olympiad (*Flow*, Owl Project & Ed Carter).

4.2.5 An aberrant collection?

Having examined the city's timeline of public commissioning and artwork accumulation and explored this activity in relation to broader national developments, I now turn back to the broader question of how the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection might be characterized. Although collecting is often a highly purposeful activity, we are reminded that collections can also evolve in less intentional ways (Bal 1994; Pearce 1992). Collections can sometimes be the result of 'aberrant plots', or accumulations of 'aborted' and unrelated collections (Bal 1994: 111). Generated through different commissioning programmes which have little relationship or continuity between them Newcastle-Gateshead's profile of public art accumulation would seem to fit well with Bal's suggestions. As Bal writes, this is a pattern of aberrancy that can be observed in many museum collections. Newcastle's own Hatton Gallery collection is a good example. Its art collection has developed through a single focused and strategic period of acquisitions made between 1952-68, preceded and followed by periods of 'ad hoc' collecting: based on 'the acceptance of gifts from a wide variety of sources, or taking advantage of occasionally available funds' (Hatton Gallery 2015: 3).

As well as being the product of an episodic process of accumulation, Newcastle-Gateshead's public art collection has developed through the separate actions and agendas of many different commissioning bodies. This is a characteristic shared by other more consciously-framed public art collections, such as in Milton Keynes, which has a similar diversity of public artwork origination and ownership.⁶³ Fig 4.17 gives a visual breakdown of the main organisations involved in public art commissioning in Newcastle-Gateshead and their percentage held in relation to the total number of

⁶³ The Milton Keynes Public Art Collection contains some 220 artworks. While most artworks installed in the 1980s were purchased rather than commissioned, more recent projects have been commissioned in partnership with the private sector through the Council's percent for art scheme. Managing and promoting the city's public artworks as a 'collection' is a stated strategic priority for the Council (Milton Keynes Council 2014) (Izod 2015).

artworks installed in the city between 1960-2015. It gives a picture of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art cityscape as a 'collection of collections'.

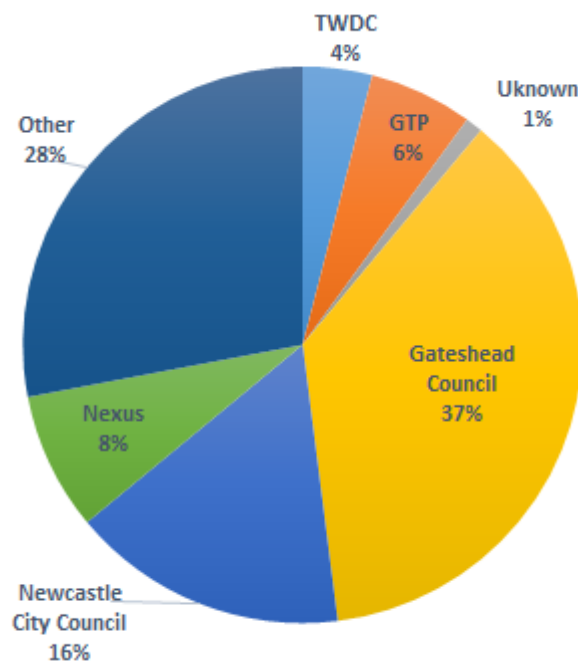


Figure 4-17: Share of Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection by commissioning bodies

Reflecting its historic 'special enthusiasm' for public art, this chart shows that Gateshead Council have been responsible for the largest body of acquisitions (37%, n=88). Newcastle City Council represents the second most active public art commissioner, generating 16% (n=38) of public artworks in Newcastle-Gateshead over this period. Nexus have also built up a consistent programme of public art commissioning since the early beginnings of 'Art on the Metro' in the 1970s. While this activity has spread across the wider Tyne and Wear transport system, Nexus commissions in Newcastle-Gateshead itself represent 8% (n=20) of public artworks in the city. 6% (n=15) of these acquisitions were made through the Grainger Town Project (GTP) and 4% (n=10) by Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (TWDC) mainly of the TWDC artworks, as we have seen, being concentrated along Newcastle's East Quayside. A high proportion of the city's public artworks (28%, n=66) have been generated by a patchwork of other public and private organisations, including those from the higher education, property development and retail sectors. Private sector companies who have commissioned recent public artworks in

Newcastle-Gateshead include, since 2000:⁶⁴ Parabola Estates Ltd; UK Land Estates; Silverlink Holdings Ltd; Land Securities; Keelman Homes; Spenhill; and Capital Shopping Centres. Of these, Parabola and Silverlink have made perhaps the most significant contributions: Parabola for its siting of a sequence of sculptures around the Central Square office development in Newcastle e.g. *Vulcan* (Eduardo Paolozzi, 2000), *Reaching for the Stars* (Kenneth Armitage, 2002); and Silverlink⁶⁵ which commissioned the sculpture *Give and Take* (Peter Randall-Page, 2005) for its Trinity Gardens scheme off Newcastle's Quayside.⁶⁶

As the historical narrative of public art development in the city set out in sections 4.2.1-4.2.4 has demonstrated, the focus of commissioning activity has gone through several key shifts in direction since the 1960s. Although very much a simplification (these different practices might also appear in a more minor key at different points in the timeline), Table 4.1 sets out the broad shifts in the direction of public art practice in the city over this 55-year period.

Table 4-1 Key shifts in Newcastle-Gateshead public art commissioning activity 1960-2015.

Decade	Public art practice shifts	Key programmes	Key locations	Exemplar artworks
1960s	Civic architecture	Newcastle Civic Centre	Newcastle city centre and university campus	<i>River God Tyne</i> , <i>Spiral Nebula</i>

⁶⁴ The earliest extant private sector-led public artwork in Newcastle-Gateshead is *Newcastle Through the Ages* (Henry Collins & Joyce Pallot, 1974) on the façade of Primark, Northumberland Road, Newcastle. This was commissioned by British Home Stores as one of a series of Collins & Pallot murals created for its network of department stores during the 1960s and 1970s (Pearson 2006).

⁶⁵ c.2017 Silverlink (now Clousten Group Ltd) was in the process of commissioning new public artworks for its development of The Stephenson Quarter (the regeneration area to the south of Newcastle Central Station).

⁶⁶ It should be noted that while these institutional/corporate distinctions are relevant in a historiography sense (especially the separate commissioning cultures of the two local authorities) these differences in public art generation and continuing ownership are not necessarily obvious (or important) to audiences encountering these artworks within the physical cityscape.

1970s	Transport infrastructure	Art on Transport	City-wide (and across Tyne and Wear)	<i>Garden Front</i>
1980s	Riverside regeneration	Gateshead Riverside Park	Gateshead riverside	<i>Sports Day, Bottle Bank</i>
1990s	Landmark artworks	Newcastle East Quayside / <i>The Angel of the North</i>	Newcastle riverside and Gateshead southern approach	<i>Blacksmiths Needle, The Angel of the North</i>
2000s	Historic townscape and city linkage	Grainger Town Project / Hidden Rivers / Gateshead Quays	Newcastle historic city centre and Gateshead Quays	<i>Everchanging, Tyne Line of Text Flow, Ribbon of Colour</i>
2010s	Community projects and private-sector development	Next Stop Byker, Secret Bunker North	Newcastle neighbourhoods	<i>Next Stop Byker (mural series), Halo, End of Broadcast, Secret Bunker North Sound Walk</i>

Looking at this history of commissioning, it can be argued that Newcastle-Gateshead has at times been an innovator in the way it has approached its public art activity, especially in the earlier part of this timescale. We might point to the development of the ‘urban Grizedale’ on Gateshead’s riverside and the early initiation of the ‘Art on Transport’ programme as particularly adventurous early moves, while the origination of *The Angel of the North* is nationally recognised as a standout achievement. While these developments originate from this city’s specific political and economic context and cultural interests (especially as led by the early public art enthusiasms of Northern Arts and commitment of Gateshead Council), it can also be said that the general trajectory of public art practice evidenced over this period is also broadly in line with national public art trends (e.g. as examined by Ixia, and especially in relation to the turn towards temporary projects). While outside the scope of this current study, it needs to be noted that public art development in Newcastle-Gateshead has also been part of a wider picture of regional investment in public art activity across the North East (as surveyed by Usherwood et al. 2000).

Newcastle-Gateshead's narrative of public art investment can also be thought of as contributing to what Gee (2017) refers to as a 'Northern imaginary'; a shared cultural agenda emerging out of the political and economic experience of a cohort of post-industrial Northern English cities from the 1980s and 1990s onwards.⁶⁷ Gee writes that rather than being defined by a distinctive Northern style, the common feature shared across this cohort has been its active 'diversification' of artistic practices (*ibid*: 5), both artist and institutionally-led. While much of this activity has been 'subservient to economic regeneration', a context 'where aesthetics become a means to an end' (*ibid*: 91), one of the key areas of common ground between these Northern cities has also been the way in which they have worked to generate a regional creative economy beyond the London-centric art world. Along with its investment in major new cultural infrastructure (BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, The Sage Gateshead), the opportunities provided for regional artists through public art commissioning has been a key feature of Newcastle-Gateshead's approach to this shared project. (I go on to an examination of the public art collection's mix of artistic authorship in Chapter Five.) Gee describes these moves as a process of 'transindustrialisation', whereby the Northern cities have been transformed through 'the superimposition of industrial memories and legacies [...] with 'flexible and variable forms of [cultural] industriousness' (*ibid*: 214). As Usherwood (et al. 2000) noted in their survey for PMSA, the significant concentration of public sculpture in Newcastle-Gateshead (and the wider North East) has invested the region with a new meaning beyond the 'latent' associations with coal mining and heavy industry, i.e. 'as a distinctive and progressively cultural place' known nationally for its integration of public art (*ibid*: xxvii).

Having examined the timeline of activity through which the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection has been accumulated, and drawn some broad conclusions on the characterisation of this 'collection', this next chapter section now shifts the temporal perspective of my discussion to examine how collection time operates in relation to public art's conditions of physical permanency.

⁶⁷ For Gee (2017) this Northern post-industrial cohort links five cities: Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle-Gateshead.

4.3 Permanence, temporality and the shifting valorisation of public artworks

In my review of the museological literature (Chapter Two, section 2.4) I explored the notion that collection objects have a presumption of longevity and permanence: objects to be conserved and cared for as a legacy for future generations. I also noted how more recent writers in this field (e.g. Knell 2004), have begun to question this presumption, arguing that deaccessioning and object 'flow' is vital to collection sustainability. My review also showed that the issue of artwork permanence is a key theme within academic and sectoral debate around public art. While they may be fixed in material and space, public artworks are also vulnerable to physical and cultural change, perhaps more so than their museum-held counterparts: as such they can be thought of as 'processional' objects (Doss 2016b).

Following Doss's descriptor and the themes of public art's material, physical and cultural vulnerability raised in the literature review, this section looks back into the timeline set out in section 4.2 to examine how these processes have impacted on the afterlives of public artworks sited within the Newcastle-Gateshead cityscape. In doing so, it aims to indicate points of intersection between the permanency implied by museological collection time and public art's processional nature.

The literature on the 'problem of permanence' in public art identifies three types of threat to the longevity of public artworks. The first and most obvious of these is the artwork's material and physical vulnerability e.g. to weathering, accidental damage, vandalism and even theft (Doss 2016b; Franklin 2016; Usherwood et al. 2000). The second major threat to the permanency of public artworks, as noted by both Doss (2016a) and Knight (2008), is urban change and redevelopment. The third threat is cultural rather than material, although as Doss (2016b) points out, and as we shall explore further here, cultural devalorisation of public artworks can have material outcomes. While 90% of the 240 Newcastle-Gateshead public artworks listed in my research database were still in-situ c.2017, the city's public artworks have not been immune to the type of temporal threats suggested in the public art literature. Of the Newcastle-Gateshead collection, there were at least twenty artworks that had been

relocated, removed or decommissioned since their original installation and several others which were in a poor material condition or required maintenance.

The Blue Carpet, outside the Laing Art Gallery, is a high-profile example of how public artworks can be subject to considerable wear and tear and even wilful damage post-installation (see Fig. 4.18). Designed by Thomas Heatherwick and constructed from bespoke recycled glass and resin tiles and incorporating complex light fittings, *The Blue Carpet* has been a fragile project from its start. Due to its high cost,⁶⁸ delays in installation, and its subsequent fading colour and increasing poor state of repair, the *Carpet* has become a contentious issue locally (see accounts by Hodgson 2016; Lawson 2011). The materiality and visual appearance of the artwork was further compromised in 2011 when the *Carpet*'s bronze edging strips were stolen by metal thieves (as reported by Sykes 2011).



Figure 4-18: Faded, repaired and damaged sections of *The Blue Carpet* (c.2013).

While *The Blue Carpet* is still in-situ, structural problems and accidental damage have resulted in the gradual decommissioning of at least two other Newcastle artworks. *Garden Front*, at Jesmond Metro Station, was noted earlier in my historical narrative (section 4.2) as the earliest of the city's 'Art on Transport' commissions.

⁶⁸ Final costs for the artwork reportedly came to £1.4m. In 2006 a further £36,000 was spent on repairs while ongoing maintenance costs (to replace broken tiles, remove chewing gum and graffiti), which are paid by Newcastle City Council, are estimated at £3,200 annually (Hodgson 2016).

Since then, due to structural issues emerging with the sculpture, parts of the artwork have gradually been dismantled by Nexus. In 2017, *Garden Front*'s original row of seven architectural elements had been reduced to a single central archway.

Meanwhile, the multiple artwork *Nine Things to Do on a Bench* (Cate Watkinson & Julia Darling, 2004), originally a series of nine (glass, steel and granite) poetry seats commissioned for the Grainger Town Project, have also gradually been removed.

Without the funds to remake and replace the bespoke glass panels when damaged, Newcastle City Council now only commits to maintaining the most centrally-sited of the poetry benches (Ayris & Smith 2015).



Figure 4-19: 'Sold' poster from 'Out There: Our Post War Public Art' exhibition (Image: Historic England)

Richard Harris's *Bottle Bank* and *Shoulder to Shoulder* (Ray Smith, 2000) are two Newcastle-Gateshead artworks whose loss was specifically highlighted in Historic

England's 2016 national post-war public art campaign.⁶⁹ Both were victims of new urban development schemes. Although now recognised as significant in terms of Gateshead Council's public art history, *Bottle Bank* was decommissioned in the 2000s to make way for the new Gateshead Hilton Hotel, while *Shoulder to Shoulder* (part sculpture, part water feature and road barrier) was removed during the 2010-11 remodelling of Haymarket Metro Station. While the decommissioning of these artworks to make way for new architectural schemes might be legitimised in urban development terms (at the time neither artwork had the protection of official 'listed' status), it has been suggested such decommissioning is also a form of cultural vandalism (Doss 2016b). The (commissioner-led) destruction of *Shoulder to Shoulder* (see Fig. 4.19) an artwork which was allegedly removed in response to public distaste rather than entirely for physical necessity, could be framed in this way. Smith's sculpture (locally nicknamed 'The Lego-men') 'was roundly, and perhaps deservedly, condemned as ugly' when it was first installed (Usherwood (2004: 127). This negative assessment was not shared by all. Although referring to the sculpture as 'clumsy and banal', Usherwood also defended its positive contribution to Newcastle's civic life, as a visual affirmation of the 'value of cooperation and communal action' (*ibid*: 127). Perhaps supporting Usherwood's more positive evaluation, 19 people submitted bids to buy individual sections of *Shoulder to Shoulder* when Newcastle City Council auctioned-off parts of Smith's sculpture on eBay in 2011 (Anon n.d.).

In recent years, the refurbishment of other stations and transport hubs on the Tyne and Wear Metro system has also led to further artwork removals. These include a painted staircase at Regent Centre Metro, *Have you paid and displayed?* (Nic Armstrong, 2001), and two other mural works, *Wakes Week* (Stephen McNulty, 1985) and *From the River to the Sea* (Hilary Paynter, 2004), both at Central Station. This latter artwork, part of the 'Art on Transport' collection of printed vitreous enamel panels, was one that Nexus was planning to reprint and reinstall elsewhere in the station (Lewis 2015). This potential for the artwork relocation has been considered and on occasion acted on elsewhere in Newcastle-Gateshead. Sometimes this has

⁶⁹ See <https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/protect/missing-public-art/> (Accessed: 24 January 2016).

been to the benefit of the artwork. The *Grainger Town Map* for example, originally installed to the north-side of Grainger Street and closely crowded by street furniture, was relocated across the road to a less cluttered location immediately outside Central Station. While this might be considered an upgrade in terms of positioning, in other sites relocation seems to present a spatial downgrading of the artwork. The already-mentioned 1969 sculpture *Articulated Opposites* at Swan House (section 4.2), originally stood in the centre of a specially designed water pool. Moved to several different positions over the years as the site has been remodelled, *Articulated Opposites* now sits more awkwardly to the edge of the walkway which leads across the roundabout.

What I have sought to show in citing these examples, is that the processual character of public artworks, including their conditions of spatial and material presentation, are closely aligned to shifts in their cultural valorisation. Poor material repair might be an expression of the institutional de-valorisation of an artwork (at least in relation to other more pressing demands on public resources). As Franklin (2016) suggests, the cultural value of a public artwork (and its social and economic value too) can change dramatically over its lifetime. While Keene (2005) writes that ‘on the whole the older an object is the greater its cultural value: and further, the longer it is *likely* to last, the greater its *potential* cultural value’ (*ibid*: 168, original emphasis) she also talks about collection objects as having a ‘value curve’ in terms of the way they are used by and within the museum (2005: 165). As with Pearce (1994), Keene observes that the cultural value of a collection object can fluctuate quite widely.

Such fluctuations are clearly evidenced in the story of the earliest extant artwork within the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection, *Spiral Nebula*. As already noted (in section 4.2.1), *Spiral Nebula* began its life as a prestigious commission: it was linked to a landmark new building by a major architect, sited in a high-profile location, and the creation of a sought-after contemporary artist (Geoffrey Clarke).⁷⁰ From this

⁷⁰ As already referenced in section 4.2.1 Geoffrey Clarke (1924-2014) was a leading sculptor of the 1950s-60s undertaking a series of major public art commissions and representing Britain at the Venice Biennale (in 1952, 1954, 1960). Clarke was one of a new wave of British sculptors of this period.

high-status/high value beginning, the cultural use and hence value of the sculpture went into a steady decline; over the years, University development shifted to other areas of the campus, while critical and public interest in Clarke's work diminished. *Spiral Nebula* received little curatorial attention in subsequent years. As Pearce might say, it was an object that became almost 'lost to sight' (1994: 2). By the 2000s, Clarke's sculpture was becoming materially degraded and was placed on the Public Monument and Sculpture Association's register of 'at risk' public artworks. Revalorisation of *Spiral Nebula* came in the early 2010s, with the launch of a University-led conservation programme to restore the sculpture. This was completed in 2012 and was accompanied by the installation of a new on-site plaque and accompanying interpretative material. More recently, in 2016, the sculpture made a further value-shift as one of a group of notable post-war public artworks given 'Grade II' listed status by Historic England.⁷¹

What we can conclude from this discussion is that there is a potential conflict between understandings of the processual character of public artworks and the notion of permanence or forever-ness implied by museological notions of collection time. In-situ conservation measures such as HE's listing of public artworks (as part of a national post-war public art collection), or even just the on-site labelling or signposting of public artworks (as suggested by Davis 2011: 25), can be seen as representing a partial musealisation of public art (as defined by Macdonald 2013; Loureiro 2012; Mensch 1992). This can be read as an attempt not just to protect the physical materiality of public artworks, but also to assert and temporarily 'anchor' (Macdonald 2013: 138) the cultural value of the artworks being selected. (I will return to this question of artwork value and its assessment in Chapter Five.) Such processes of selection also involve 'a change in meaning (or actual identity) for that object' (Van Mensch 1993, cited in Davis 2011: 19): a change of meaning that some communities and audiences may find problematic (Davis, *ibid*: 25).

Better-known sculptors of this grouping, cited as those working in 'the geometry of fear', were Lynn Chadwick, William Turnbull and Kenneth Armitage (Darwent 2014).

⁷¹ See full HE list entry at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1437126>

To conclude my discussion in this current chapter, I comment briefly in this next final section on how Newcastle-Gateshead's three main public art commissioning institutions (the two local authorities and Nexus) themselves problematised this potential musealisation of the city's public artworks, as a 'collection'.

4.4 Institutional positions on the concept of collection

As already observed in my Introduction chapter, public art commissioners do not necessarily regard themselves as 'collectors' or see that their activities may lead to the building of de-facto public art collections. This was certainly the position in Newcastle-Gateshead. Public art managers and curators I interviewed from the two local authorities especially, were sometimes actively uneasy over the use of the term 'collection' in relation to their own public art practices. Their ambivalence towards such musealisation is evidenced in the following interview extracts:

I think a collection is always more associated with museums and galleries. It's static. Something that is brought out and shown [...] I know people have talked about it as a collection but it's been commissioned in a very wide-ranging way. It's not just 'things', which 'collection' has that feel of. Ours is more of a living, breathing space [...] It's about making and response (Anna Pepperall, Public Art Curator, Gateshead Council).

I suppose it is a collection in lots of ways, but it's not curated in the sense that you'd curate an exhibition. There's nothing that hangs it all together. That's partly to do with the passage of time and different people's perceptions of public art. It's also to do with the fact that in cities what you get is vested interests in different developments and those interests don't often connect in a curated sort of way (Andrew Rothwell, Arts and Culture Manager, Newcastle City Council).

Two main objections to the concept of public art as a collection can be drawn from these interview extracts. The first being that collections are inert entities offering only a passive engagement with the objects that they hold ('something that is brought out and shown'). Public artworks, in contrast, were seen in more active process-based terms. This was particularly stressed in Gateshead, where my Council interviewees spoke enthusiastically about public engagement and community involvement in public art commissioning programmes. The second objection raised here and particularly emphasised in the Newcastle interview, focuses on the disconnected, relatively un-curated and non-thematic way in which the public art cityscape has evolved. As noted by Senie (2008), this ad-hoc, site-by-site approach to artwork acquisition is a typical characteristic of (US-based) public art collections. (The aberrant, episodic and multi-origin nature of Newcastle-Gateshead's public art commissioning history was a feature highlighted in my own analysis in section 4.2.5.)

Reflecting their discomfort with museological framings, my interviewees proffered the terms 'portfolio' and 'programme' as alternatives to the label 'collection': portfolio because it seemed to them to better describe the unconnected character of the city's public art holdings; and programme because it linked public art with wider arts and culture activity and events. The Newcastle interviewees were particularly wary of the implications of collection-hood in relation to commitment to ongoing artwork care. There was a generally-held view that public artworks need little maintenance or further commissioner input post-installation. For these interviewees, the most successful public artworks were those that had the material and physical integrity to 'look after themselves' in these terms (Rothwell 2015). Although similarly wary of ongoing care implications, Nexus took a more positive view of the 'collection' term. This descriptor was one that Nexus itself actively used in some of their press releases and communications activity (including on their website).⁷² While admitting that he was not a professional curator, my Nexus interviewee Huw Lewis⁷³ did view himself as being engaged in collection management activity. This was balanced between identifying opportunities for new commissions and decision-making around

⁷² See <https://www.nexus.org.uk/art> (accessed: 06.05.15).

⁷³ His job title was 'Corporate Manager for Customer Services and Communications' a role which included responsibility for managing the 'Art on Transport' programme and existing artworks.

the safeguarding and potential relocation or decommissioning of existing artworks. As with the two local authorities, budgets and commitments to ongoing artwork care were minimal. There was also a recognition that, while artworks some did have a particular artistic or historical value within the 'Art on Transport' collection, these were not necessarily regarded as 'forever' artworks. As my interviewee here stated: 'Any art commissioned into a space is a hostage to fortune [in terms of future station redevelopment]. You can't get too precious' (Lewis 2015).

While she does not focus on differences in approaches to artwork care, one of the other key points made by Senie (2008) in her comparison between public art collections and museum collections (discussed in Chapter Two) is the positive way in which museums are able to focus on audience engagement and artwork documentation. While my Gateshead interviewees were quite vocal in resisting attachment to museological framings, it was interesting to note that of the three institutional public art commissioners focused on in my study, they were the most active in terms of their approach to these two activities. My interviewees spoke in some detail about their responsibility to document and record existing public artworks for the Council's asset management register (an activity that was in-progress at the time of our interview). They also spoke of a substantial historical archive they held on Gateshead's public art commissioning activity. Gateshead was the only one of the three institutions to hold these kind of extensive public art records. As already mentioned, and perhaps stemming from the Council's participatory and social inclusion agendas, these interviewees were keen to highlight public art as a 'living' entity rather than just a series of displayed objects, an approach which also shaped their interpretation strategy. The active way in which Gateshead Council sought to engage with public art audiences, post-commissioning, will be discussed in my examination of Newcastle-Gateshead public art interpretation practices in Chapter Six.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined how public artworks in Newcastle-Gateshead can be considered in relation to the concept of collection time. Investigation of the historical

narrative of public art acquisition has shown how this public art cityscape has been built up in an episodic manner through different waves of public art activity and the actions of multiple commissioners and successive commissioning programmes. As such, we might consider it as more of a 'collection of collections' than as a cohesive whole. It is also something of an unintentional collection, one which has (as Pearce might put it) 'crept up' on the city over this 55-year timeframe. As discussed in section 4.4, the unintentional nature of the collection was a characteristic that was highlighted in my research interviews. Indeed, it was noted that, among Newcastle-Gateshead's major commissioning organisations, there was quite a high level of unease around the potential musealisation of public art practice.

Further analysis of the city's historical public art trajectory indicates that while Newcastle-Gateshead's history is broadly reflective of national trends in public art practice over this period, it can also be identified with what Gee (2017) has described as a specific 'Northern imaginary' or post-industrial ethos of urban cultural development. While I have not pursued Gee's assertion by making direct comparison with public art activity in other northern cities included in his 'imaginary', existing literature (e.g. Usherwood et al 2000; Vall 2011) points to Newcastle-Gateshead being a leading innovator in such developments. I would suggest that the late 1970s and early 1980s (identified with the origination of the 'Art on Transport' and Gateshead Riverside Sculpture Park programmes) and the late 1990s (with the arrival of *The Angel of the North*) have been particularly significant periods in this regard.

The second half of this chapter went on to consider this theme of collection time in terms of what Doss (2016b) has labelled as public art's inevitable processuality. In particular, it has considered how, over a post-commissioning lifetime, presumptions of public art's permanency can become threatened by material decay and by new phases of city redevelopment. Going further, I have suggested that such changes and decisions made on an artwork's removal, relocation or refurbishment not only impact on, but can also be an expression of, the shifting cultural valorisation of these objects. In this chapter, these processual effects were examined in relation to

selected artwork examples from across the 55-year timeframe: *The Blue Carpet* and *Spiral Nebula* and the 'lost' artworks *Bottle Bank* and *Shoulder to Shoulder*.

Having told the story of Newcastle-Gateshead's public art development history and considered the various effects of collection time across this period, Chapter Five now moves on to explore the legacy of this activity as represented in the topography, material and artistic make-up of today's public art cityscape. In the next and subsequent chapters, my thesis further expands on discussion initiated in this chapter on the question of public art's shifting cultural valorisation, exploring this issue within the spatial framework of a 'collection' (Chapter Five), as conveyed through interpretive presentation (Chapter Six) and lastly from an audiencing perspective (in Chapter Seven).

Chapter 5. A public art collection in space

The use of lateral space is one of the ways in which collections achieve significance; and, because they are material and must, literally, always be somewhere, this happens in the most crudely physical way when a collector's hand puts one object here and others there. Secondly, spatial relationships put one thing beside another so that our eyes can take in both, or several, together, and come to a view about their appropriate neighbourliness. Thirdly, significance lies in the perceived relationship between collected objects [...] It rests partly in the objects themselves and what they, with their intrinsic shapes, and histories suggest, and partly on how and what the collector can see in them (Pearce 1995: 256).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter continues my examination of what Pearce might call the 'characteristic shape' of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection: its topography of artwork distribution and settings of display; and the typology of artworks that it contains. Mapping these characteristics is central to Aim Two of this thesis, and is a crucial stage in the process of defining the city's public art collection as an entity which, in Pearce's words, is 'more than the sum of its parts' (1995: 21). In doing this work, I venture into a discussion of both public art's relation to site and place, and into what Pearce (in my opening quote) refers to as the 'lateral space' of the collection, where artwork relationships and scales of significance can be articulated.

This chapter is organised in four sections. I start with an examination of public art's imbedded relationships with the Newcastle-Gateshead cityscape as a geographical site and as a setting for public art display (section 5.2). The following sections (5.3 and 5.4) then focus more specifically on an analysis of the object-hood of public artworks themselves, in terms of their materiality, representational schema and artistic authorships. The final section (5.5) then presents a more speculative discussion, showing how following Pearce's thinking on the essential laterality of the

‘collection’ can prompt new perspectives on the value and significance of public artworks.

5.2 A collection in situ

Public art’s relationship to place, and especially its ‘site-specificity’, where ‘the place of its display is part of the point of the art piece’ (Cresswell 2015: 152), has long been a critical issue within public art practice and its scholarly literature. The different understandings of site in a visual art context are given in-depth examination by Kwon, who writes that site, and especially the notion of ‘site-specificity’, has played an important role in the development of contemporary practice (1997a; 2002). Kwon’s concept of ‘site-specificity’ comprises three coexisting paradigms. The first of these and the one that is most pertinent to this section of my discussion, is the ‘phenomenological site’: the fixed physical site within which the artwork is made and subsequently experienced by its audiences. Her second paradigm is the ‘social’ or ‘institutional’ site: the social-economic contexts within and for which an artwork is made and presented. Her third paradigm is the diffused or ‘discursive site’, where an artwork’s meaning is generated through public critique, discussion and debate (Kwon 2002: 26). Later, she also refers to a further site, the mobile site of the artist’s ‘vitae’ (*ibid*: 51-52). (I will return to this last of Kwon’s sites of specificity later in this chapter discussion in section 5.4.)

As Kwon (1997a; 2002) writes, site-specific art encompasses a breadth of contemporary art forms (from land art to performance to socially-engaged activity) which have all influenced the development of what we call public art practice. Phenomenological site-specificity especially is a strategy of art-making that has been normalised in institutional processes of public art commissioning, which commonly make claims for public art as an expression of *genius loci*. Here ‘*genius loci*’ is understood as being conjured from a rich mix of factors including ‘the topographical, the cosmological and spiritual, the built environment and people’s emotional and psychological engagement with place’ (Convery et al. 2012: 2). It is public art’s

perceived ability to engage with and express this assemblage of factors that provides its contribution to 'place-making'. As contemporary architecture and urban design has become more homogenous and 'placeless', Kwon (1997b) argues that the commissioning of site-specific public artworks has been increasingly valorised as a methodology for establishing a new 'distinction of place' (*ibid*).

In this current chapter section, I examine the phenomenological site of Newcastle-Gateshead's public art collection and its place relations in terms of artworks' geographic locations and physical settings. As distinguished by Agnew (1987, cited in Cresswell 2015: 7) 'location' is defined as the in-situ fixed positions that public artworks occupy within the cityscape (addressed in section 5.2.1), while 'setting' refers to the experiential spaces in which these artworks are displayed (section 5.2.2). As we shall see later in Chapter Seven, the physical, visual and temporal affordances of these artwork settings play a critical role in public art audiencing.

The findings discussed in this and the following sections (5.3 and 5.4) are drawn primarily from my own fieldwork and the analysis of my research database which lists 240 public artworks sited in Newcastle-Gateshead between 1960-2015, 220 of which were still in situ at the time of my study (c.2017). The process and sources used to draw up this database were described in Chapter Three (section 3.3.1).

5.2.1 Geographic distribution

As examined in Chapter Four, the public art cityscape of Newcastle-Gateshead is the legacy of a 55-year history of public art commissioning. Over this period, activity has ranged across different geographic areas of the city, resulting in distinctive patterns and concentrations of artworks across this cityscape. A Google map (Fig 5.1), drawn up from my research database, shows how these artworks are distributed across the two local authority areas of Newcastle and Gateshead.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Location data on these artworks was derived from a range of documentary sources (published and researcher generated) and different levels of geographic information, including: the names of individual buildings; street addresses; visual locations shown on other published maps (including

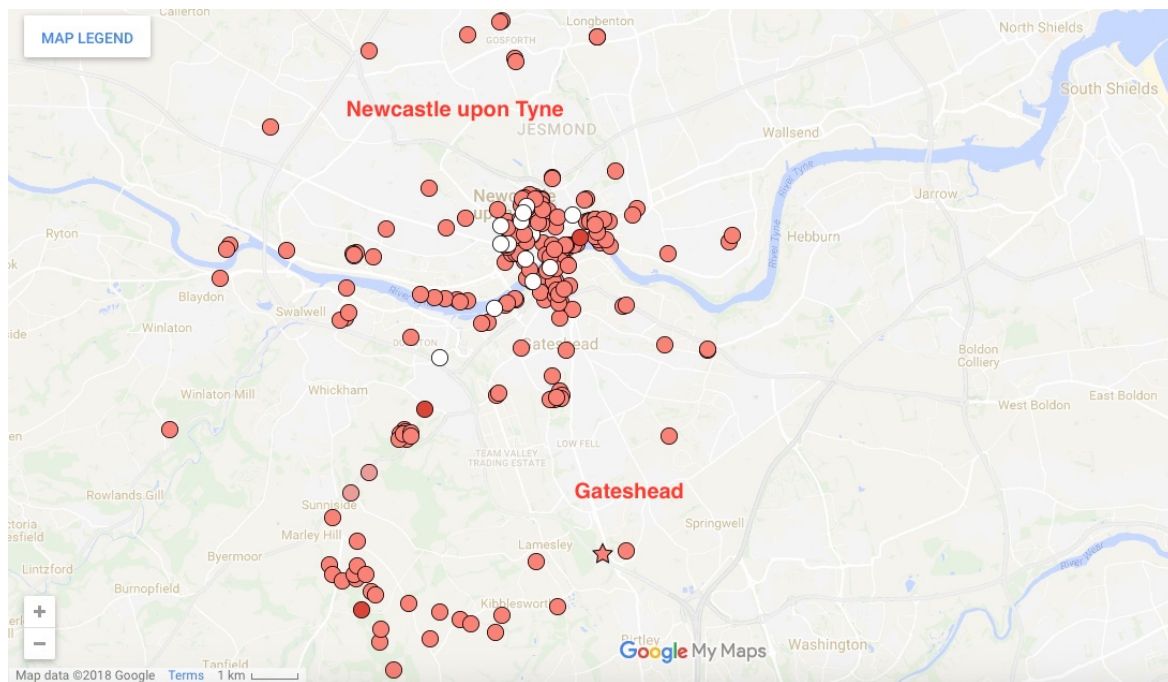


Figure 5-1: Map indicating the distribution of public artworks across Newcastle-Gateshead (star = *The Angel of the North*; white markers = decommissioned artworks) (Map data ©2018 Google).

Allowing for the variation in counting of multiple objects produced under a single commission, this distribution of public artworks is shared roughly equally between Newcastle and Gateshead. While the two urban centres clearly represent the strongest concentration of activity, artwork locations are also scattered quite widely beyond this landscape, especially to the south of the River Tyne. While a third of Newcastle-Gateshead's public artworks are located within the immediate urban hub to the north and south of the Tyne, a roughly equal percentage are sited in out-of-centre neighbourhoods. Many of these artworks are found in the city's parks or at suburban stations along the Metro transport system. A further 18% (n=42) of the city's public artworks are located along the urban quaysides or riverside corridor along the north and south bank of the River Tyne. This is a major geographical landmark within the cityscape and a defining meeting point between the two local authority areas. Both banks of the Tyne have been key target areas for urban regeneration programmes, schemes through which many of the city's public artworks have been funded. A similar but slightly smaller number of artwork objects (n=39, 16% of the total), including *The Angel of the North*, are distributed across Gateshead's

Google satellite view); and GPS information from geo-tagged digital photographs taken on site as part of my own fieldwork.

urban/rural fringe several kilometres to the south of the Tyne. To summarise, Fig. 5.2 shows the percentage split of artwork distribution across these four area types: the two city/town centres; city neighbourhoods; riverside (and Quayside); and the urban/rural fringe.⁷⁵

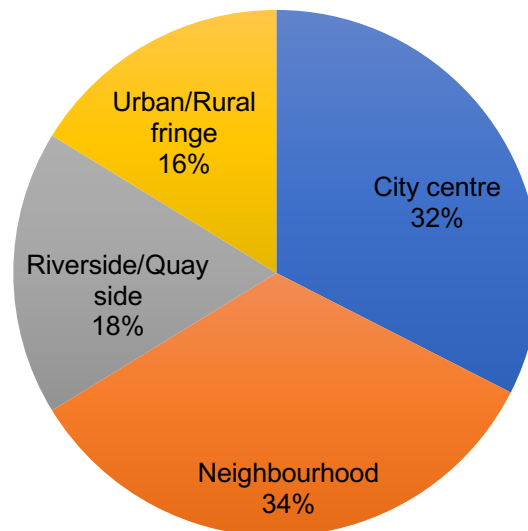


Figure 5-2 Distribution of public artworks across Newcastle-Gateshead.

Looking more closely within Newcastle, key concentrations of public artworks are found in Grainger Town (Newcastle's historic city centre), in and around the Civic Centre and the city's two university campuses, along the Quayside to the West and East of the centre and along the Ouseburn. While some of these are one-off commissions, most are the legacy of flagship public art programmes, including the 'Grainger Town Project' and 'Art on the Riverside' (both examined in Chapter Four). To the south of the River Tyne in Gateshead, key concentrations of public artworks are found around Gateshead's East Quays, in Gateshead town centre and in Riverside Park west of the Queen Elizabeth Bridge. A further string of public artworks is dispersed along cycle routes and walking trails between Gateshead's settlements of Sunniside and Kibblesworth. Many of the artworks in this area are linked to the

⁷⁵ It should be noted that the geographic labels I am using here ('neighbourhood', 'urban centre', etc.) are debated terms with no precisely agreed definition within the literature (Jenks & Dempsey 2007).

Council's 'Marking the Ways' programme. Begun in 1991, this initiative commissioned and installed at least 35 artworks waymarking rural paths and cycle routes between the settlements of Whickham, Lamesley, Kibblesworth and Beamish.

As will be discussed in Chapter Six, the geographic distribution of the city's public art collection and the clustering of artworks into locational groupings is a key organising principle within many public art interpretation materials. For one of my local authority interviewees (Andrew Rothwell, Newcastle City Council), the differing densities of artwork distribution and their relative visit-ability was an important constituent factor when considering the public art cityscape as a 'collection'. Thinking of the collection as a 'visit-able' entity, he observed: 'You could walk around the Ouseburn. You could walk around the City Centre [but] it would quite difficult to do public art in Walker [one of the city's neighbourhoods] in the same way' (Rothwell 2015). While considering local pockets of public art concentration as potential micro-collections was a possibility, for this interviewee, conceiving of a more distributed city-wide collection thus proved more problematic.

5.2.2 Sites and settings

In considering the question of the artwork's relation to its geographic location and setting, and through this, its contribution (or not) to place-making or place distinction, it is helpful to think about gradations or degrees of site-specificity. Although focused on performance rather than visual art practice, the following typology of relative site-specificities, suggested by Wilkie (2002: 150) offers a useful guide. For her, (phenomenologically) site-specific works are those that are 'specifically generated from/for one selected site' (*ibid*: 150). These artworks make a 'profound engagement' through references to a site's history, past and present usage, or its physicality and 'morphology' (*ibid*). She contrasts these with what she terms 'site-generic' works, which are created, not for or in the context of a specific defined site, but rather for a type of site ('like sites'). Wilkie also offers a third category of artworks, which she calls the 'site-sympathetic', to denote instances where pre-existing works are re-located and reworked to be 'physicalized in a selected site' (*ibid*.). Thinking in public art terms we can say that, while Newcastle-Gateshead contains instances of all three

types of differently site-sensitive works, as commissioned artworks, most fall into the first two of her proposed categories.

While recognising that every artwork site is geographically unique, with its own morphology, histories and micro-audiences, in Newcastle-Gateshead public artwork sites can be described in terms of one of four broad setting types: (1) city square; (2) park or green space; (3) streetscape; (4) building. Fig 5.3 indicates the relative share of Newcastle-Gateshead's public art collection across these four categories.

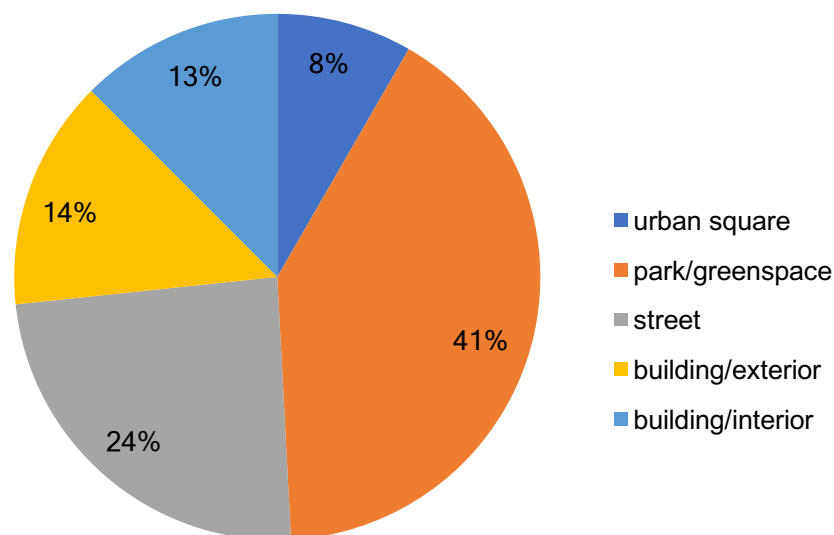


Figure 5-3 Distribution of public artworks between setting types

Consideration of artwork setting is important to my study as each type of setting can be expected to set up and support different viewing and audiencing conditions (both negative and positive) for the artworks they contain. Sited within the cityscape, public artworks exist in a confused material and visual landscape, where artworks are encountered within a predominantly mobile experience and through the shifting viewpoints, from long view to close-up tactile encounter that this enables. While this expansion and contraction of viewpoint also occurs within the museum space (see Leahy 2012), such embodiments are amplified within the larger, outdoor and distributed space of the city. The things that people do in these different spaces and

settings, the setting's visual and wider sensory ambience, its mix of access (or otherwise) to traffic and pedestrians, its differing encouragement (or discouragement) of 'dwell time', are all part of the complex environment of public art audiencing. These aspects are also part of the usage and morphology of site that Wilkie (2002) argues is, or should be, at the heart of site-specific public art commissioning and making. Thinking in these terms, the encounter with an artwork in a busy street is always going to be experientially different from an encounter that might take place in a park, where the backdrop to the artwork may be less visually confused, and where there may be more space (and time) for visual and physical investigation of the artwork. Norms and policing of behaviours in these two environments are also different. The effects of setting on audience encounters with public artworks is one of the themes explored in my examination of public art audiencing in Chapter Seven.

In Newcastle-Gateshead, relatively few artworks are sited in spaces that might be called public squares. For the purposes of this analysis, the 'square' is loosely defined as a designed hard landscaped public space, slightly set aside from the thoroughfare or streetscape. These are usually quieter social spaces, away from traffic, where people might be encouraged to rest and spend time. It should be noted, that in practice, these are quite blurred categories: in Newcastle, the Quayside promenade might be considered as having something of a hybrid function, part public square-part streetscape (and in the summertime, partly transformed into an urban beach). In the analysis undertaken for this study, only 8% (n=20) of the city's public artworks were identified as located in this type of site. One reason for this is that Newcastle has a tightly-packed historic city centre with only a handful of spaces that might be described as formal public squares. Old Eldon Square is perhaps the most obvious example in Newcastle, but has not to date been used as a site for public art, probably because it is already the site of one of Newcastle's official 1st World War memorials. Gateshead, similarly, has few such designed public spaces, the newly developed Trinity Square (the location of Stephen Newby's 2014 sculpture *Halo*), being a notable exception. This might be contrasted with the case of *The Blue Carpet* outside the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle, where the public artwork itself defines the urban square.

Around 40% (n = 98) of Newcastle-Gateshead's public artworks are sited in parks or other green spaces. As listed in my research database, these spaces include formal city parks, woodlands and semi-rural landscapes, but also more marginal urban green locations such as the soft landscaping found around many office developments, especially in out-of-centre business parks. Public art commissioning for this type of site is seen on both sides of the Tyne, with Gateshead in particular having built an early reputation for its innovative approach to urban green space commissioning (in Riverside Park, as described in Chapter Four). Gateshead Council has also used Saltwell Park as a formal setting for public art (the 'Install Sculpture Trail'), while in Newcastle, the City Council/NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI) project, 'Parks, People and Sense of Place' (2004), commissioned permanent and temporary artworks for five neighbourhood parks around the city. Other artworks included in this location category in my study, include a series of sculptures sited within office garden areas at Newcastle Business Park and the sculptures, markers and seating-based artworks developed for Gateshead's 'Marking the Ways' programme. Often artworks sited in these locations are presented in groups or chains, setting up display forms and conditions that have some similarity with those encountered within the 'sculpture park' and 'sculpture trail' models. The audiencing of art in these types of settings and the art-place relationships generated in these more specific art viewing environments have been usefully examined elsewhere by Cant & Morris (2006) and Warren (2011; 2012).

In comparison to the more framed and set-aside space of the urban square or park, the streetscape operates as a very different environment for public art production and audiencing. Around a quarter (n=58) of Newcastle-Gateshead's public artworks are sited in city streets and urban thoroughfare sites. Some of these have formal visual settings, e.g. as planned landmarks along Newcastle's Quayside (the *Blacksmith's Needle* and Raf Fulcher's 1998 *Swirle Pavilion* being two such examples). Other works are integrated or inserted within the surface of the streetscape itself. These may form part of the overall floor-scape design, as in John Maine's *Tributary* (2005) running down Newcastle's Dean Street, or as more small-scale, interventional 'stumble-upon' works such as the *Grainger Town Plaques* series. Other artworks, some in the form of sculpture, others as more functional objects (seating, railings, etc.), can be found on street corners (e.g. *Threshold* at the south end of Gateshead

High Street, or within the thoroughfare itself (*Parsons' Polygon*, David Hamilton, Newcastle, 1985) in car parks (e.g. *Acceleration*) and sometimes by the side of the road (*Ribbon Railings*, Alan Dawson, 2002, Askew Road, Gateshead).

Just over a quarter (n=64) of the public artworks in the city are sited within or on buildings or other architectural structures, such as pedestrian subways, bridges and Metro stations (e.g. *Canon*). Some of these are commissioned as integrated architectural artworks, perhaps as externally fixed sculptures (e.g. *River Tyne God*, at Newcastle Civic Centre), as architectural interventions (e.g. Cath Campbell's *Escapology* on the roof of Northern Stage) or as exterior or interior glass and mural-based works. The latter is a public art approach that has been widely adopted by Nexus within its 'Art on Transport' programme.

Beyond their experiential affordances, artwork settings can also play a role in and be an expression of the spatial hierarchies set up within a collection. Mouliou & Kalessopoulou (2012) observe that in the museum, an object's spatial setting and the viewing relations set up around it is one criteria for the identification of the most 'emblematic' objects in a collection. From my observations and analysis set out so far in this chapter, I would suggest that this principle also applies with the siting of artworks in the public art landscape. The positioning of *The Angel of the North* on a hill side beside a major transport entry/exit point to Gateshead (the A1 motorway) is one obvious example of how this works: along with *The Angel's* scale and bold design, this setting is a key ingredient in generating the sculpture's status as *the* emblematic public artwork for the city.⁷⁶ The artworks along Newcastle's East Quayside are afforded a similarly prioritised setting as a sequential promenade of sculptural features, which can be recognised from a distance as well as being encountered close-up and in-the-round.

While the artworks just mentioned might enjoy privileged settings in terms of their affordance for artwork viewing, there are very few locations in Newcastle-Gateshead

⁷⁶ The *Angel's* setting and its contribution to the sculpture's significance was the subject of a research study recently commissioned by Gateshead Council and Historic England (2017, unpublished), a project to which I contributed as a consultant.

where public artworks can be visually compared in the spatially immediate way that collection objects can be co-examined within a museum display. Fig. 5.4 shows an unusual example of a location where three public artworks, from very different eras, are visually juxtaposed with one another in this way.

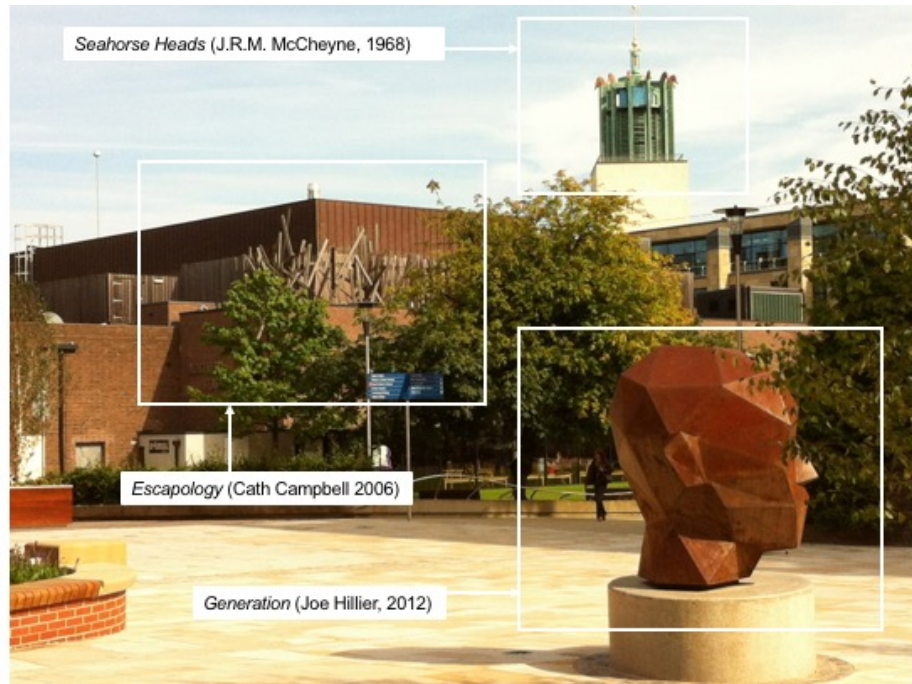


Figure 5-4: Visual juxtaposition of public artworks seen from the Newcastle University campus.

Even where artworks are sited within the same immediate streetscape, as in Grainger Street, their discrete and often pavement-level placement means that they cannot be viewed together in the same moment. Embedded within the everyday cityscape, public artworks have more immediate physical and visual relation to their surrounding architectures and general urban scene than they do to one-another. As Whybrow (2011) writes, public artworks 'contend' most directly with their surrounding cityscape and it is only through the relations generated by the mobile viewer that lateral connections between these artworks are really created. While in a museum environment visual and conceptual connections between artworks are essential to the functions of exhibition making and exhibition design, in the public realm it is less the curator and more 'the linking, thinking figure of the spectator on foot on whom the

onus is placed to perform this process of cross pollination' (2011: 81–82).⁷⁷ As we shall see later in this thesis (Chapter Six), this invitation for mobile 'cross-pollination' between spatially separated artworks, is a strong feature within the design of institutional interpretive materials produced for the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection. Having examined the broad topography of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection and noted some key discussion points to be picked up in later chapters, the next section now shifts the focus of this chapter to examine the specific typology of artworks that this collection contains.

5.3 Artform, materiality and schemes of representation

This section examines the typology of public artworks within the Newcastle-Gateshead collection: exploring the 'thingness' (Dudley 2012: 1) and 'potentialities' (Massey & Rose 2003) of these artworks in terms of their varying forms and materials. It also provides an analysis of the representational themes highlighted within the public art collection. The aim here is to consider the character of the overall 'collection' rather than to examine individual artworks in depth. As in the typologies discussed elsewhere in this chapter, the categories presented are not intended as fixed; indeed, as will become apparent, there is much slippage between my suggested categorisations.

5.3.1 Artform

As already discussed in Chapter One, contemporary public art practice in its fullest definition encompasses a broad range of approaches, art forms and creative disciplines which result in the production of a wide typology of artworks and art projects. In my own focus on the encounter with permanent and material public artworks, this study considers a narrower paradigm of public art production. This includes both fine-art-based and more craft or design-based approaches. The post-1960 public art landscape of Newcastle-Gateshead contains both easily identifiable artworks (sculptures and murals), and integrated and functional, and perhaps,

⁷⁷ Whybrow's observations are based on his experiences of visiting *Skulptur Projekte Münster* 2007.

therefore, less obvious forms of public art production, such as artist-designed bespoke street furniture. Fig 5.5 provides a breakdown of the make-up of the public art collection in terms of its particular mix of art forms.

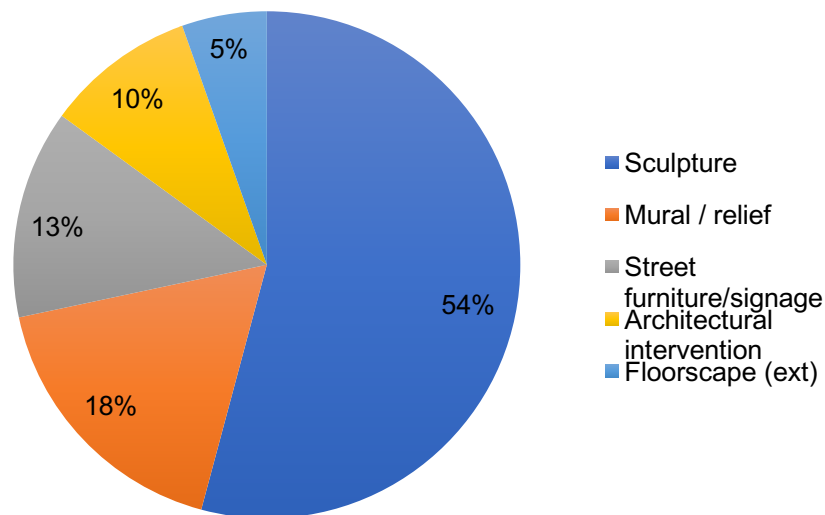


Figure 5-5: Typology of public art forms in Newcastle-Gateshead.

Based on this analysis of my research database, over half (n=130) of the artworks in the public art collection are three-dimensional sculptural works. These are present on a variety of scales (from the monumental twenty-metre-high *The Angel of the North* downwards) and are made from a range of durable sculptural materials. They include examples of both representational and abstract forms. Two-dimensional murals and reliefs are also strongly present within the collection, making up 18% (n=42) of all the artworks sited in the city. They range from the hand-painted and hand-carved to works created through industrial fabrication methods. 13% (n=32) of the city's public art holdings consist of artist-made or artist-designed street furniture and signage (seats, way markers, entrance features and railings being typical forms). Many of these more functional artworks are situated in green-space environments associated with walking or cycle routes. The final category in this public art typology are architectural and urban floor-scape interventions. These also make up a significant component of the collection (15% of the total, n=36). In encompassing this range of

public art forms, the Newcastle-Gateshead collection is widely representative of permanent forms of public art practice present in other UK cities.

5.3.2 Materiality

Generally Newcastle-Gateshead's public art collection adheres to quite a limited and conservative palette of materials, chosen for their longevity and everyday durability within the urban environment as much as on aesthetic grounds. This is particularly the case with sculptural works, where metals of various kinds and finishes, and bronze and stone, are the predominant materials used. Meanwhile, in its commissions for the Tyne and Wear Metro system, Nexus has developed a speciality in vitreous enamel panel-based artworks, a material that works well for the Metro's high pedestrian traffic and the system's cleaning and maintenance regimes. This utilitarian approach to material selection is, perhaps, one of the features of public art that marks it out from gallery-based work, which, being for indoor presentation, has a much more various and adventurous materiality. In the public art field, the choice of material shares more with the world of architecture, urban design and sometimes engineering, than it does to the wider art world. Often, as in the case of the *Angel of the North*, this choice is due to specific requirements of the artwork's scale and structural integrity.

As we shall see in my later discussion in Chapter Seven, materiality can play an important role in public art audiencing. Different materials generate different (emotional and embodied) affects. They can also be interpreted as a form of representation: especially, in a post-industrial city like Newcastle-Gateshead, in relation to the use of industrial materials and their perceived heritage associations.



Figure 5-6: *Nocturne* (Nayan Kulkarni, Queen Elizabeth Bridge, 2007) (Photo: ©Nexus/Sally Ann Norman)

Where innovative materials have been employed, public artworks can prove controversial, often because over time, the materials fail to perform as intended and expected: as noted in Chapter Four, *The Blue Carpet* in Newcastle is a particularly notable example of this. Some older artworks such as *Spiral Nebula* were also technologically innovative in their day. (*Spiral Nebula* is made from cast aluminium, an experimental sculptural medium at the time.) Other more recent artworks, such as *Nocturne* (Fig.5.6), *Rise and Fall* and *Threshold* have used digital technology to create animated lighting or sound effects, sometimes with an interactive element. *Threshold* emits a random sequence of recorded sounds in reaction to pedestrian movements around it, while in *Nocturne* (Fig. 5.6) members of the public were invited to participate in the artwork's production by contributing images from which daily changing light 'messages' would be generated. Not surprisingly perhaps, ten years on from its installation, this interactive element is no longer in operation.

5.3.3 Representational schema

While the city's public artworks are extremely diverse in terms of their artistic styles and imagery, visual analysis (along with an examination of artwork titles) reveals several symbolic themes and schema of representation that are threaded through the collection. Key themes and example artworks are set out in Table 5.1. In some cases, representation might be more strongly suggested in titling than as a visual feature of

the artwork itself. Drawing on the earlier discussion about public art and site-specific meaning-making, Table 5.1 separates these representational themes into two main groupings. The first column lists those that we might consider as site-specific while column two lists those that can be regarded as generic themes.

Table 5-1: Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection – representational schema

Site-specific themes	Generic themes
<u>Local heritage</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maritime and shipping (e.g. <i>Swirle Pavilion</i>) - Industrial (e.g. <i>Yesterday, Today, Forever</i>) - Science and invention, esp. engineering (e.g. <i>Parsons' Polygon</i>, <i>Hutton's Etched Glass</i> at Newcastle Civic Centre) - <i>Newcastle Through the Ages</i> 	<u>People / human figure</u> <p>(e.g. <i>Man with Potential Selves</i>, <i>Man with Pigeons</i>, <i>The Family</i>, <i>Shoulder to Shoulder</i>, <i>Pillar Man</i>, <i>Community in Motion</i>, <i>Generation</i>)</p>
<u>Topography</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rivers (e.g. <i>River Tyne</i>, <i>From the River to the Sea</i>, <i>Tyne Wave</i>, <i>River God Tyne</i>) - Cityscape (e.g. <i>South Tyne Eye Plan</i>, <i>Grainger Town Map</i>) 	<u>Mythological figure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - e.g. <i>Phoenix Cobbles</i>, <i>Siren</i>, <i>Golden Angel</i>
<u>Local people</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historic figures (e.g. <i>James Hill Monument</i>, <i>Grainger Dedication</i>) - Contemporary figures / personalities (e.g., <i>Cardinal Hume</i>, <i>Famous Faces</i>, <i>Bobbie Robson Memorial</i>, <i>Wor Jackie</i>) 	<u>Natural world</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Animals (e.g. <i>Swans in Flight</i>, <i>Lion</i>, <i>Goats</i>) - Natural forms (e.g. <i>Foliate Form</i>) - Astronomical forms (e.g. <i>Spiral Nebula</i>, <i>Rolling Moon</i>, <i>New Moon Rising</i>) - Meteorological references (e.g. <i>Come Rain</i>, <i>Wind or Shine</i>, <i>West Wind</i>)
<u>Social history</u> <p>(e.g. <i>Victorian Bakers Shop</i>, <i>Keelrow</i>, <i>Blaydon Races</i>, <i>Head Cubes</i>, <i>Tyne Line of Text Flow</i>, <i>Ouseburn Waymarkers</i>)</p>	<u>Architectural forms</u> <p>(e.g. <i>Column and Steps</i>, <i>Lintzford</i>, <i>Threshold</i>, <i>Pavilion for Cultural Exchange</i>, <i>Rise and Fall</i>)</p>

The site-specific category identifies themes which draw on and relate in some way to the cultural heritage, topography or socio-economic history of the city or wider North East region. Art critic Paul Usherwood (2000) has commented that the relationship between public artworks and the history of the city (and North East England more

broadly) has largely been a celebratory or commemorative one. *Swirle Pavilion* (a 20th Century monument to the city's 19th Century maritime trading history), *Parsons' Polygon* (a tribute to local engineer Charles Parsons, a pioneer in the development of turbine engines) and *Newcastle Through the Ages* (Fig. 5.7) are all examples of public artworks which play this role.



Figure 5-7: *Newcastle Through the Ages* (one of two panels) combining imagery drawn from the city's industrial, engineering and architectural history.

As in these examples, such artworks often seek to promote a narrative of the city as a place of 19th-Century innovation and former industrial power (note the imagery in the central two panels of *Newcastle Through the Ages*). In contrast, there are few examples of artworks which represent a more 'critical history' or at least a less 'referential stance' in relation to the city's past (Usherwood et al. 2000: xx). For Usherwood, these public art representations play only an antiquarian and nostalgic relationship to history. Rather than retelling and re-examining history in a 'liberating and progressive' way, they exist only as 'token gestures towards the city's past': gestures which are selected (by commissioning institutions) as particularly suitable images for 'enhancing a city or company's marketability' (Usherwood 2004: 123).⁷⁸

⁷⁸ This is a position which Usherwood (2000) considers as being a failure of public art more broadly, and not just in Newcastle-Gateshead or the North East.

Echoing these critiques, Vall (2011) observes how heritage associations have been ‘harnessed’ to give local ‘colour’ to some key and highly profitable property developments in Newcastle-Gateshead, such as on Newcastle’s East Quayside in the 1990s (*ibid*: 143), where narratives relating to the area’s maritime and shipping history were specifically highlighted.⁷⁹



Figure 5-8: *From the Rivers to the Sea* (Hilary Paynter, 2004).

Alongside these narratives of local industrial and history, the topography of the cityscape itself is a recurrent theme. Not surprisingly, the River Tyne, one of the defining geographical symbols of Newcastle-Gateshead, features in many of these representations, from the prominent sculpture *River God Tyne* (on the facade of Newcastle Civic Centre) to mural works such as *From the River to the Sea* (Central Station Metro) (Fig. 5.8) and *Tyne Wave* (Christine Constant, 2004, at Gateshead’s Metro Centre). In some instances, it is the geographic location of the artwork rather than its visual imagery that performs the symbolic site-specific role. Newcastle’s ‘Hidden Rivers’ project (see Fig. 5.9) is a particular case in point. As the Newcastle City Council (2002) outline proposal for this commissioning programme stated, the

⁷⁹ Vall describes how this thematic was part of the Terry Farrell masterplan for the East Quayside, being present not just in the public artworks commissioned, but also in the naming of the office buildings: ‘Copenhagen House’ being the first one to be built (2011: 131).

aim of this initiative was 'to 'mark' the land with public art in a number of strategically important locations across the city under which the hidden rivers run, and to create a 'collection' of works which orientate the viewer and provide a physical and conceptual guide to the city'. Four 'hidden river' locations along Skinner Burn, Pandon Burn, Ouseburn and Lort Burn were identified as potential sites for public art commissions, each one linked to public realm projects being developed within the city at the time.



Figure 5-9: Map showing locations of the 'Hidden Rivers' artworks (© Newcastle City Council)

Funded and sited in collaboration with the Grainger Town Partnership, Northumbria University and property developers Silverlink, the resulting artworks (installed 2004-05) were very diverse in character. In visual terms, most only make subtle reference to the project's rivers theme. Two of these artworks are sculptures, both marking the site of Pandon Burn: the figurative bronze *Pillar Man* (marked No.1 on the map) and the abstract stone carving *Give and Take* (No. 5). One is a narrative text work, *Tyne Line of Text*, set into street paving above the course of the Skinner Burn (No. 3). With its imagery of water splashes, *Flowering of the Lort Burn* in Leazes Park (No.2) is probably the most literal representation of a river, whilst apart from in its title,

Tributary, a discrete artist-designed paving scheme tracing the path of Lort Burn down The Side from the railway bridge to the Guildhall (position No. 4), makes only subtle visual references to liquid 'flow'.



Figure 5-10: *Cardinal Basil Hume Memorial* (Nigel Boonham, St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle, 2002).

Beyond city topography, another common site-specific category is the representation of notable local figures and personalities. Although mainly present in terms of sculpture, these also sometimes appear in two-dimensional graphic (mural) form. Usherwood (2000) draws a connection between these more recent artworks and earlier forms of sculptural 'heroisation', of the kind most usually seen in 19th century miner statues or WW1 memorials. Among such representations, we might include monuments to local football heroes, including artist Graeme Mitcheson's (2011) *Sir Bobby Robson Memorial* (the much-admired former manager of Newcastle United football club) and sculptor Susanna Robinson's (1991) statue *Wor Jackie* (a tribute to the legendary Newcastle United player from the 1940s-50s, Jackie Milburn). Other 'local heroes' memorialised in this way include Cardinal Basil Hume, the Newcastle-born former Archbishop of Westminster (*Cardinal Basil Hume Memorial Garden*) (Fig. 5.10). Meanwhile, the mural *Famous Faces* (Bob Olley, Monument Metro Station, 1996), features portraits of Newcastle personalities from the football, music, media and business worlds, including among others, footballers Jackie Charlton and Alan Shearer, singers Jimmy Nail and Sting, broadcaster Mike Neville, comedian Rowan Atkinson and property developer, Sir John Hall. While these were high-profile figures

in the mid 1990s, whether these still have currency as the city's 'famous faces' for current and future audiences is probably questionable.

Site-generic themes

These locally-associated portraits are very different from the generic human figure forms also found within the public art collection. Including representations of solitary figures (e.g. *Man with Pigeons*, *Pillar Man*, *Man with Potential Selves*, *The Angel of the North*) and groups (*The Family*, *Community in Motion*), these artworks seem to reach towards more universalist meanings, e.g. around human and social relationships, psychological or emotional states. In these artworks, rather than portraits of individuals, we have images of Everyman (as a representation of a 'typical' or 'ordinary' person, or perhaps as an everyday hero) and mythological figures (including gods, sirens and angels).

As with the other themes listed in the second column of Table 5.1, while present in Newcastle-Gateshead, this range of images and associations are not especially particular to this city. Many of these artworks could fit in equally well in other cities. However, while not site-specific as such, these artworks are usually site-appropriate in having some correlation with their physical setting. For example, *The Family* (Gordon Young, 1991), a three-part sculptural depiction of family relationships and life stages, sits in the grounds of Gateshead Civic Centre adjacent to the Registry Office. The appropriateness of this setting is certainly promoted by Gateshead Council which presents the sculpture as a visual backdrop for wedding photographs. Meanwhile, Dan Savage's (2007) graphic scheme *Community in Motion* is part of the designed interior of a bus station, and deliberately attempts to represent the mix of people who use the space. Similarly, many of the artworks that feature nature imagery (animals, plants, etc.) are situated in city parks or other green spaces.

In reviewing the schema of representation present in both these thematic ranges (site-specific and generic), it is noticeable how these are strongly aligned with authorised heritage discourse (as defined by Smith 2006) and well-worn familiar local

narratives. As with Usherwood's critique cited earlier, and making a distinction between 'heritage' – the emotional and symbolic reconstruction and repackaging of the past for the present – and the more critical-intellectual 'history', Pollock & Sharp suggest that most public art generates a one-dimensional narrative of time and place (*ibid*: 1063). Through such selective reading, more diverse, plural and multi-layered histories of the city tend to be excluded (Pollock & Sharp 2007). Where there are examples of artworks which undercut authorised heritage discourse (we might count the interwoven stories contained in *Tyne Line of Text Flow*, and the fictional mini-histories commemorated in the *Grainger Town Plaque* series, as examples), these artworks tend to be more playful than critical.

Whether site-specific or generic in their representations, we should note that the themes identified in my public art typology are, as in the 'Hidden Rivers' example, mobilised primarily by public art commissioners (either in the briefs for these commissions or in the design selection process) rather than by artists themselves. (Although we might speculate that some of the more playful artworks commissioned for Grainger Town are more artist-led in this regard.) As such, and as Pollock (2017) suggests, within public art practice, it is usually the commissioning body that has the controlling hand in terms of what is remembered and what is forgotten through public artwork representation. This is especially the case with post-industrial regeneration projects where public art has been employed strategically for the purposes of re-aestheticizing and reimagining place (*ibid*: 4). Memory becomes a political process where the past is 'selected, filtered and restructured in terms set out by the questions and necessity of the present (Jedlowski 2001, cited in Pollock 2017: 4). As Pollock writes, 'within regeneration, memory is used to serve several masters and its evocation of, and inscription into, place is a deliberate process of remembering, forgetting, and re-presenting' (*ibid*). As will be examined in Chapter Six, this inscriptional function of Newcastle-Gateshead public art commissioning is further emphasised in the production of institutional interpretive resources.

In this section, I have examined the city's public art collection in terms of its physical, material and representational typologies. In the next section, I now move the focus of discussion on to explore the city's profile of artistic authorship. As will be argued

here, this is a further key component in the characterisation of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection.

5.4 Artistic authorship

As explored in my review of the collections literature (in Chapter Two), questions of an artwork's uniqueness, its provenance (of creation as well as ownership) and its artistic value are key points of reference for assessing the significance of artworks within museum-based collections. In thinking about the role of artistic authorship in the public art collection, it is useful to go back to Kwon's conceptualisations of site-specificity (2002; 1997a) and in particular to her notion of the 'nomadic site' of the artist's 'vitae'. As she writes, despite increased focus on context as a core site of artwork meaning-making, all site-oriented projects are also aligned in some way with 'what might be called a fifth site – the exhibition history of the artist, his/her vitae' (Kwon 1997a: 104). For Kwon, this 'fifth site' represents a reawakening of the importance of authorship in public art arising from the increased international mobilisation (and commodification) of site-specific art practice. The artist becomes a new kind of itinerant 'critical-artistic' service provider (Kwon, 2002: 50), someone who moves from city to city (biennial to biennial, commission to commission) to create new 'site-specific' projects. In this way, the 'narrative trajectories' of these projects are 'consistently aligned' with the artist's prior works in other places (*ibid*: 51-52).

Kwon's conceptualisation of this site of 'vitae' contrasts sharply with the way in which the role of authorship has usually been downplayed within the public art literature. In this field challenges to the traditional autonomy of authorship come from two critical directions. The first critique, brought by Kwon herself (1997a; 2002), concerns the way in which public art can be seen to relegate much of its meaning-making ability to its physical site-specificity rather than to the specific ideas, style and sensibility of its maker. The second critique, and one that has grown in importance with the rise of 'new genre' public art practice, is the question of 'collective authorship'. In other words, a shared authorship evolved either between artist and community in the

production of an artwork (Bishop 2006: 12, refers to this as 'collaborative creativity') or perhaps a sense of 'public authorship' (as suggested by Vickery 2011) that might emerge from an ongoing relational dynamic between the completed artwork and its audience(s). More recently, Macneill (2012) and Stevens (2015; Stevens & Lossau 2015) have argued that artistic authorship has little presence or importance for public realm audiences for whom public artworks are most often encountered as anonymous and functional objects rather than having recognition as artistic products. (The way audiences in Newcastle-Gateshead show interest in artistic authorship is one of the themes explored in Chapter Seven).

Kwon's concept of the nomadic artist would seem to be consistent with the ways in which artistic careers are built, including within the field of public art practice. The making of artistic reputation and the organisation of activity around this measure is a key part of this process (Becker 2008: 352). Following this line, most sociological typologies of visual artists have focused on scales of relationship to amateur or professional practice, or self-orientation to art or crafts-based activity (see Becker 2008; Forsyth & Palmer 1999; Ethridge & Neapolitan 1985). Although generalising across art worlds, and not just concerned with the visual arts, Becker's analysis is the most influential and nuanced of these studies. His model posits four categories of artist, each standing in a different relation to the art world: 'integrated professionals', 'mavericks', 'folk artists' and 'naïve artists' (Becker 1982; 2008). It is Becker's first grouping, the integrated professionals, that is of most relevance to my examination of commissioned public art. These are the artists who, as Becker states:

have the technical abilities, social skills, and conceptual apparatus necessary to make it easy to make art. Because they know, understand, and habitually use the conventions on which their world runs, they fit easily into all its standard activities [...] They stay within the bounds of what potential audiences and the state considers respectable. By using and conforming to the conventions governing materials, forms, contents, modes of presentation, sizes, shapes, durations, and modes of financing, integrated professionals make it possible for art works to occur efficiently and easily (2008: 229).

While arts worlds are complex and dynamic entities where divisions between discrete types and typologies are rarely clear (Becker 2008; DiMaggio 1987), Becker's description is one that seems to fit very well with the profile of artists who are usually commissioned to make public art (at least in the definition of public art used in my study).

Following these sociological observations and Kwon's concept of the artist as a key driver in the public art narrative, my exploration of Newcastle-Gateshead's public art authorships discussed in this chapter section is largely based on an analysis of artistic vitae as documented by the artists in their own CVs or online portfolios. Rather than examine this constituency of artists in terms of approach or orientation to specific materials or media (e.g. 'textile artist', 'sculptor', 'printmaker', etc.), orientations which may be specific for some but hold no real meaning for artists who work across a variety of media,⁸⁰ the typology explored here relates more specifically to questions of artistic mobility and reputation (as raised by Kwon 2002; Becker 2008; 1982; and DiMaggio 1987). Activity in terms of international profile, professional orientation to public art practice, and relationships to the city and region form the central basis of my (speculative) typology.

The Newcastle-Gateshead public art cityscape contains the work of at least 140 individual artists.⁸¹ Most of these artists (66%, n=93) have been involved in one-off commissions only. However, around a third (34%, n=49) have authored multiple artworks in the city. Table 5.2 posits five 'types' into which these artists might be grouped: (1) The 'international nomad'; (2) The 'public artist'; (3) The 'local artist'; (4) The 'visiting artist'; and (5) The 'rediscovered artist'. As will be shown in the following discussion, the boundaries between these types are quite loose: at an individual level artists may fall into one or more of these groupings.

⁸⁰ Neither do I make a differentiation between those who might identify as 'fine artists', 'makers', 'designer-makers', etc.

⁸¹ 142 artists were listed in my research database. This is the figure that the quantitative analysis offered here is based on. Five of the artworks listed in the database were created by artists' groups e.g. those by Red Nile or Kibblesworth Karvers (each of which involved multiple artists).

Table 5-2: Speculative typology of artists in the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection.

Type	Description	Examples
Type 1: The 'international nomad'	Has recognition within the international art world (as defined by int. art market / gallery system) Makes work in one international location (site) to another May cross over between public art / gallery contexts	Antony Gormley Danny Lane
Type 2: The 'public artist'	Artists who are known mainly for their work in the public art field May have little contact with the gallery art world May also have work in corporate collections May work as national (UK) nomads in terms of public art commissions	Nayan Kulkarni Andre Wallace David Wynne
Type 3: The 'local artist'	Commissioned artists based in Newcastle-Gateshead or the North East, who work mainly within the region Or who use N-G/region as a base for national/international practice (ex-local) May overlap with gallery / community practice	Cath Campbell Kathryn Hodgkinson Gilbert Ward
Type 4: The 'visiting artist'	Artists who very rarely create permanent public artworks, i.e. are 'visiting' the world of 'public art' from another field of practice.	Basil Beattie Andy Goldsworthy
Type 5: The 'rediscovered' artist	Once-established artists whose reputation had declined but who have gained new critical recognition Esp. from post-war period up to 1980s May be deceased or no longer active	Geoffrey Clarke Victor Pasmore

My first grouping, the 'international nomads' are the artists whom Kwon (2002) might describe as having a serially mobile practice, moving between one international commission and the next. Although, as we have seen in the earlier discussion of Newcastle-Gateshead's public art history, while a number of internationally known

artists have been invited to propose works for the city only a very few of these artists have actually been commissioned. Antony Gormley is one artist who would clearly fit into the 'international nomad' category. While *The Angel of the North* is his largest and most famous artwork to date, Gormley has also created permanent sculptures in Western Australia (*Inside Australia*), The Netherlands (*Exposure*), Norway (*Broken Column*) and the USA (*Chord* at Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Alongside his commissioned works, Gormley also has an established international gallery profile. Between 2010-15, amongst other activity, he had solo exhibitions of his work in St Petersburg, Rio de Janeiro, Bern, and Florence (Gormley 2016). Gormley also has work in the Tate Collection, a marker which might be regarded as both a clear measure of national and international artistic esteem.

Although less well known, at least in Newcastle-Gateshead, Danny Lane is an artist who we might class as another 'international nomad'. Born in the USA, Lane has been based in London since the 1980s. He is particularly known for his large-scale abstract glass sculptures. Like Gormley, his practice bridges both the gallery and public art commissioning worlds. Since 2000 Lane has exhibited internationally in Milan, Munich, Beijing and New York. As well as his two major Newcastle-Gateshead pieces, *Opening Line* and *Elipses Eclipses*, permanent large-scale outdoor public artworks by Lane in the UK also include: *Assembly Field* at the National Assembly Wales; *Lock Level Line* in South Wharf Square, London; and *Man Catching a Star*, Wembley Stadium Approach, London. Lane's glass sculptures and objects are also held in numerous public collections including the Crafts Council and Victoria and Albert Museum collections (London), the National Museum (Stockholm), and museums in several cities in the USA. For Lane and Gormley, their strong presence in both the gallery and public art worlds has a symbiotic effect, one area of practice seemingly supporting the building of reputation and artistic profile in the other. Based on an analysis of the CVs of artists included in the Newcastle-Gateshead collection, this is not a position held by many artists who have created artworks in this city.

Except perhaps where internationally nomadic artists are involved (or where artworks are presented and curated as temporary projects or biennale commissions), public art generally sits separate from the structures and critical dialogues of the mainstream art world (Senie 2003a). Since the institutionalisation of public art in the

1990s-2000s, public art practice has largely operated as a separate art system (Adamek & Lorenz 2008), existing within its own conventions and professional networks. DiMaggio (1987) might describe public art as a 'genre' of art practice rather than as a separate art world. Despite its marginality, public art is also a genre with which some artists have sought to identify when differentiating and promoting their professional practice. However, it should be noted that many artists (and curators) have also distanced themselves from engagement with the term 'public art' or identification as 'public artist' (Cartiere & Willis 2008: 1). Some artists who self-identify as 'public artists' have set up professional collaborations specifically to serve a public art commissions market.

As already suggested, a small number of artists may establish careers which successfully span both the mainstream gallery world and public art activity. Some artists may venture into the public art field for specific projects or to make work on a grander scale than is possibly within the gallery/museum.⁸² While 'international nomads' like Gormley and Lane may be accepted within both art worlds, many artists working within public art practice have much more limited connection with the mainstream, sometimes deliberately so. Many may be oriented to other kinds of artistic practice or creative service provision, such as in community arts or gallery education projects.

The Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection includes a high number of artists (86% of those represented in my research database) who had been involved in multiple public art commissions in or beyond the city and who might therefore orientate themselves toward the second category in my typology, the 'public artist'.⁸³ Newcastle-based Simon Watkinson (*Head Cubes*, *Grainger Town Map*) is one such example and an individual who closely matches Kwon's 'one place after another' model of the serially site-specific artist, although this time on a national rather than international scale. Watkinson's website provides strong evidence of this approach

⁸² One such example might be Damien Hirst's sculpture *Verity*, Ilfracombe, Devon, 2003-2012.

⁸³ It should be noted that these artists themselves were not part of my research participant group for this project. Evidence presented here is purely based on my analysis of artists' CVs and website data.

stating very clearly that his practice is all about 'location, location, location' (Watkinson n.d.). Watkinson consciously presents himself as a 'public realm' artist, whether that is in the role of an object maker, designer or more strategically working as a 'Lead Artist' within a design team. This wider public realm design consultancy approach is one that is common to several artists who have work in Newcastle-Gateshead, including Nayan Kulkarni⁸⁴ (*Nocturne*), Thomas Heatherwick⁸⁵ (*Blue Carpet*) and David Pearl⁸⁶ (*Beacons*). This category might also include representational sculptors such as David Wynne (*River God Tyne, Swans in Flight*) and Andre Wallace (*Man with Pigeons, River God, Siren*). Both are artists whose public works are well represented in other UK cities. Wynne's figure and animal sculptures can be seen in multiple locations across London (his Newcastle works are rare Northern examples of his artistic output) while Wallace's public art portfolio includes works located in London, Milton Keynes, Telford, Chepstow and Manchester (Wallace 2008).

Kwon (2002) suggests that in some contexts, and particularly within socially-engaged or community-based public art projects, locally-based artists may have certain advantages over their brought-in (more 'nomadically' perceived) colleagues. In these projects, familiarity with the area, 'its geographical configuration, its history, its available resources, its constituencies', are thought to give the local artist something of a 'head-start' with a project (*ibid*). Although, as Kwon is also careful to remind us, an artist's supposed localness cannot be regarded as a guarantee of success in terms of public acceptance or long-term sustainability (2004:135). Further, from the wider academic literature on place, the notion of localness itself is problematic (see discussion in Massey 2005). All people (in Western society) including artists, are

⁸⁴ Alongside individual artwork commissions, Kulkarni's other recent public art activity includes roles as arts consultant on public realm design strategies Hull 2013-16 and Elsmere Port 2013-14. Source: http://www.nkprojects.co.uk/downloads/NK_CV_March14.pdf

⁸⁵ Heatherwick was also the artist behind the controversial proposal to create a new 'Garden Bridge' for London) Source: <http://www.heatherwick.com>.

⁸⁶ Pearl's work includes object-based public art commissions (e.g. in Cardiff and Swansea) architectural works and collaborative proposals. Source: <http://www.david-pearl.com>

‘networked to both local and extra-local places’ (Massey 1994; Escobar 2001; cited in Convery et al. 2012: 2).

Of the 140-plus artists represented in the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection, a strong proportion (42%, n=60) are either based in or have some professional or personal connection with the city or North East England (see Fig. 5.11). Often, this is through previous study and training, primarily in Fine Art departments at Newcastle University or Northumbria University (or in their predecessor institutions). While a small number of artists may be ‘native-born’, many of the artists who may now be regarded as local to the city or region have moved and settled here from other parts of the UK.

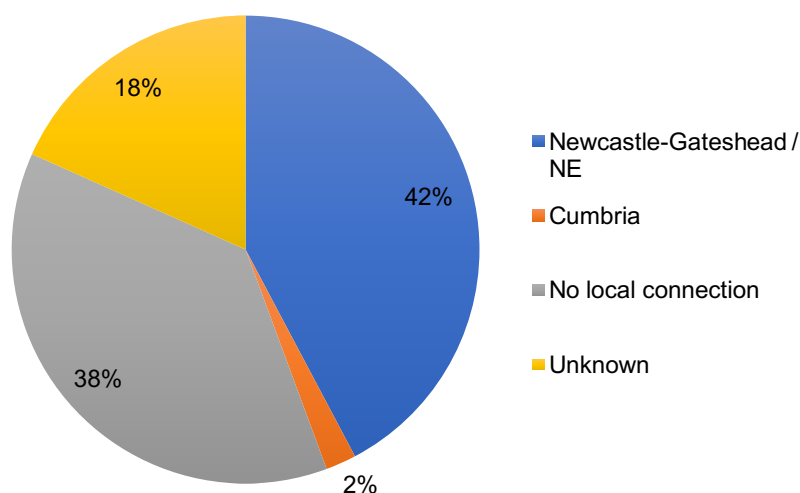


Figure 5-11: Percentage of artists with a local connection to Newcastle-Gateshead / NE England

The term ‘local artist’ is sometimes used or interpreted in a pejorative sense: to indicate an artist who has only a limited reputation and therefore a low level of recognition or status in terms of the art world (as it might be defined by the mainstream art market or gallery system). Of course, all artists must be ‘local’ to somewhere in terms of where they live. While some artists may indeed have only quite a geographically localised practice (undertaking commissions and projects

mainly within the city or region), many of the artists who might be classified as local to Newcastle-Gateshead have vitae that demonstrate a much wider (ex-local) distribution of practice. Gee (2017) offers an interesting discussion on 'local-international' dynamics, an artistic identity that he suggests has been a notable feature of artistic production in the post-industrial north and a special feature of the cultural strength that England's northern cities have gained since the 1980s and 1990s.⁸⁷

Although not high profile in an international art world sense, Newcastle-Gateshead-based artist Cath Campbell is a good example of this type of mixed trans-local/local-international profile. Her CV shows that the artist was born in Derbyshire and came to study Fine Art at Newcastle University. Although in terms of permanent public art commissions all her work to date (c.2017) has been delivered in the city (e.g. *Escapology*, 2006, Northern Stage) or in the wider Tyneside and Northumberland area, Campbell also has a much wider national and international practice and profile. Through her gallery, Workplace in Gateshead, she has exhibited (in solo and group shows) nationally within the UK (Leeds, London, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow, among others) and internationally in Europe and the USA (Campbell n.d.).

My next grouping, the 'visiting artist' covers artists who only very occasionally make artworks for public spaces, and whose work in the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection thus represents a rare example of their practice. I have suggested painter Basil Beattie as an artist who might fit this category. His hand-painted mural for Nexus at Manors Metro Station, *Magic City* (1987) is highly unusual in terms of Beattie's output. (In my research interview with Nexus, the mural was singled-out as a particularly valued work in the 'Art on Transport' collection). From my research this mural seems to be his only public artwork: Beatties' practice being otherwise focused on gallery-based production. Andy Goldsworthy (*Cone*, 1990, Gateshead Riverside Park) might also perhaps be considered in this category. As a sculptor, Goldsworthy is best known for his ephemeral environmental artworks than for making permanent

⁸⁷ Gee notes how this northern 'local-international' identity was specifically fostered in the first Tyne International (1990) and Visual Arts UK (1996).

public art pieces. Where he has made permanent works, these have tended to be in rural or formal sculpture park settings (e.g. his Cumbria 'Sheepfolds' project or artworks at Yorkshire Sculpture Park) rather than in the urban public realm, as in his work for Gateshead.

My final category, the 'rediscovered artist', includes an older generation of artists who once had an established reputation and who received multiple public commissions (e.g. during the post-war period) but whose work has declined and then grown again in terms of critical attention. In Newcastle-Gateshead, this would include artists such as Geoffrey Clarke (*Spiral Nebula*) who, as already mentioned, had a strong reputation as an adventurous sculptor in the 1950s and 1960s, but whose output until quite recently was relatively forgotten. His (now Grade II heritage listed) Newcastle work, *Spiral Nebula*, is now lauded as Clarke's most significant public sculpture. Notable, of course, is the fact that many of the artists who might be placed in this grouping, such as Clarke, are no longer living: following the pattern of market-led commodification, their artistic reputation and the value and importance of their work increasing (and sometimes only recognised) after their death.

Summarising from this analysis, it is clear that only one or two artists represented within the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection have, what might be termed, international art world status. Where the city's collection can be considered strongest is in its representation of the 'public artist' and 'local artist' groupings (Type Two and Three in my typology). Many of the artists commissioned to make artworks for Newcastle-Gateshead had, or have since developed, strong professional track records in public art practice. With at least 42% of commissioned artists based in or having connections to the North-East region, Newcastle-Gateshead can also make claim to having a solid representation in terms of local (and in some cases local-international) artistic authorship. As examined in the historical narrative of public art development presented in Chapter Four, this characteristic might be traced to decades of regional investment in public art commission support (e.g. as provided by Commissions North which as noted, had a specific remit to stimulate and facilitate opportunities for artists based in the region) as well as to the development of a distinctive Northern English artistic economy (as examined by Gee 2017).

5.5 Thinking laterally: Routes for assessing collection value and significance

Building on my analysis of the specific topography and typology of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection, this chapter now concludes with a discussion on questions of the collection's value and significance, and the different ways in which this might potentially be assessed.

5.5.1 Lateral juxtapositions of value and significance

In my examination of the museological literature in Chapter Two (section 2.4.2), I introduced a series of models used by museum professionals to assist them in making assessments of the value and significance of the collections and collection objects under their care and hence make more informed decisions about their management. The various criteria from these were combined into a general schema composed of three value areas and seven criteria for potential assessment (see Fig. 2.5). In Chapter Four, I observed that time was a factor in object valorisation and that the value and significance of a collection and its individual objects might fluctuate over time. In this current chapter, I now want to explore this question of value assessment as it might be actioned through the lateral juxtaposition and comparison between public artworks within the Newcastle-Gateshead collection. Wickham (2004) refers to this as a process of object 'ranking', suggesting that numerical scores might at least act as a base for discussion. Activated in a museum context Reed (2012) argues that this type of exercise can help curators and collections managers to 'create a robust evidence base to inform strategy, resource allocation and development as well as rationalisation, de-accessioning and disposal' (*ibid*: 2) and through this to generate a clearer narrative for communicating the importance of their collections to governing bodies and funders. Reviewing collections in this way helps museum staff to 'think realistically about objects' potential and consider how this might be realised' (*ibid*).

Presented in the vein of a thought-experiment, Table 5.3 shows my provisional ranking of three Newcastle-Gateshead public artworks according to the general schema set out earlier in Fig. 2.5. It should be stated that this is only an initial

assessment rather than the result of detailed collaborative discussion with other collection curators, stakeholders or users (as recommended by Reed 2012; Wickham 2004). The aim is to suggest how using such a tool might engender new thinking around the city's public art collection rather than to arrive at firm conclusions about the specific artworks examined. My findings on audience engagement with these three artworks are discussed separately in Chapter Seven, although those observations have to some degree also influenced my speculative ranking here.

Table 5-3: Speculative ranking of three public artworks in relation to their collection value and significance

Value criteria/artwork		<i>The Angel of the North</i>	<i>The Blue Carpet</i>	<i>Blacksmiths' Needle</i>
Material / artefactual characteristics	A. Material condition	5	1	5
	B. Visual / sensory impact	5	1	5
	C. Uniqueness / provenance	5	5	3
'Use' value	D. Social and educational value	5	1	3
	E. Cultural / symbolic value	5	2	3
'Heritage' values	F. Historic value	5	1	1
	G. Artistic value	5	4	1
	Overall score A-G	35	15	21
Ranking on a scale of 1-5 (where 5 = high score)				

Not surprisingly perhaps, *The Angel of the North* scores highly across all groups of assessment criteria. With its scale and emblematic siting, it is certainly the artwork with most obvious 'wow factor' within this public art collection (see Wickham 2004). (While an obvious example to take, in terms of its national profile and reputation, it should be noted that *The Angel* also presents something of an unfair benchmark for wider collection assessment and ranking.)

(1) Material / artefactual characteristics

As a well-designed, robust, and well cared-for artwork *The Angel* is, 20 years after its installation, still in very good 'display' condition in museum terms, as is the *Blacksmiths Needle*. Both artworks contrast strongly with the material condition of *The Blue Carpet* which has been steadily deteriorating since its completion in 2002.

By 2016, it was in a serious state of disrepair (hence its very low score under this criteria). Its siting, scale and clear outline undoubtedly gives *The Angel* an exceptionally strong visual impact. Although on a smaller physical scale and far less dramatic, *The Blacksmiths Needle* also has a clear visual impact that makes it an emblematic landmark on Newcastle's Quayside. Made up of a multitude of figurative elements, its visual interest also increases with proximity, hence its high score here (on a level with *The Angel*). Because of its material condition, *The Blue Carpet* achieves a low score in the visual impact category (although perhaps a score of minus-5 might be a more accurate assessment due to the degree of negative visual effect generated). In terms of the next criteria, uniqueness and provenance, *The Blue Carpet* and *The Angel* might be given an equal scoring: both being innovative and stand out artworks of their time, authored by leading artists in their field: Thomas Heatherwick and Antony Gormley, respectively. Although unique visually, as a collaborative artwork (made collectively by anonymous members of the British Art Blacksmiths Association) *The Blacksmith's Needle* has been scored lower than the other two artworks in terms of artistic provenance.

(2) 'Use' value

Based on my field work observation of Gateshead Council-run events and interpretive resources (the detailed findings from this are discussed later in Chapter Six) and my review of the public art literature, only *The Angel* would seem to score highly in terms of educational or research use value (criteria D in my table). While the other two artworks are included in various published public art guides and self-guided walking routes, to my knowledge neither have been the subject of more focused events, or extended educational or research activity. In terms of the second use, value (E), again only *The Angel* stands out, especially in terms of its symbolic and cultural value to the region and its obvious place-marketing and business 'exploitability' (a value specifically highlighted by Reed 2012). While the *Blacksmiths Needle* is clearly intended as having local cultural and symbolic relevance in terms of its imagery, it does not have an obvious track record of this type of use at an institutional collection level or in the popular media. However, as with all my commentary here, that does not mean that it fails in terms of cultural and symbolic use at an audiences level. Because of its low score in values A-B, *The Blue Carpet* also has a low score in terms of value E, although, based on its symbolism as a high profile failing artwork, a strong negative score might also be suggested.

(3) 'Heritage' values

Based on the overview of the museum literature, 'heritage values' in my experimental schema include both the value of the artwork as an association with or reflection on an historic event, person or activity (see Reed 2012) and its value and significance in terms of artistic authorship (as discussed in section 5.4). Closely linked to notions of uniqueness (value D), both *The Angel* and *The Blue Carpet* are high scorers in the latter regard, but only *The Angel* (in its siting on a former pit-head and in its industrial references) has any claim to heritage value in the sense suggested by Reed (*ibid*). Although less high profile in terms of their artistic authorship, as discussed in section 5.3.3, many of the city's artworks reference heritage narratives.



Figure 5-12: *Parsons' Polygon* (David Hamilton, 1985).

Historic England's recent interest in the preservation of post-war public artworks through the heritage listing process is an indication that public artworks can also be considered to have material heritage value in themselves, separate from their value as representations of heritage narratives. Three artworks sited in Newcastle-Gateshead have been Grade II listed as part of this post-war public art programme: *Parsons' Polygon*, *Derwent Walk Express* (Andy Frost, 1987) and *Spiral Nebula*.

As set out in the official list entries for these artworks, this selection is based on an assemblage of 'heritage' qualities. The listing of *Parsons' Polygon* (Fig. 5.12) is based on four key factors. First, its aesthetic qualities as 'an intriguing and eye-catching' and 'hand-crafted' artwork (Historic England 2017). The second factor is *Polygon's* clever practical function as a covering for a ventilation shaft coming from the metro station below. The third is its historic interest in celebrating Newcastle's engineering achievements (as embodied in the pioneering work of Sir Charles Parsons). The final factor giving the sculpture Grade II value is its contribution to the public realm. Here *Polygon* is specifically held up as a good example of post-war commissioning that enlivens the public realm by 'introducing aesthetic pleasure to an otherwise functional structure' (*ibid*).

In focusing on these examples and perspectives, I have aimed to demonstrate how the lateral and comparative relations implied by 'collections thinking' may be applied to public artworks. Here we are considering what might be called the secondary 'use' value of public artworks as collection objects: the different valorisations and uses that they may hold (or be supported in holding) beyond their original public art function (i.e. their supposed regenerative or commemorative effects), and especially within their extended afterlives. Although, as shown in the examination of heritage listing by Historic England, these original functions will always be part of these artworks' own object biographies.

Continuing this museological thinking, what might the speculative rankings set out in Table 5.3 imply for the future management and curation of the three artworks scored? The consistently high ranking of *The Angel of the North* across all seven value criteria suggests that this artwork should raise little concern in terms of its ongoing curation and cultural use. Where issues about the management of *The Angel* have been raised locally, these are mainly in relation to the artwork's setting and its visual impact on the sculpture. c2016 there were specific concerns voiced by public art professionals in the city about the detrimental impact of tree growth on the views afforded of *The Angel*. The fear was that, over time, without a clear landscape management plan in place, nearby trees would grow up to obscure the public views

of the sculpture, seriously effecting its visibility and impact, both within its immediate vicinity (most notably from the A1 motorway) and from further afield⁸⁸.

As its more uneven 'ranking' suggests, *The Blue Carpet* raises more problematic management concerns. In museum collection terms, *Carpet's* deteriorating physical condition would make it an obvious candidate for deaccessioning or perhaps, in recognition of its provenance and artistic value, for removal to a reserve or research collection. This is one possibility on which museum collections and in-situ public art collections most clearly diverge. With perhaps Memento Park, Budapest, as one exception, the concept of a 'reserve' collection is largely unknown in the public art field. Although some public artworks are produced in relatively stand-alone and therefore removable form (e.g. as with *Vulcan*, and some of the other sculptures formerly sited at Central Square, Newcastle, cited in Chapter Four), as a public realm design invention *The Blue Carpet* cannot be removed from public display without in effect: a) destroying the artwork; and b) necessitating extensive remediation work to the site. High costs of decommissioning, coupled with limited public resources for conservation or even simple maintenance, indicates that this artwork, even in its failing form, must remain largely in place until a new regenerative solution for this space can be found. Put together with its high score for artistic provenance, the material biography of *The Blue Carpet* suggests that, with sufficient documentation (and public access to this), this artwork could acquire a new collection 'use value' as an educational resource, even beyond its eventual physical decommissioning. The story of *The Blue Carpet* could provide a valuable case study for commissioners, curators, public realm managers and artists seeking a better understanding of the demands of the public art commissioning process and of technical public art conservation issues.

The outline significance assessment of the *Blacksmiths' Needle* indicates that this artwork has strong material and visual value, but is underplayed in terms of its wider use within the city's public art collection. While it is unlikely that *Blacksmiths Needle*

⁸⁸ Recent research commissioned by Gateshead Council and Historic England (2018, unpublished) makes a strong case for the contribution of setting to the significance of *The Angel of the North*. This research included a thorough analysis of the range of incidental and intended views of the sculpture from across Newcastle-Gateshead and the Team Valley.

would be afforded the celebratory and interpretive focus provided for *The Angel*, its accessibility and visual appeal, especially across age groups, does suggest that its capacity for enjoyment and educational use could be enhanced. Displayed in a museum collection, an artwork like *Blacksmiths' Needle* might be featured on a children's trail or be the subject of creative interpretation practices, such as storytelling or participatory drawing activities. Containing many allusions to local culture and to past maritime life on the Tyne, this artwork might also be employed as a focus for memory work with older generation groups. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, while such value-added cultural programming is not unknown in the public art context, it is rarely prioritised in terms of ongoing resourcing.

Building on from these assessments of individual artwork valorisation and the typologies of representation and authorship examined in earlier sections, I now consider, in the next and final section in this chapter, how the overall value and significance of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection may be characterised.

5.5.2 A collection of, and beyond, 'place'

As already noted, the question of public art's relation to place is a strong theme within public art literature. In recent years, place and place-identity has also emerged as a major topic within museology (see Convery et al. 2012; Mason et al. 2012a; Whitehead 2009). Keene (2005) states that most museum objects are held within place (or people) related collections. However, while place is an accepted frame of reference within museum collections generally (and especially in natural history, social history, archaeology and ethnography collections), it is a frame that is rarely used within art collections (Mason et al. 2012a). In addressing this gap, Mason et al argue that:

Art gallery displays which represent given locales make public statements about the perceived, collective and recognized meanings of place. Such displays offer authorized frames of reference for visitors because of the high status of public art galleries and the authoritative position they have historically occupied (*ibid*: 135).

As examined in the earlier discussion of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection's representational schema (in section 5.3.3), artworks sited within the public realm also make artistic and public statements about meanings of place. Referencing Mason et al (2012), it is interesting to note the similarity between place-based representations found within the public art realm (examined in section 5.3.3) and within the local art collection held with the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. In their research focusing on the re-display of the Laing collection, Mason et al found a strong preponderance of representations of the River Tyne, the quaysides and local trades and industries, such as coalmining and seafaring (*ibid*: 140): site-specific themes that came out strongly in my own analysis of the city's public art collection. More than this, as also recounted in the examination of the city's public art history in Chapter Four, the river and the Newcastle-Gateshead quaysides have also been key physical locations for the city's public art commissioning programmes.

Further, Mason et al write that while not all artworks in art museums are directly 'representational of place', they may connect to place in other ways, e.g. as examples of local creative industries or in being works made by artists who are local to the area (*ibid*: 136). As these authors observe, even where artworks apparently have no specific relation to place in terms of imagery and authorship, 'place' is still involved:

even in this situation the artworks still tell a powerful story about the relations between art and specific places; they tell us about the histories of patronage, the economic prosperity which enabled the art gallery to be created or sustained, or the civic aspirations within a particular city at a given moment (*ibid*).

It is this type of regional narrative that has been emphasised by Gee (2017) as a key feature of northern cultural production since the 1980s, and which was the subject of my own analysis of the city's public art commissioning history in Chapter Four. Those

findings and the ones discussed in this current chapter on profiles of artistic authorship suggest that Newcastle-Gateshead's public art collection has a strong affiliation to place in both senses put forward by Mason et al. Following this, the question now might be asked: Does the city's public art collection have value and significance *only* in relation to its genius loci, as a collection which talks of and to Newcastle-Gateshead, or does it hold significance and value *beyond* this place relationship?

As can be seen from the examination presented so far, Pearce's (museological) notion of 'here' and 'there'-ness and the laterality of a collection (as articulated in the quotation given in my chapter opening) is about more than just the physical and spatial arrangement and visual juxtapositions between a collection's constituent objects. It is also essentially about choice, comparison and evaluation: of assessing one object's (in my case, a public artwork's) attributes (formal, material, symbolic, artistic, historic) against another. Contextualised within wider collection remits and objectives it is from such valorisations (whether tacit and normalised or consciously re-examined) that key museological decisions about object presentation, exhibition-making, interpretation, conservation and other resource allocations are made.

In examining the collection through a speculative typology, as I have done in this chapter, I have made some connections and observations that take the discussion of these public artworks' meaning, value and potential significance beyond usual and more dominant considerations of site-specificity and genius loci. My examination of the typology of the city's public art authorships and the discussion of Kwon's notion of artistic vitae as a mobile 'site' of meaning-making (in section 5.4), suggests one such alternative potential avenue for valorisation and meaning-making. Examined through this perspective we might see the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection as being mapped, via its constituent artistic authorships, to a wider lattice of artworks and locations beyond the immediate cityscape.

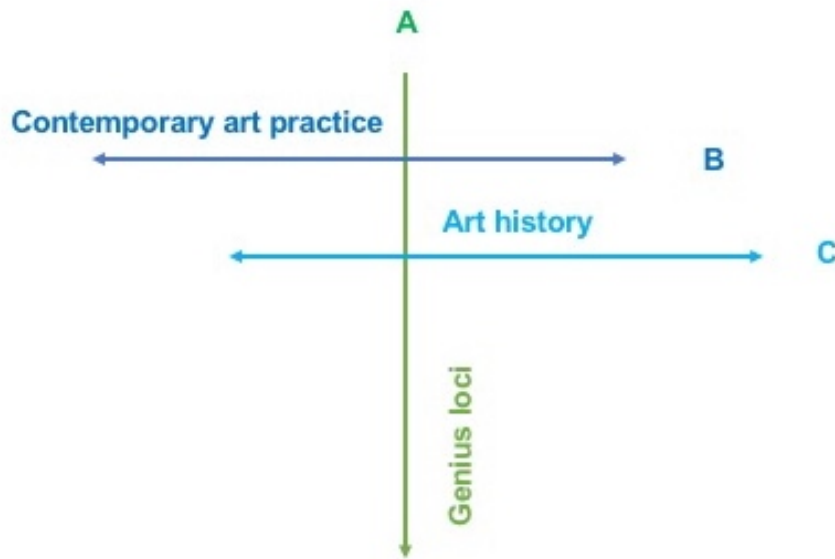


Figure 5-13: Lattice of potential artwork relationships

The Angel of the North is one artwork that can be quite easily mapped in this way. The literature and research around *The Angel* tells us that it is perceived as a strong representation of genius loci (axis A in Fig. 5.13). At the same time, looking laterally, *The Angel* is also situated in relation to Antony Gormley's wider practice, including both his international exhibition work and his public art production (axis B): and particularly perhaps to his other outdoor human figure works, *Horizon Field* (Austria, 2010-12), *Another Place* (Liverpool, 1997) and his earlier *Sculpture for Derry Walls* (Derry, 1987). Widely regarded as the leading example of the UK's late 20th century's production of landmark artworks, *The Angel* also holds a particular art historical position (axis C). Grove Art Online places *The Angel* alongside Richard Serra's *Titled Arc* (New York, 1981) and Christo's *Wrapped Reichstag* (Berlin, 1995) in terms of sculptural significance. It also features prominently in Cartiere & Willis (2008) *UK/USA Timeline for the History of Public Art 1900-2005*.

While few other public artworks within the Newcastle-Gateshead collection can make claim to the art historical interest of *The Angel*, they are all representative in some way of the spectrum of contemporary or at least post-war visual art production. As already mentioned, three Newcastle-Gateshead artworks have been specifically

highlighted in this regard by Historic England's public art listing campaign. Such listing suggests that these artworks (and potentially other more recent artworks not yet under the timescale allowed for heritage listing) have a valorisation, not only in relation to Newcastle-Gateshead, but also in the context of wider notional 'national' public art collection.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has set out my assessment of the topographic, material and representational features and authorship profile of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection. In doing so it has suggested a speculative typology through which its constituent artworks might be categorised and an overview characterisation of the collection produced.

My analysis has shown that the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection is not just a feature of the city-centre and urban riversides but is more widely distributed across the cityscape including its neighbourhoods and rural fringe. Topographically, the city's artworks are presented across a range of settings from urban streetscapes to formal city parks and other green spaces. Within this range, I suggested that some sites might be regarded as more emblematic and more affording of public art viewing activity than others (a topic of discussion that will be returned to my examination of public art audiencing in Chapter Seven). In terms of commission approach, the Newcastle-Gateshead collection was found to be broadly representative of most accepted forms of permanent public art production, with a strong leaning towards sculptural practice. Significant space was made in this chapter for discussion around the collection's representational schema and mix of artwork authorships, especially the ways in which these might be tied to or go beyond notions of place or *genius loci*. With at least 40% of commissioned artists having some professional or personal connections with the city or the North-East region, further evidence was found to support Gee's (2017) assertion of Newcastle-Gateshead's place within a distinctive 'Northern imaginary' of locally-based artistic production.

Developing from Pearce's concept of collection space and drawing on significance assessment schemes used within the museum sector, this chapter has also offered some original speculation on the various and comparative values that might be applied to these public art collection objects. This includes their potential valorisation (and revalorisation) in terms of educational or cultural use and their historic and artistic significance. In doing this, my discussion has started to go beyond normative understandings of public art's essential anonymity and site-specificity to suggest how this collection might also hold value and interest beyond its fixed physical relationship with place, as part of a wider network of nomadic artistic authorship and a national history of public art production.

With a characterisation of the Newcastle-Gateshead physical public art cityscape now set out, my next chapter turns to an examination of the ways in which individual artworks and artwork clusters within this collection have been formally presented and framed through commissioner-led practices of public art interpretation. It is through this new institutional perspective that this chapter's discussion of artwork's materiality, imagery, authorship and place relations will now be taken forward.

Chapter 6. Interpreting a public art collection: institutional framings

6.1 Introduction

Shifting the perspective of my analysis of the cultural cartography of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection, this chapter provides an examination of the institutionally-produced interpretive resources through which the collection and its constituent artworks are presented and 'framed' for their imagined public audience. The analysis offered here is based on 'frame theory' (Goffman 1974) a form of discourse analysis that can be applied to both spoken and written communication. Kuypers (2009) uses the simplified but useful visual analogy of the picture frame to define this concept of 'framing':

If you have ever had a picture framed, you know that the frame you chose emphasized some elements of the picture at the expense of others. Similarly if you were to reframe the picture, you would notice that the very elements previously emphasized – colours, patterns, composition – would subsequently be de-emphasized by the new frame. Instead a different combination of elements would be highlighted. Similar to pictures, ideas and events – facts – are also framed. When we frame in a particular way, we encourage others to see these facts in a particular way. Framing in this sense can be understood as taking some aspects of our reality and making them more accessible than other aspects (*ibid*: 181).

In other words, frames operate as filters of experience and information. Such framings can be both intentional – consciously employed to convey a particular perspective – or unintentional, part of the normative understanding of a given topic (Gitlin 1980: 6). As Whitehead (2012) has shown, this process of framing plays an important role within museological interpretive practice and artwork display. It is an essential part of museum meaning-making. Whether spatial or textual, interpretative

framing sets the scene for the museum or exhibition visitor to make a specific set of connections between the artworks that they will encounter. These framings are part of the cartography of the museum experience, providing visitors with ‘the means to navigate through culture’ (*ibid*: 54): a cultural navigation which, as this thesis suggests, is also implicit within the practices of public art presentation. The role of this chapter is to explore how the framings present in institutionally-generated public interpretive resources serve to structure the audience encounter with the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection (at least in terms of the imagined audience – the part played by institutional interpretations in actual public art encounters will be examined in Chapter Seven, section 7.3.4).

To achieve this aim, my examination of public art interpretation is developed through three main sections. The first section (6.2) reviews the range of public art interpretive resources deployed within Newcastle-Gateshead. Having established what resources exist and what purposes these might serve, I then move on (in section 6.3) to explore the ways in which public artworks are framed within the textual and visual content of these materials, using examples to illustrate the different framings presented. The final discussion section (6.4) then brings these two strands together to speculate on the role these resources and narratives might play in shaping the public art encounter.

The discussion presented in this chapter is based on an original analysis of a sample of commissioner-produced public art interpretive materials in public circulation in Newcastle-Gateshead during the main data collection period of my study (2011-16). It also draws on evidence from interviews conducted with representatives from the city’s three main public art commissioners (Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council and Nexus) who have been primary producers of these resources. My content-level analysis of these interpretive materials used processes of multimodal discourse analysis (e.g. as set out by Fairclough 2001; 2003; Gee 2011) as described in the account of my research methodology in Chapter Three.

6.2 Survey of public art interpretative resources

Museological forms of contemporary art interpretation incorporate a wide range of media: from print-based object labels, panels and exhibition guides, to digital media, touch screens, audio commentaries and live interpretation such as in-gallery curator-led talks and tours. In line with the growth of the participatory museum model (Simon 2010; Stein 2012; Fischer & Levinson 2010), much of this activity now goes beyond 'expert'-produced texts to be inclusive of alternative viewpoints and visitor voices. Some interpretive experimentation also incorporates embodied activities, such as movement and dance, designed to bring alternative sensory dimensions to the traditional art viewing experience⁸⁹ (for an overview of recent art museum interpretation projects see Farnell 2015).

Although public art operates in a very different physical and institutional context to that of the contemporary art museum, my research found that institutional practices of public art interpretation in Newcastle-Gateshead employed a similarly recognisable, although less sophisticated or innovative, range of media. This was dominated by traditional artwork object labels (in the form of on-site plaques) and portable print-based formats. In Gateshead, these resources were complemented by a programme of live interpretation in the form of curator-led public art walks and artwork celebration events. Digital forms of interpretation were much less used (at least in terms of the institutionally-produced material examined in this study). Although several of my interviewees were aware of the potential offered by digital media in relation to public art interpretation and aspired to develop such resources in the future, none had specific plans, funding or expertise in place to deliver this. At the time of my study digital interpretation of public art in the city was limited to corporate webpages.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ E.g. as explored at The Hepworth Wakefield, as cited by Walton (2013).

⁹⁰ One mobile App, *Newcastle Public Art* had been created by an independent developer (Richard Hyett/Tap North East Ltd, 2015). In reviewing this App it was clear that much of the textual content seemed to be drawn from the institutionally-produced materials analysed in my study.

Before going on to an examination of these different resources and the interpretive framings set up within them, it should be said that (based on my research interviews) the public art commissioning institutions responsible for producing these resources were often ambivalent about the actual role and value of such materials, particularly in their on-site form. Interviewees at Gateshead Council expressed especially mixed views on this issue. Whilst stressing the value of on-site labelling and interpretation (particularly for city centre and more high profile artworks) they also had concerns that such resources might interrupt rather than enrich the viewer's experience of the artwork. There was a sense, often ascribed to the desires of the originating artist, that the artwork should be allowed to 'speak for itself'. Some of these concerns were also cited by my Nexus interviewee Huw Lewis who offered this critique of the 'Art on Transport' interpretation strategy, which to date had focused on the production of relatively long-form in-station interpretation posters:

I'd rather the art was referred to briefly in spaces [...] If you walk down the street within five minutes' walk of here, I can think of half a dozen pieces of art that speak for themselves [...] I don't really understand why you step onto the Metro system and you have to read an essay on what a work is [...] People like to look at works. But I'm not sure to what extent they should be told what it is. They should discover it themselves (Lewis 2015).

For this public art manager, these on-site 'essays' offered interpretations that were simultaneously too complex and too directional, his personal preference being for impromptu and unscripted encounters with these artworks.

In their ambivalence towards their own corporate interpretive practices, my interviewees appeared to be echoing views which have until quite recently been common to many curators working in the contemporary art museum (as reported in Latimer 2011; Luckett 2007; Whitehead 2012; Farnell 2015). Here there is a strong feeling that artworks should be allowed to speak for themselves, but also as Farnell (*ibid*) notes, a reluctance to reduce artworks to single interpretations. From this viewpoint artwork labels and interpretative panels are regarded as simplistic and patronising, intrusions that can 'spoil the direct, often sensitive, relationship between

the viewer and the work of art' (Farnell 2015: 13). As Whitehead (2011; 2012) points out, rather than encouraging more active and open engagement between artwork and audience, 'open' or unmediated encounters can also be alienating:

Contemporary art is not easier to understand because it is produced in our time [...] Many visitors are not possessed of the kind of internalized map of relations that might make sense of contemporary art [...] Without access to such cultural capital, visitor's interpretations of artworks may be at best unique and highly personal, but certainly uninformed; at worst they will simply be unsatisfying, confusing and possibly disenfranchising (2011: 63).

The history of public art is full of such stories of audience disenfranchisement: the controversy of *Tilted Arc* being a much-cited example (see accounts in: Senie 2002; Levine 2002; Macneill 2012). Whether this dissatisfaction is due to lack of adequate interpretation or to poor commissioning practice or to artistic or curatorial misjudgement is a matter of debate, but Whitehead's comment is nevertheless pertinent in pointing out the important role that interpretation (or lack of it) may play in the audience experience and enjoyment of their encounters with public artworks. To prepare the way for my later exploration of public art audiencing in Newcastle-Gateshead (the subject of my next chapter), we first need to examine the way in which public art is framed within the interpretive resources provided within the city. I will start this examination with the most ubiquitous and basic form of public art interpretation: on-site artwork labels and explanatory panels.

6.2.1 On-site labels and panels

My visual survey of on-site interpretation in Newcastle-Gateshead showed that there was no coherent or on-going city-wide strategy for the labelling of public artworks. It was obvious from the different styles and formats of these label-plaques that these were the legacy of separate waves of activity and authored or commissioned by a range of different corporate bodies. Some of these plaques had been in-place since the early 1980s. Many showed serious signs of weathering or wear which made them

very hard to read (as shown in the two examples in Fig. 6.1), evidence that even when rendered unusable, on-site resources are seldom revisited or replaced:⁹¹ commissioner and curatorial interest and funding having ceased or moved on to other projects and initiatives.



Figure 6-1: Two worn-out on-site artwork plaques. Left: for *Parsons' Polygon*; Right, *Sandgate Steps*.

In terms of content, on-site label-plaques usually combined basic artwork identification and authorship information, in common gallery 'title, artist, date' format but often with additional references to corporate ownership and support. The *Sandgate Steps* (Fig. 6.1. Right) example includes, for instance, a prominent link to the 'Art on the Riverside' website (now defunct) and a full line-up of partner and funder logos. As Serrell (1996; 2015) might be tempted to observe, such artwork plaques are barely 'interpretive' in the sense of being actively supportive of visitor meaning-making. While they may contain hints toward interpretive possibilities (as afforded by artwork titles), many of these resources might be considered as fulfilling more basic 'non-interpretive' functions (Serrell 1996): as object identification labels

⁹¹ Except in a few isolated cases, such as in the restoration and re-presentation of *Spiral Nebula* discussed in Chapter Four. This included the installation of a new on-site artwork plaque and the production of a nearby interpretive display explaining the conservation project (sited inside the entrance to the Herschel Building).

for collection (or in local authority language ‘asset’) management purposes,⁹² or as official thanks to funders, donors and co-producers (as in *Sandgate Steps*). Serrell notes that while not exactly ‘interpretative’, the crediting of co-producers has a positive benefit in emphasising the creative effort that has gone into a project e.g. as seen in Fig. 6.3, where the artwork plaque gives the artwork’s fabricators equal billing with the sculptor. Serrell is less positive about donor plaques because they suggest that corporate interests are being foregrounded in place of viewer-visitor needs (*ibid*: 30).

From the audience perspective, on-site labels and interpretation panels and their portable print-based counterparts form an important role in framing the objects they reference as works of ‘Art’. These interpretive resources perform a kind of ‘boundary work’ (Whitehead (2011; 2012) used here by institutional public art producers to demarcate and valorise these objects and interventions as ‘Art’ within the cityscape. Some public artworks, like the very obviously sculptural *Lion* (Fig. 6.2), need little further reinforcement in these terms (its own ‘Art’ categorisation and status being further emphasised by its presentation on a plinth).



Figure 6-2: *Lion*, Newcastle Business Park.

⁹² The term ‘asset’ was one used by several of my Newcastle-Gateshead public art manager / curator interviewees to describe their public art holdings, e.g. as objects listed in a council’s ‘asset register’.

Other public artworks, especially more abstract, integrated or semi-functional examples, may be far less obviously encountered as 'Art'. In these cases, as in David McMillan's (1990) untitled sculpture at Newcastle Business Park (Fig. 6.3), it may well be the on-site label that performs this 'Art' framing role, albeit very discreetly. Indeed, it is unlikely that this ground-level plaque would be noticed by many casual users of this site. We might posit that it works instead to clarify one's finding of this sculpture (for a 'public art'-seeking visitor or perhaps an official with responsibility for its maintenance), rather than announcing the artwork's presence for a passing public.



Figure 6-3: On-site artwork plaque at *Untitled* (Newcastle Business Park). Left: arrow indicates plaque position in relation to the sculpture and walkway; Right, plaque details.

Some Newcastle-Gateshead public artworks are accompanied by more visually obvious and long-form interpretation. This is especially the case with the 'Art on the Metro' commissions, which (as noted earlier in the extract from my Nexus interview) have been accompanied by in-station explanatory panels (as illustrated in Fig. 6.4). This suite of materials, first introduced in the 1990s, represents one of the most coherent public art interpretive schemes in the city. Unlike the simple on-site plaques already examined, which usually pay reference only to the individual artworks that they physically accompany, these Nexus resources have a more serial and collection-like dimension. By using a common design format and incorporating an overarching programme title and accompanying logo, these panels provide tacit hints to the reader-viewer-traveller that the artwork they are looking at is only one of a number that might be encountered on the Metro system.



Figure 6-4: Two examples of on-platform interpretation panels from Nexus 'Art on the Metro' series.

While the Nexus panels are displayed in stations and transport interchanges, externally-sited interpretation panels of this extended type are much rarer. Only *The Angel of the North* and the group of public art objects located in Gateshead Riverside Park are provided with this type of more detailed on-site resource.



Figure 6-5: Public art interpretation panel in Gateshead Riverside Park.

Installed by Gateshead Council in 2010 the Riverside Park panel (Fig. 6.5) presents brief introductions to thirteen sculptures that can be found in this area of woodland and meadow running along the north bank of the River Tyne, an area that has been developed and designated by Gateshead Council as an urban sculpture park (the history of this commissioning programme was examined in Chapter Four). While the individual art objects installed in the park and described in the panel are widely different in form (varying from sculpture to paving and lighting schemes) and age (the earliest was installed in 1990, the most recent in 2010), these artworks are presented here as a coherent and visit-able group. Alongside a parallel narrative of the industrial history and natural heritage of the site (top left section of the panel), the artworks are clearly marked out on the plan as key features of this part of the urban riverside. Identified through location numbers on the map and thumbnail images the panel enables park users and potential visitors to find and identify the artworks, which themselves do not have physical on-site labels. This panel thus operates in a very similar way to an exhibit or collection layout plan that we might find within a museum or gallery. It suggests a route that encourages us to explore and make connections, if only through our own mobility, between the different artworks sited within this landscape. In doing so this plan-map structures an exhibit-like framing that is also present in many of the print-based resources examined in the next section.

6.2.2 *Print-based maps and guides*

Available print materials ranged from single artwork interpretation leaflets to multi-artwork area guides. Typically, in my sample, these resources contained photographs of the artwork in situ with interpretive textual descriptions, commissioner and funder logos and artwork location details, often presented as a form of map. These printed guides play a very different function to the on-site resources examined in the previous section.⁹³ As we shall see in later discussion in Chapter Seven, while they may indeed be used in-visit to inform the physical artwork encounter, they might

⁹³ None of these public art leaflets or maps were available on-site at any of these public artworks (e.g. through a leaflet dispenser, as might be employed in an open-air heritage or landscape site).

also be used to plan a visit or perhaps turned to retrospectively as a post-visit reference source.

As already noted (in Chapter Five), there are few locations in the city where public artworks can be physically seen together from a single viewing point. In the public art cityscape, visual connections or ‘cross-pollination’ between artworks are often created instead through the mobile agency of the public art audience (as argued by Whybrow 2011). While (as we will see in the discussion of audiencing in the next chapter) individual audience members may have their own internal mental maps of the city’s public art collection (or at least sub-sections of it), it is largely through these printed maps and multi-artwork guides that collective and ‘lateral’ relations (Pearce 1995) between the artworks in the city’s collection are mostly strongly framed.

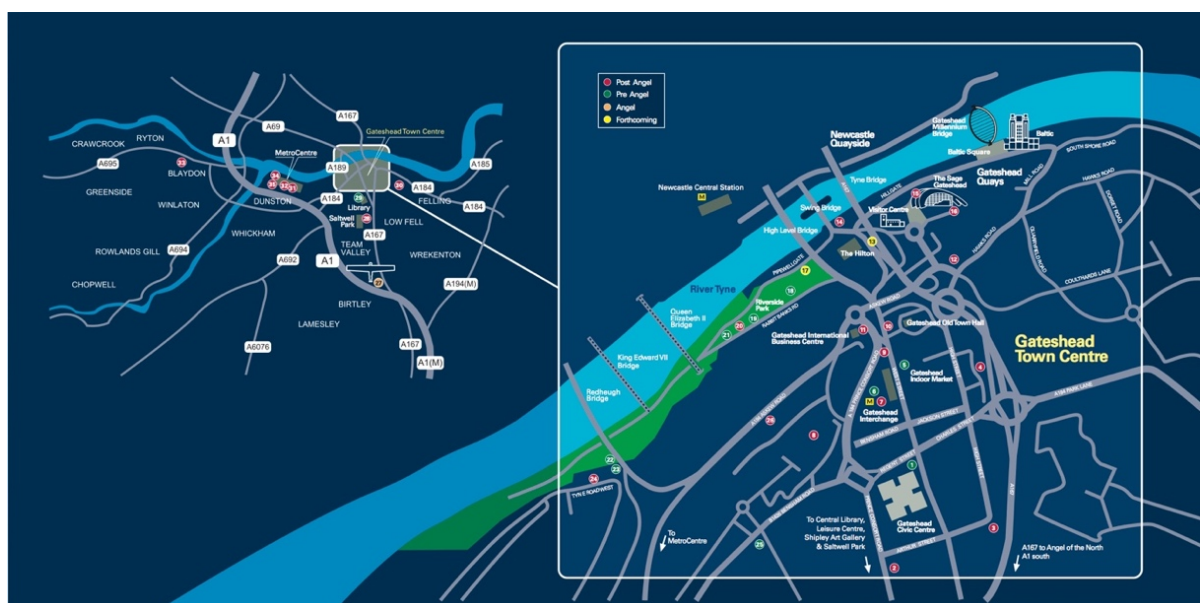


Figure 6-6: Map graphic from the *Gateshead Art Map* publication (©Gateshead Council 2007).

Three of the guides in my interpretive sample, Gateshead Council’s *Art Map*, *Public art walks in Tyne and Wear* guide (TyneWear Partnership) and the Nexus’ ‘Art on Transport’ booklet, set out to make lateral connections between the city’s public artworks through explicit appeal to a mobile audience.

The first of these, the *Gateshead Art Map*,⁹⁴ is a relatively substantial publication providing an interpretive resource for 35 public artworks located in the main urban centre of Gateshead, along Riverside Park and around the Metro Centre.⁹⁵ The artworks covered date from 1983-2007, including, of course *The Angel of the North*, which is marked on the map with its own special logo. The centre-fold of the publication (Fig. 6.6) maps the locations of these artworks, plotting them in relation to the riverside, city landmarks (including all the Tyne bridges), major civic, business and cultural buildings in Gateshead and main transport access points. Interestingly, alongside this spatial representation, the map also offers a temporal mapping, colour-coding the artworks according to their 'Pre' or 'Post-Angel' presence, while others still in progress at time of this publication (in 2006), are marked as 'forthcoming'. The guide suggests that these numbered markers can be used by 'residents and visitors' to follow a public art route around Gateshead. Emphasising the strongly corporate tone of the publication, this is a walk that 'starts at Gateshead Civic Centre', the building from which the map also seems to orientate us. Beyond their boundedness within Gateshead, no other curatorial thematic is applied to the artwork selection. Starting at the Civic Centre, looping down to Gateshead Quays and Riverside Park and ending at a relatively obscure artwork on a busy main road (*Ribbon Railings*, on Askew Road), this route seems to be designed to take in all the artworks in the central area of Gateshead. While inviting 'residents and visitors' to 'walk' the artworks, the suggested route represents something of an unrealistic ask for most readers (from my own experience it would take most of a day to walk to all 35 artworks featured).

Compared to the Gateshead route, the public art walks set out in the Tyne and Wear guide are much more concise and manageable. Along with walks in Sunderland and North and South Tyneside, there are four Newcastle-Gateshead routes set out in the guide. Here, each route map and set of artwork thumbnails is prefaced with information on the walking distance (between one and three-miles) and a brief description of the terrain to be covered (e.g. how flat or steep). In this way, the guide is very user-friendly and audience-focused. Although fewer artworks are covered in

⁹⁴ Available free from Gateshead Civic Centre at the time of my study.

⁹⁵ A major retail centre situated in Gateshead's Team Valley.

these walks, as in the *Gateshead Art Map*, the selections made seem to be based more on proximity rather than any curatorial thematic or collective narrative.

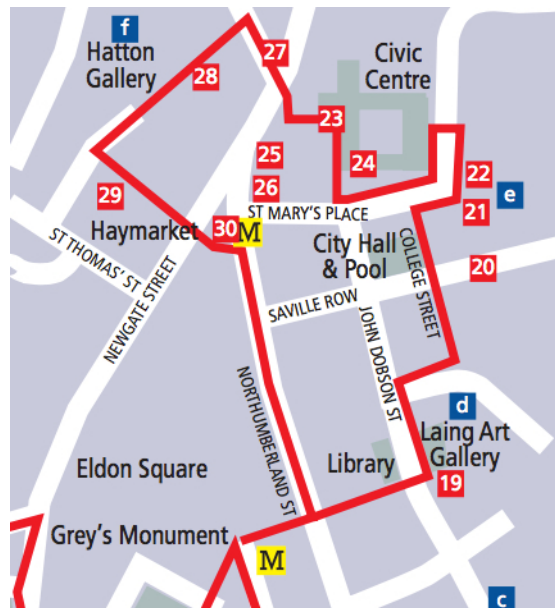


Figure 6-7: Sample map from the *Public art walks in Tyne and Wear* booklet (©TyneWear Partnership).

Route 2, for example (Fig. 6.7), plots a one and a half-mile route around twelve contemporary public artworks and early twentieth century monuments in the northern area of Newcastle city centre. The walk starts with *The Blue Carpet* outside the Laing Art Gallery (point 19 on the map) and ends at the South African War Memorial (Macklin 1908) adjacent to the Haymarket Metro Station (point 30). Other artworks visited on the route include those sited around the two university campuses (e.g. *Book Stack* and *Pillar Man* at Northumbria, and *Spiral Nebula* at Newcastle) and *River God Tyne* and *Swans in Flight* at the Civic Centre. This walk is among several others in this guide to mark out an extended chronology for public art in the city. Route 2 includes several early 20th Century monuments and war memorials alongside contemporary (post-1960) figurative and abstract artworks. In common with the *Gateshead Art Map*, and in line with the publication's stated aim to offer a tool for broader exploration of the area's cultural offer, other arts and leisure facilities (the City Hall, library, Laing Art Gallery and Hatton Gallery) are also clearly marked on this walking map (as features d, e and f respectively).

Armed with the printed maps and guides described here, readers and users are primed and prompted to adopt a more filtered view of the cityscape than might be habitual within their everyday journeys around the city. In this way, we might see such resources as performing a kind of museological orientation and display function: focusing users' attention on individual objects, or types of objects (in this case public artworks) rather than other competing features of interest. Although, as shown in the examples examined here, public artworks may also be mapped in relation to other civic or cultural amenities. This entry point into a more focused and selective form of urban 'looking' (and 'looking for') is suggested in this welcome introduction to the 'Art on Transport' booklet: 'Just by picking up this guide you are beginning a journey – a journey that could see you travelling round our community in a whole new light [...] You will be charmed by a few hidden gems [...] and perhaps spot a few surprises in the fabric of your journey you'd never noticed before' (Nexus 2008: 1).



Figure 6-8: Sample page spread from 'Celebrating 30 years...' booklet (©Nexus).

This appeal to focus on the Metro artworks is made even more explicit in the design and illustration of the guide where the Metro system's public artworks are shown as being literally 'framed' as if in an art gallery or perhaps a private art collection (as the

page spread in Fig. 6.8 shows). This booklet is also somewhat unique in that it presents an image of its invited public art audience.⁹⁶

In exploring these examples, it is useful to recall an earlier statement made by one of my Newcastle Council interviewees (see Chapter Four, section 4.4) about the relative visitability of the public art collection as distributed across the city. Where the Gateshead Art Map attempts to plot out Gateshead's own section of this city-wide collection in its entirety, the TyneWear Partnership maps are much more selective. In setting out manageable walks around specific areas, these maps act more like gallery room-plans than guides to a whole collection. What all these map-based resources seek to do is to make the city's public artworks both identifiable and findable within the broader cityscape. Thus, we can see them as operating in two contrasting ways: on the one hand emphasizing the located-ness of the artworks in their individual sites; and on the other hinting at an element of collectivity and possible cross-pollination between the artworks (even if as we shall see later in this chapter such lateral connections are rarely developed within the accompanying textual content).

6.2.3 Digital resources: Corporate webpages

As mentioned at the start of this examination, at the time of my study digital interpretation was limited to corporate website-based material. Perhaps not surprisingly (given the broader public functions of these institutions) these websites presented public art as a relatively minor activity within the overall structure of corporate delivery. On the Nexus website for example, the link to the 'Art on Transport' pages is hidden in the footer of the homepage. On the two council websites public art is first referenced on pages relating to 'Arts and Entertainment' (Newcastle City Council) and to Leisure and Culture (Gateshead Council). Although often being commissioned in the context of urban design, planning and regeneration-led activity public art is framed here very much as part of the city's cultural offer.

⁹⁶ Interestingly, this imagery seems to go directly against the comments made by my Nexus interviewee Huw Lewis, who was keen to assert that the Metro system is distinctly not a gallery.

There are contrasting ways in which public art information is arranged within these webpages. All three provide some level of locational information, either through an area-based listing or, in the case of Nexus and some of the newer Gateshead public art commissions, through provision of an annotated Google map.⁹⁷ As already noted in relation to print guides, Gateshead also chooses to present its public artworks chronologically: as being completed pre- or post-*Angel*. Of the three, it is Gateshead's website that contains the richest set of interpretive resources, although again these are primarily 'Angel'-focused.⁹⁸ These include: a full background history of *The Angel of the North* commission (including separate pages on its engineering and installation); a downloadable Teachers' Pack; and a range of multimedia content, including a slideshow and a series of specially commissioned artists' films inspired by the sculpture.

While seemingly offering a potentially richer resource and a more cost-effective way of updating information on the city's public art collection than printed materials, in reality these webpages often contained out-of-date information. Many of the photographs of public artworks included on Newcastle City Council's site bore little resemblance to how these artworks might be seen and encountered within the contemporary cityscape. Indeed, some of the artworks listed and described on these webpages, such as Paolozzi's *Vulcan*, were no longer in situ.⁹⁹ Nexus was the only one of these organisations to provide updates on cases where artworks had been decommissioned (e.g. Ron Hasledon's *Full Circle*, removed from the façade of Nexus House in 2011 due to structural damage) or which were being re-sited e.g. because of station improvements (as with *From the Rivers to the Sea*). It was the only website to include a 'News' section on its public art pages. Stories uploaded in September 2016 included the announcement of Historic England's listing of *Parsons' Polygon* and the launch of the 'Snow Dogs' temporary public art exhibition.

⁹⁷ The inclusion of these Google maps on the Gateshead Council and Nexus public art webpages was a recent addition, incorporated into these websites in 2016.

⁹⁸ Much of this material was created in celebration of the 10th anniversary of *The Angel* in 2008.

⁹⁹ The webpage including *Vulcan* was date stamped as being last updated on 16 August 2011. Since 2000 this sculpture has been replaced in sequence by two other sculptures. The most recent of these, *Advocate* (Bruce Beasley), was installed on this same Central Square site in 2014.

6.2.4 Live interpretation: art tours and celebrations

Live interpretation, typically in the form of curator-led tours and artists' talks, is a familiar tool within contemporary art museum practice. As Whitehead (2012) shows in his examination of interpretative practice at Gateshead's BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, front-of-house staff can also play a valuable role as live interpreters. The specially-trained 'BALTIC Crew' act as the 'human face' of BALTIC, ready to interact with individual visitors and to answer any questions they may have about the artworks on display. Complementing more formal programming led by curatorial staff, the BALTIC Crew also run regular 'spotlight' tours of the exhibition and of the building.

Whilst not as imbedded as BALTIC's programme, live activity has also been a regular feature of Gateshead Council's approach to public art interpretation. This activity has included a mix of curator and artists' talks (often held at The Shipley Art Gallery), curator-led walking tours and public art celebration events. The Council's 'Gateshead Live' programme for Spring/Summer 2013, for example, listed a range of activities associated with the 'Angel 15' celebrations marking the fifteenth 'birthday' of *The Angel of the North*. The 'Angel Celebration Day' itself (Sunday 16 June 2013) (Fig. 6.9) reportedly attracted over 2,500 visitors to *The Angel* site.¹⁰⁰ Designed as a 'family-friendly' event, the day-long celebration included a specially commissioned temporary sculptural installation, screenings of a new digital 'Angel' animation, themed art workshops and an improvised dance performance.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Source: Anna Pepperall, Gateshead Council, 2013.

¹⁰¹ Commissioned artworks presented at this event were: *Green Field* (sculptural installation by Julia Barton); *An Angel in my Palm* (digital animation by Anton Hecht); *It's Playtime* (improvised dance performance by Unfolding Theatre).



Figure 6-9: 'Angel Day' 2013 celebrations: Left, temporary artwork and audience interaction; Right, model of *The Angel* made during an on-site workshop.

Alongside these mass events, which also include a popular Family Sculpture Day (held annually since 1986), Gateshead Council has also organised regular, seasonal, curator-led public art walking tours of the town centre and Gateshead Riverside Park aimed at residents and city visitors. Two of these tours were observed as part of my research study.

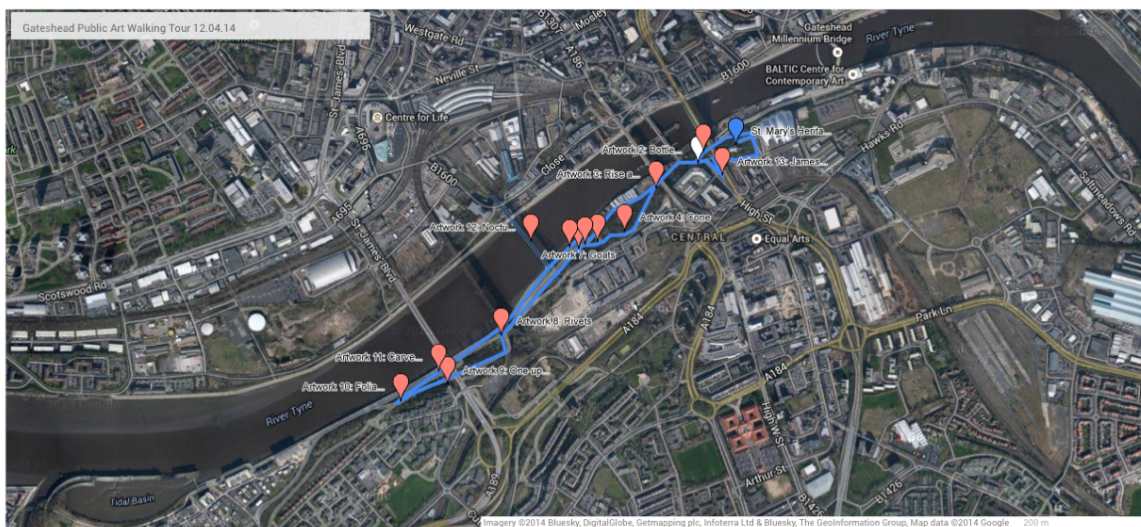


Figure 6-10: Map showing route of curator-led public art tour (12.04.14.) (Map data ©2014 Google).

The walk I joined on the 12th April 2014 involved fifteen participants, most of whom were based in Tyne and Wear.¹⁰² Starting at St Mary's Heritage Centre (indicated as

¹⁰² Apart from two teenage children (attending with a parent) all participants were adults, most aged over 45 years. Participants had a mix of motivations for coming on the tour: one woman interested in

blue marker on the map), the two-hour route took in thirteen public artworks in the Town Centre and Riverside Park (see route map Fig. 6.10). The route also included a visit to the site of one of the city's 'lost' public artworks, Richard Harris's *Bottle Bank* (indicated as white marker). For the participants, this walking tour offered an opportunity to visit artworks that they may not have seen before, such as Andy Goldsworthy's illusive *Cone*,¹⁰³ but also to find out more about the history of public art in the city and the processes involved in the commissioning and production of these artworks. As I observed in the 2014 walk, at times the tour also offered a stimulus for participants to ask questions and to open a more social discussion with the curator around the artworks visited. While there was plenty of conversation between participants during the walk, much of this was on more general or personal topics than around public art. Where participants entered a direct dialogue with the curator, this mostly centred on practical questions about materials and how the artworks were made. Sometimes queries were raised about potential connections with other remembered artworks and art experiences. This type of connective audiencing practice was also a feature observed in my own research walking interviews (to be discussed in detail in the next chapter).

Gateshead was the only one of the three main commissioning bodies in the city to deliver this type of activity, although Newcastle City Council had previously commissioned some experimental student-led projects in this vein.¹⁰⁴ Where public art walking tours had been held in Newcastle, these were organised and led by the

history had come with a friend who was doing a U3A course in art appreciation; another couple were keen amateur photographers. One man was a volunteer city guide interested in city heritage.

¹⁰³ This sculpture is hidden in thick woodland and undergrowth in Riverside Park, and can only be seen in the summer if its position is pointed out along the path. Because of low growth, April was a good month to view this artwork.

¹⁰⁴ 'Creative Stuff in Public Places' (2011) was a collaboration between Newcastle City Council's Directorate of Strategic Housing, Planning and Transportation, Northern Architecture and Newcastle University. In this project students from Culture Lab's 'Media in Public' module were tasked to develop proposals for a new 'guided interpretive experience' which would increase audience awareness of Newcastle's public art. Proposals included: an artist-led photographic walking tour; 3D 'puzzles' focusing on 'Art on the Metro'; and a series of improvised street performances highlighting public artworks around Grainger Town.

volunteer group Newcastle City Guides and usually integrated within broader heritage content rather than being focused exclusively on public art.

In my interviews with public art managers in the city, it was clear that finding the budget and staff-time to develop interpretive resources of whatever type was always difficult. Strategic and long-term approaches to interpretive provision were not possible within these existing structures of public art curation and care. Where interpretive resources (especially print-based) were produced, this was on an opportunistic basis, where funds or additional expertise (e.g. from agencies like Commissions North) were available. As a result, and as my interviewees from both councils stressed, these resources were produced to fulfill multiple institutional purposes: to support artwork interpretation but also as internal advocacy documents and sometimes for the commissioned artist's own use as a promotional tool. As one council interviewee explained:

[these materials] were never intended to be for an arts-interested audience or anyone else. We simply didn't have either the resources or the time to produce bespoke publications for different parts of the market. We didn't have either the sophistication of thought or the sufficient number of people to distribute them in different ways to different parts of the market. [...] So these, for all their limitations, are comprehensible. Reasonably attractive. Pick-up-able. Printed on good quality paper with good quality images. And they've got a long shelf-life. They fulfil a middle of the road mission (Rothwell 2015).¹⁰⁵

With this assumed 'long shelf-life' interpretive resources, as I found in my own survey of on-site plaques and panels, were very rarely revisited or renewed. Further, when new materials were created, they often reproduced or simply made small tweaks to

¹⁰⁵ This interviewee did mention one new and purposefully less 'middle of the road' interpretive resource that the council had commissioned: a combined print/online project called 'Art Pods', designed by artist Chris Morton. This was still in development at the time of my research and therefore was not included in my data analysis.

existing texts, rather than being more thoroughly updated or critically refreshed for a new contemporary audience.

From the chapter discussion offered so far, we can see the four categories of interpretive resource (on-site materials, printed guides, webpages and live activities) as providing different levels of institutional annotation to the public art cityscape. As within the museum, these resources take on multiple mediation roles between audience and artwork, providing: reference tools for artwork identification and discovery; a means for physical navigation to and between individual artworks and artwork clusters; and, most obviously in the case of live interpretation, an educational and social function. Some resources are clearly intended for use actively on-site alongside the artwork itself (certainly on-site labels and panels but also perhaps the Google Maps) while other resources (such as the background material provided for *The Angel*) are more likely to be used off-site and pre- or post-visit. Accepting the intermittency of institutional investment and commitment to public art interpretation highlighted in this section and whatever the actual use of these resources by audiences, I would suggest that it is in the production and continuing presence of these artwork labels, maps, online and portable annotations that (museological) collection space is most visibly projected onto the public art cityscape. Having explored the various forms of interpretation produced in Newcastle-Gateshead and highlighted their different functions in framing public art as a 'collection', my next Chapter section moves on to examine these resources closer-up, exploring the processes of interpretive framing at a narrative content level.

6.3 Interpretation as a cartography for the audience-artwork encounter

In his study of the art museum, Whitehead identified a multitude of textual interpretive framings, each providing its own selective understandings and theories of art (Whitehead, 2012: 53). In Whitehead's analysis, interpretive texts are broadly either 'product'-based or 'process'-based. Product-based approaches use interpretive framings that encourage viewers to focus on the object as a product of an artist's

creativity. Typically, these are written (or spoken) texts which talk about who the artist is, the visual and material characteristics of the artwork, where it fits in terms of the artist's creative development, how this work compares with that of other artists and its importance in art-historical terms (Whitehead 2012: 36). 'Process'-based approaches, on the other hand, situate the artwork within its wider social and cultural context. Here the discussion is about why the artwork was made, who for, and in what circumstances, how the object has been previously displayed and viewed and how it might relate to wider social concerns. Whitehead observes that it is the former product-based approach to interpretation that has been most commonly used within art museums, suggesting that while not superior in themselves, more attention could usefully be given to process-based approaches. He argues that these could help in grounding artworks in social and everyday contexts that might prove more meaningful for visitors who do not have a high level of art historical understanding (Whitehead 2012: 37).

Taking Whitehead's argument as a starting point for my own investigation, Table 6.1 sets out a provisional typology of public art framings based on my analysis of interpretive resources in Newcastle-Gateshead. Often, individual texts within my sample contained an amalgam of possible framings, a feature of art interpretative production that Whitehead (2012) also found in his museum investigations. He concludes that while this 'frame multiplication' might be considered an 'inclusionary gesture' (*ibid*: 90), these potentially contradictory framings can also lead to visitor confusion. While such multiplication and overlapping represents the reality of public art interpretive production, for the sake of clarity in my present analysis, these four interpretive categories (and their sub-categories) are each examined separately in the following discussion (sections 6.3.1-6.3.4).

Table 6-1: Provisional typology of public art interpretive framings

Object-based	Artist-based	Process-based	Location-based
Texts that describe and explain the content, materials physical form of the artwork.	Texts that focus on artistic authorship, and career development.	Texts that focus on the social processes of public art commissioning.	Texts that make connections between the artwork and its site.

My analysis and typology diverges slightly from Whitehead's, in that I have separated his 'product'-based framing into two strands: those which focus on public artworks as physical objects (object-based framings); and those which focus on artistic authorship (artist-based framings). Inevitably, there is some overlap between these two sets of framings (as in the 'creation-production' frame, examined in 6.3.1). In line with my earlier discussions (in Chapter 5) on the in-situ nature of the public art collection and its relations to site and place, location-based framings (Whitehead's 'geo-contextual' meta-frame) are highlighted as an important category in my study.

6.3.1 Object-based framings

In my analysis of public art interpretive resources, I found three slightly different orientations towards object-based framings. Partially following Whitehead's typology, I have labelled these sub-categories as: 1) intentional-explanatory; 2) material-physical and; 3) creation-production oriented framings.

Intentional-explanatory framing

Although perhaps present in a more truncated form than might be found in an art museum setting, this was one of most strongly represented framings within my sample. Interpretive texts utilising this type of framing aim to 'explain the significance of the artwork from the perspective of the artist who produced it, often in a desire to relay her or his creative intention [telling the viewer] what to notice, what to look at and in what order' (Whitehead 2012: 98-99).

Typically, in a public art context, these readings focus on the artwork's representational subject matter but they may also be used to speculate on the meaning of stylistic intentions. With more abstract or symbolic works, we might be given a specific description of what the artwork is meant to represent. For example, in the Gateshead Council public art webpages entry for the sculpture *The Family*, we are told that the three sets of carved stone figures represent 'life's three main stages:

1. Infancy; 2. Maturity; 3. Old age. And the changing relationships which sustain them' (Gateshead Council 2014b). Meanwhile, across the city at Manors Metro Station, we are told that the expressive visual 'language' (lines, shapes and 'vibrant colours') of Basil Beattie's wall painting *Magic City* 'stands as a metaphor for the energy of the city' (Nexus n.d.). In this case, we can probably assume that such interpretations are based on descriptions and statements provided by the artist. Indeed, some resources incorporate the artist's voice directly as quoted text. This interest in artists' intention or on 'artist-as-individual' (Whitehead 2012: 102) is further developed in some public art texts where the artwork is framed in relation to the artist's wider creative practice or biography (i.e. 'artist'-based framings, see 6.3.2).

While, as in Whitehead's (2012) study, the artist's intention is foregrounded in many of these resources, other texts in my sample speak of or point more towards the corporate intentions of artwork commissioners. Thus, from Gateshead Council's interpretive booklet for *Rise and Fall*, we learn that this kinetic light sculpture is both a monument to the 'boom and bust industrial history' of Gateshead (artistic intention) and a 'meeting point and dynamic viewing platform onto the Riverside' – a statement that has a more urban design flavour (commissioner intention). Similarly, as its accompanying interpretive panel tells us, the mosaic *Nocturnal Landscape* at Gateshead Metro Station, is both a visual allusion to the 'landscape of the North East and its historical connections with Norway' (an intention that can be attributed to the artist who had close personal connections with Scandinavia) and an object that can 'act as a calming influence, countering the bustle of urban Gateshead' (Nexus n.d.). This latter statement sounds like a more corporate, commissioner-generated interpretation of the artwork related to Nexus's art commissioning aims more broadly.

Material-physical framing

This framing follows precedents and traditions established within the art museum, where artwork materials and physical dimensions are key elements of artwork labelling and cataloguing systems. This was a framing that was present in many of the public art texts I examined, particularly in relation to sculptural works. For *Pillar Man* (one of the 'Hidden Rivers' artworks), we are told that the sculpture has:

a hand-modelled surface which alternates between smooth and rough. The patina of the bronze is dark and appears almost black, a stark contrast against the white wall of the gallery. The river on which the sculpture sits is shaped from dark blue-grey Norwegian granite, polished to a gloss to give the illusion of water (Newcastle City Council n.d.).

From other texts in my sample, we learn that other artworks in the city are variously made from 'galvanised steel', 'reclaimed granite cobbles', 'Caithness slate', 'Blaxter stone', 'reinforced concrete', 'painted bronze', 'mild steel' and 'glazed tiles'. These material-physical readings are supported and further emphasised in some the photographic content included in these interpretive resources, especially in those images that focus in on specific sculptural surface details, as shown in Fig. 6.11.



Figure 6-11: Covers from interpretation booklets for *The Blue Carpet* and the 'Hidden Rivers' project.

Quite often this material-physical framing is expressed in very non-visual terms, through what might be called a 'by-numbers' approach. *The Angel of the North*, in particular, seems to attract this type of description, its on-site interpretation panel offering the following 'facts' about the sculpture:

- Made of 3,153 pieces of weather resistant Cor-ten steel it contains a small amount of copper that forms a shine on the surface that mellows with age.
- It is 20 metres (65ft) high, the height of four double decker buses and has foundations of the same size and a wingspan of 54 metres (175ft) almost the same as a jumbo jet.
- It weighs 208 tonnes – the body 108 tones and the wings weigh 50 tonnes each.
- Contains enough steel to make four Chieftan tanks.

In its scale, *The Angel of the North* is probably an extreme example but much smaller artworks are also described in a similar way. For example, from Gateshead Council, we learn that the sculpture *Halo* is ‘the world's largest structure made from inflated stainless steel [...] made up of around 330 individual [...] sections, linked together to form a spectacular 27-foot ring’ that is ‘tilted on a 66 degrees angle’ (Gateshead Council 2015). Meanwhile, Newcastle City Council tells us that: *Tyne Line of Txt Flow* is ‘140m long’; *Give and Take* weighs ‘36-tonne’ and is ‘3m in height’ (Newcastle City Council n.d.); and that *Ever Changing* stands ‘at an angle of 73 degrees to the horizontal’ (Newcastle City Council n.d.).

Creation-production frame

This framing is most obviously used in explanatory texts that describe or point towards the creative processes by which the artist approached the commission – how they researched the project and developed their ideas or how they physically made the work. For instance, we find out (from Newcastle City Council) that the words and images included in *Tyne Line of Txt Flow*: ‘comes from Roman messages found locally, printed text from the time of King Charles 1 and text messages collected by Carol and Sue [the artists] in 2002 on the day of the Newcastle v Sunderland derby’ (Newcastle City Council n.d.). Or (from Nexus) that: ‘In designing the ‘South Tyne Eye Plan’, the artist walked, over a six-month period, each street an average of four times. He viewed and recorded houses, open spaces, factories and trees, expanding streets where there was great detail and reduced the relative scale where there was less of interest’ (Nexus n.d.). Also, (from Gateshead Council) that the creation of the sculptural group *The Family* ‘involved a laborious process of chipping, drilling and polishing and took three years to complete’ (Gateshead Council

2014b). This creation-production frame is further highlighted through visual content. The *James Hill Monument* booklet (Gateshead Council 2007a), contains several images that might be said to support such framing. Alongside a sample of James Hill's music manuscript, the cover features one of the artist's design sketches. On other pages, photographs of a model of the sculpture, a shot of the artist's studio wall, and a (rather posed) one of the sculptor (Peter Coates) adding final touches to the artwork on-site (Fig. 6.12), all serve to emphasise individual creativity and craftsmanship.

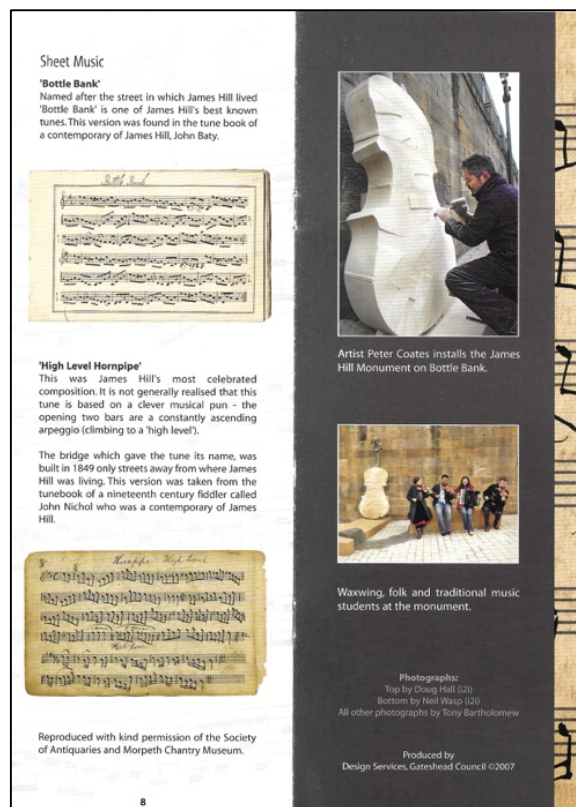


Figure 6-12: Sample page from *The James Hill Monument* booklet (©Gateshead Council).

Sometimes, this production frame is opened out, to include the creative agency of other non-artist collaborators, e.g. those involved in the fabrication, construction or installation of the artwork. This 'production-construction' framing is in many ways an extension of the creative process, but this time stressing the engineering or technical collaboration aspects of the commission. Often these give specific mention to external companies involved, especially if they are local to the city or the North East. In doing so, this type of content highlights Gee's (2017) point made earlier (in

Chapter Four section 4.2.5) on the emphasis given to new creative and entrepreneurial forms of industriousness in the making of a post-industrial identity.

For example, in the series of ‘facts’ about *The Angel of the North*, included on the on-site interpretation panel (again described ‘by-numbers’), visitors find out that: it ‘took 20 fabricators working full-time for six months (22,000 hours) to finish the sculpture’; it was ‘pieced together’ on the site using a ‘500 tonne crane’ and ‘took an entire day to assemble’ (Gateshead Council 2013). Engineering input is also highlighted in relation to the more recently completed *Halo*. Here we are told that:

Halo was constructed by a team of highly skilled engineers at the Ryton-based Impress Group, turning Newby's pioneering idea into reality. Newcastle University carried out a programme of physical testing and simulations using architecture software, while the patent for the technology to make its individual sections was also developed in Gateshead (Gateshead Council 2015).

Collaboration, although of a different mix, is also referenced in the brass plaque installed below the mosaic *Nocturnal Landscape* sited in the concourse at Gateshead Transport Interchange. The text on this plaque reads:

NOCTURNAL LANDSCAPE by KEITH GRANT A.R.C.A | This mosaic was made by the following young people of the Project Based Work | Experience Agency under the supervision of IAN PATIENCE | F. CAIRNS, W. TWEDDLE, G.M. ANDERSON, V. COGGAN | Assisted by J. LAWSON, C. SPRINGETT, S. HENDRY, M. SIDDONS | The work was sponsored by G.M.B.C. and carried out through the Youth Opportunities Programme of the M.S.C. with support from Northern Arts and the Arts Council of Great Britain.

As shown, alongside its references to corporate sponsors and funders, this plaque goes to some lengths to celebrate the co-production role taken by artist-assistants and local unemployed young people in the creation of the mosaic. This collaboration

between professional artists and the Youth Opportunities Programme/Manpower Services Commission (MSC) was one that was also employed in the construction of other public artworks of this period, including (the now removed) *Bottle Bank*.

While the framings examined here focus primarily on the artwork as a material object, the next set of framings turn viewer-reader attention more towards the personhood of the artist and the importance of the artwork within their artistic oeuvre (or 'vitae', as discussed earlier in Chapter Five, section 5.4).

6.3.2 Artist-based framings

As in Whitehead's gallery-based investigation (2012), this group of public art framings is primarily concerned with questions around artistic authorship, the artist's biography, identity and development and assessments of artist and object significance in art-historical terms. As Whitehead's study has shown, these were central framings within the art museum interpretation practice. In my document sample, these framings were more scattered and hinted-at than forming a dominant narrative or focal point for more extensive interpretive discussion.

My sample of interpretive resources contained several examples which referenced artists' biographies, mentioning where and when the artist was born, where they had studied and where they were based geographically (at the time of the commission). Here biographical details were often used to highlight either personal links with Newcastle-Gateshead and the North East or to emphasise the art world status of the artist. For instance, in reference to the sculpture *Lintzford* (Nick Lloyd, 1990) Newcastle City Council's public art webpages inform us that the artist was a 'member of the Newcastle group of artists' and that the title of the artwork 'refers to the Derwent Valley where the artist lived' (Newcastle City Council 2011). Elsewhere in my sample we discover that: *James Hill Monument* artist Peter Coates 'is based in Yorkshire'; while the creator of *Ellipses Eclipses*, Danny Lane, 'was born in Illinois, USA, in 1955 [and] has lived and worked in London since coming to the UK to study in 1975' (Gateshead Council 2007a; Newcastle City Council 2012).

If the artist has a strong track record these resources may offer an extended biography, as in this text on the sculptor Nigel Boonham in the leaflet produced for his Cardinal Hume memorial. Here we are told that:

Nigel Boonham is a British portrait sculptor whose work dates back to 1975. [...] Over the past two decades he has made a series of distinguished portrait bronzes including Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Lord Runcie (Archbishop of Canterbury), Archbishop Daniel Mannix (Archbishop of Melbourne), and recently Dame Cicely Saunders OM, pioneer of the hospice movement. His best known portrait, of Diana, Princess of Wales was unveiled by the Princess herself at the National Hospital of Neurology, London. Bonham's work is held in many private and public collections including The Royal College of Surgeons; the Royal College of Physicians; Manchester Free Trade Hall, The National Portrait Gallery and The International Courts of Justice. B is a Fellow of The Royal Society of British Sculptors. He is a member of the Society of Portrait Sculptors and was elected their Vice-President in 1999' (Newcastle City Council; Grainger Town Partnership n.d.).

With its serial references to key clients in the British establishment and Royal institutions, this is a biography that is certainly designed to impress the reader-viewer. Similar extended professional biographies are also included elsewhere within my sample: for instance on the Irish artist Eilis O'Connell in the leaflet for *Ever Changing* (Newcastle City Council n.d.); while a full CV for sculptor Peter Coates is included in the *James Hill Monument* booklet (Gateshead Council 2007a). As in the quote from the Boonham text, these passages contain a range of references to professional or art world status. In the *James Hill* booklet, we learn that Coates had a long-term working relationship with the 'well known' and critically recognised Scottish artist Ian Hamilton Finlay. Other documents reference artists' previous commission clients, their inclusion in major collections and exhibition (Eilis O'Connell has exhibited at the Venice Biennale), prizes awarded (Richard Deacon, creator of *Once Upon a Time* in Gateshead Riverside Park, was winner of the 1987 Turner Prize). In

establishing the status of the artist through presentation of such details, the institutional intention seems to be to impress upon the viewer-reader the legitimacy of the artist within the 'art world', and thus the credibility of the artwork they have produced for the public realm.

6.3.3 Process-based framings

Whitehead (2012) writes that the process-based frame raises a different set of questions about the artwork, which go beyond concerns with the materiality and meaning of the object and questions of authorship to focus on the wider societal processes in which the artwork is embedded. While not a strong theme within my public art sample, this framing was present in interpretive texts which revealed something about the different organisations and the institutional processes involved in the commissioning of the artwork. Not necessarily present within main written content, this framing is alluded to graphically through the inclusion of partner and funder logos. As previously noted, this was a feature of interpretive materials that was common across my sample, including in on-site plaques and panels.

Quite often these texts focused on the funding packages put together to support the commission, although actual sums of investment are rarely mentioned. For instance, Nexus's on-site interpretation panel for *Opening Line* at Gateshead Interchange informs the reader-viewer that the artwork had: 'financial support from the Department for Transport (Local Transport Plan), Gateshead Town Centre Partnership, Capital Shopping, and Arts Council England, North East' (Nexus n.d.). Over at *The Angel of the North* site, we learn that Antony Gormley's sculpture was supported by a mix of sources including: 'the Arts Council's Lottery Fund, The European Community European Regional Development Fund, Northern Arts and sponsorship from Over Arup and Partners, The Express Group and Silverscreen plc' (Gateshead Council 2013).

Occasionally, these texts name individuals involved in origination of the commission. For example, the Newcastle City Council public art webpage entry for the sculpture *Articulated Opposites* tells us that the commission for this memorial (to nineteenth-century scientist and inventor Joseph Swan) was directly originated by (then) City

Council Leader T. Dan Smith. Meanwhile, from Gateshead Council's booklet on the *James Hill Monument*, we learn that this project was initiated by the 'Estate Agent Roddy Matthews, on behalf of the Friends of James Hill'.

It is only very rarely that we find texts that tell the reader-viewer something more about the commission brief, the artist or design selection process, such as here with *Nocturne* (the artist-designed lighting scheme commissioned for The Queen Elizabeth II Metro Bridge). Unusually, the Nexus leaflet for this artwork tells us about these processes in some detail, as in this extract:

In 2005, having already commissioned a number of artists to produce artworks using the medium of artificial light, it was a natural progression for Nexus to engage four selected artists to develop proposals for the bridge. The artists' brief essentially asked them to consider how to incorporate the use of artificial light to articulate the scale, construction, practical and symbolic functions of the bridge [...] After a review of presentations by the artists Nayan Kulkarni's proposal *Nocturne*, was selected' (Nexus 2007).

Other texts might provide something of a post-script to the commissioning process, giving us a brief thumbnail story about the artwork's launch or, in the case of some of the city's older artworks, about their history of repair or relocation. We might consider these as initial elements in telling a story of these artworks' afterlives within the context of the public art 'collection'. For example, Newcastle City Council's public art webpages offers the information that: *Lion* (1990) was 'one of the pieces bought or commissioned for the Gateshead Garden Festival' before being 'given a permanent home in Newcastle Business Park'; and that the statue *Wor Jackie* 'has had a chequered history with several thefts of the ball leading to relocation to its current position. When it was moved another statue of Jackie was occupying the site close by St James' Park' (Newcastle City Council 2011).

6.3.4 Locational framings

For Whitehead (2012), locational framings are an increasingly important feature of art museum display, especially in regional public gallery collections. This leaning is encompassed in a geo-contextual meta-frame through which different understandings of the art object can be 'rooted to a single geographical and conceptual place, which is the immediate locality of the gallery [...] the representation in the display has particular bearing on the identities and life histories of many who might visit from the area' (*ibid*: 108). Examples given by Whitehead (2012) include the Metalwork Gallery at Sheffield's Millennium Galleries, Manchester Art Gallery's 'Manchester Gallery' and Newcastle's own 'Northern Spirit' display at the Laing Art Gallery. In each case, curators and exhibition designers have sought to create displays that celebrate these localities as centres for cultural production, and which show that, in Whitehead's words, 'places can be both constitutive of works of art and, in some ways, constituted by them' (*ibid*: 109).

Writing about their involvement in the development of the 'Northern Spirit' display, (Mason et al. 2012b) state that their premise for using geographic context as the main framing device was based on premise that place is an engaging concept for a wide range of museum visitors, and particularly for those who do not have a background or wide knowledge of (or cultural capital in) art history. As they explain: 'If people do not have art-history-based cultural capital, they can draw on the knowledge of the North East. If they do have art historical knowledge they could do either or both. If they are not familiar with the North East they can relate to it in terms of places they do know' (*ibid*: 140).

As well as being represented within the map-based interpretive resources examined in section 6.2.2, locational framing, and especially place-based framing, also emerged as a strong feature within textual content across a wider range of materials. Here, localised connections between geographic site, historical and cultural context and sometimes local participation and collaboration, were all employed as elements in explaining the relevance and importance of public artworks to the city.

Many texts described the artwork's proximity and possible aesthetic or conceptual relationship to other public landmarks (bridges, buildings, etc.), heritage features (as in the Gateshead Riverside Park panel) or underlying natural topography of the city (as in the case of the 'Hidden Rivers' artworks which each mark the site of a 'hidden' water course below the city, examined in Chapter Five section 5.3.3). Meanwhile, Newcastle City Council's *Explore: Heritage Blackfriars & Chinatown* guide marks the positions of five public artworks, plotting them visually in relation to: the historic city walls (*Ever Changing*); The Tyne Theatre (*Tyne Line of Text Flow*); 'The Gate' entertainment complex (*Ellipses Eclipses*). Other texts describe the relationship between artwork and site by explicit reference to the city's industrial past. For example, in the booklet accompanying *Rise and Fall*, the artist Lulu Quinn explains how her artwork (sited at the entrance to Gateshead Riverside Park):

stands as a monument to the boom and bust industrial history that defined Gateshead's character. The arch is a reminder of the nearby industrial heritage and the explosion of new engineering and architectural developments along the River Tyne (Gateshead Council 2007b).

Or, as in the case of *Once Upon a Time*, where the interpretive text attempts to describe both the physical and conceptual relationship between the sculpture and the Redheugh Bridge abutment to which it is fixed:

Once Upon a Time..., reflects the status of the abutment as a fragment of the past, and is also the traditional introduction to stories more notable for invention than truth. [...] The appearance of the 'fabricated' sculpture on the 'real' base of the abutment hints at how industrial history can be fictionalised (Gateshead Council 2014a).

Other works, such as the *James Hill Monument*, *Famous Faces* or the *Cardinal Hume Memorial* are presented as having an explicitly local meaning and relevance in

their capacity as celebrations of local public figures. In several cases, the argument for local relevance is also made by establishing the artist's link to the city or North East area. In these, the 'local artist' (as defined in Chapter Five, section 5.4) can be an important aspect of in establishing the institutional legitimacy of the artwork. *Halo* is a particularly strong example of this type of framing. We are not only told that the sculpture was designed by 'local artist, Steve Newby' but also that 'local talent has been central to the entire creation of the large-scale project'. This is emphasised in a quotation from Newby:

It was really important to me that the construction took place here in Gateshead - it already feels like it is being born here and belongs here. This entire project is down to the work of skilled Gateshead craftsmen and it has set new standards in this particular field of engineering, which is a testament to the wonders we can do in this area (Gateshead Council 2015).

This narrative is strongly linked to local skills and innovation, linking this framing closely with that discussed under production-construction. In other cases, localised linkages were established by giving details about creative engagement activity delivered in parallel with the commission itself. Typically, such activities are described in terms of school-based projects but occasionally there may also be pointers to wider local participation in the project. This is particularly highlighted in connection to the *Hidden Rivers* programme, where a full page within the interpretive booklet is given to information about the 'Education Project', including a listing of all the schools involved and examples of the artworks the pupils produced. It is also a strong feature within some of the material produced by Gateshead Council. For example: in Lulu Quinn's *Threshold* (2003), where we learn that the audio-scape of 'sounds, songs and stories' triggered as you walk through the sculpture were contributed or created by '300 local people, including local schoolchildren and animals from Bill Quay Farm!'; and that David Goard's *Subways* (2004/05) were created with the involvement 'of local people, whose digitised portraits featured in the final design' (Gateshead Council 2006: 14).

As a collection to be encountered in-situ and one primarily made up of commissioned artworks, these objects are even more essentially in and of their 'place' than artworks displayed in the regional museum displays discussed by Mason et al. (2012) and Whitehead (2012; 2009). Further, it is clear from my analysis that institutional commissioners in the city were always keen, where print-space and the artwork content or context allowed, to promote place-based narratives. Within these locational framings we see a particular valorisation of projects which involved local talent and local people (whether they be artists, fabricators or school children), and of artworks which can be connected to authorised and easily recognised symbols of the city's industrial and engineering past. In interviews, both local authorities spoke of their increased interest in commissioning heritage-related public art (the *James Hill Monument* being cited as recent and particularly successful example). In Newcastle, heritage was also emphasised as an important element within the city's cultural offer (e.g. as represented in Newcastle City Council's 'Explore Heritage' map series). While much of this collection content is related to authorised heritage discourse (especially around celebrations of the city's industrial, maritime and Roman pasts), we also see instances of artworks which focus on hidden and perhaps darker narratives, as in the *Secret Bunker North* project, or which take a more irreverent and playful approach to city histories (e.g. *Tyne Line of Text* and *Head Cubes*).

To summarise my analysis in this section, my examination of this body of texts shows that there are multiple and overlapping framings present within the interpretive resources that accompany and annotate Newcastle-Gateshead's public art collection. Of these, product-based framings, and particularly those that I have labelled as 'intentional-explanatory' and 'material-physical', are the most dominant. Locational framings, which root understandings of public artworks in terms of place are also strongly represented. Alongside these, art historical and biographical frames (essential to the interpretive repertoire of the art museum) and process-based framings are less prevalent or well developed. As I will now go on to discuss in the next chapter section these resources thus offer a specific schema of interpretation which is both a representation of institutional (commissioner) values and of the ways in which public art audiences are imagined.

6.4 Interpretation and the imagined audience

The interpretive resources and textual framings examined in the previous sections thus present a certain set of cartographies for the audience encounter with the public art collection. While, as has been demonstrated in my exploration of these resources, actual maps do play a role, I am speaking here of Whitehead's wider museological concept of cartography i.e., as a conceptual navigation through culture (Whitehead 2011: 56), in this case the material culture of public art. It is the construction of this cartography, as demonstrated in Newcastle-Gateshead, and its potential effects on public art audiencing, that this wider discussion section now explores.

6.4.1 Envisaging a public art audience

This first discussion section examines how the city's public art audience was imagined or 'envisaged' (Whitehead 2009) within the interpretive resources examined in sections 6.2. and 6.3, and in my research interviews with the institutional producers of these materials. Table 6.2 provides a summary of the various terms used to identify the audience in published resources and in these interviews.

Table 6-2: Institutional vocabulary used to envisage public art audiences

Newcastle City Council	Gateshead Council	Nexus
locals / local communities general public viewers walkers & cyclists	residents local people communities visitors car drivers – <i>The Angel of the North</i>	customers travelling public communities 'day-to-day public'

Not surprisingly, given that two of these organisations are local authorities and the other a public transport provider, the audience for public art (and for the interpretive resources provided for these artworks) was imagined primarily in terms of local residents and communities rather than visitors to the city. In other words, the people who are the everyday users of the cityscape and its transport system and who also pay for these services and facilities through local rates and taxes. As one Newcastle City Council interviewee stated: 'We have never commissioned a piece of public art

for the tourist market [...] Our tourism strategy is much more complicated than just being able to isolate public art' (Rothwell 2015). While this was the core strategy, the maps and self-led walking guides we have examined in this chapter, were regarded as having value in orienting visitors within the city. As Rothwell (*ibid*) stated:

There is a distinction between attracting people to the destination and making their experience here an interesting and fulfilling one. The publicity we designed was not to attract tourists, but when people were in the city they should have the best quality information to orientate themselves.

Visitor audiences were given more recognition in Gateshead where, because of the reputation and profile of *The Angel of the North*, a visitor/tourist interest in the city's public art was more strongly imagined. As Gateshead Council states in its interpretive panel at the *Angel* site: '*The Angel* brings almost daily national and international attention to Gateshead and visitors have come from all over the world to see it'. Visitor audiences (perhaps people enticed along the river bank from the cultural venues at Gateshead Quays) were also specifically targeted in Gateshead's environmental work to improve access to the artworks in Gateshead Riverside Park.

In some cases, particularly where artworks are located in city neighbourhoods or outlying settlements (e.g. as in the more rural areas of Gateshead), audiences were envisaged as even more localised. Sometimes these localised audiences were perceived as public art participants, contributing actively to the development or content of the artwork. All three institutions had encouraged and facilitated public engagement of this type: as in Nexus' *Next Stop Byker* programme (at Byker Metro Station), *Secret Bunker North* (Newcastle City Council, at Kenton Bar) and *Insider Art @ Kibblesworth* (Gateshead Council, in Kibblesworth Village). In all these cases the artworks concerned were made specifically for and partly by residents, my interviewees suggesting that these artworks would be of little interest to audiences beyond these communities.

As already discussed (section 6.2.2), movement and mobility were important factors in institutional imaginings of the public art audience. This was most obvious with Nexus, where audiences were clearly envisaged as travellers (or as Nexus' 'customers'). Mostly, this travelling audience was identified with bus and Metro travel, but sometimes also as walkers and cyclists, presumably because these people are moving at a slow speed where passing art viewing might be possible. For walkers and cyclist audiences, public artworks are sometimes deliberately intended to operate as way-markers and destination points along a journey: a journey which is usually imaged as a leisure activity rather than as a regular commute. Although there are a several artworks in the city that can be viewed from the roadside and may even be designed for this audience (e.g. *Ribbon Railings*, Alan Dawson Associates, 2002), it is only in relation to *The Angel of the North* that car users are recognised as vital members of the public art audience. This is made most obvious in this statement from Gateshead Council on the number of people who see this artwork as they drive by it on the A1: 'The sculpture is seen by more than one person every second, 90,000 everyday, or 33 million every year' (Gateshead Council 2013).

6.4.2 Passer-by and visitor-mode encounters

Within public realm space, the institutional provision of interpretive resources can be posited as inviting a shift in mode from the everyday 'passer-by' public art encounter (often enacted at a peripheral or distracted level) to a 'visitor' experience, one that is more akin to the focused attention (and potential for engaged 'meaning-making' activity) of a museum visit (as suggested in Fig. 6.13).



Figure 6-13: Switching the mode of encounter with public art through engagement with interpretive resources.

Referring to the literature on the aesthetic encounter and museum visiting introduced in Chapter Two (section 2.6), we can see that (depending on their content), the availability of public art interpretive materials might stimulate a more dialogic (as oppose to a sensory or embodied) engagement with these objects. Meszaros (2007: 21) states that access to expert understandings and explanations is a 'potent and necessary part of any interpretation'. Contextual knowledge (whether already held or to be accessed) was also an active factor posited in Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson's (1990) model of aesthetic engagement. While the ability of the often truncated and short-form nature of much public art interpretation examined in my research study to fully perform such a purpose is perhaps questionable, it is reasonable to suggest that it might at least offer some initial entry points to this process. As a minimum, turning to Bitgood's model of museum audiencing (2013), the use of such resources can be assumed to play a practical role in helping visitors to detect and identify public artworks within the cityscape, and perhaps to capturing and extending viewer attention on these artworks. As in the previous discussion on the envisaged audience for these resources, at this stage in my discussion such encounters are only imagined. The way in which interpretive resources are (or are not) used within actual audience encounters with public artworks, and how the textual framings presented within these materials influence audience meaning-making activity will be explored in the next chapter.

6.4.3 Cartographies of meaning-making: dominant and marginal framings

Once in 'visitor' mode, in what directions might the cartography of interpretation explored in section 6.3 lead the interpretive reader-and artwork viewer? As examined here, multiple interpretive framings offer a set of institutionally legitimised routes for the cultural navigation of public art in the city which are differently energised across the data sample examined in this chapter.

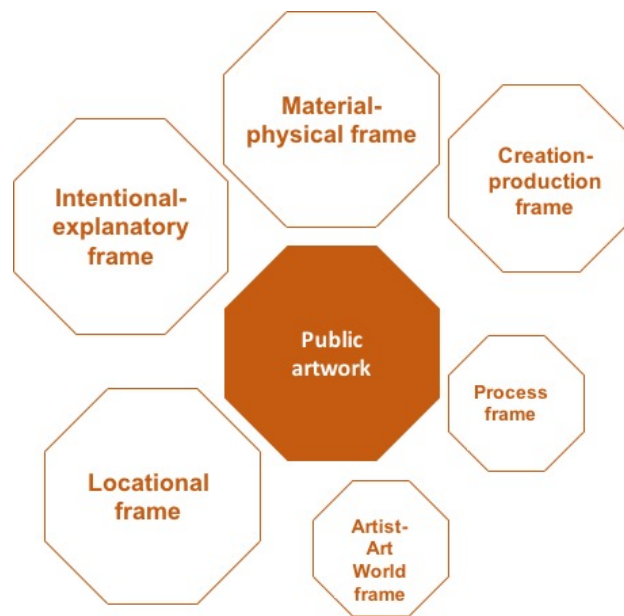


Fig. 6-14: Dominant and marginal interpretive framings.

Fig. 6.14 summarises this interpretive cartography, showing the dominant and marginal framings used within these resources (as indicated by the relative size of the hexagons). As already observed, any one interpretive resource may employ, or at least signal towards, several or indeed all these framings. These framings not only act to guide (and limit) audience meaning-making, they also envisage certain types of audience or audience interest. As shown by the strength of the intentional-explanatory frame presented within the interpretive materials I have examined, the cartography of public art in Newcastle-Gateshead is one which is very much written (consciously or tacitly) from a position of institutional and artistic authority. Although situated within this institutional authorship, there is little overt curatorial voice within these materials. Significantly, considering the supposed ‘public’ nature of these artworks, polyvocal and participatory framings (mentioned by Whitehead 2012 as an increasingly visible frame within the contemporary art museum), have virtually no presence within this institutional interpretive map.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ That is not to say that there is no polyvocal commentary on public artworks in the city. Pilot research during the early stages of my PhD (not subsequently pursued in the main study) did find a reasonably vibrant level of user-generated content around Newcastle-Gateshead’s public art collection on Flickr and Geograph (<http://www.geograph.org.uk/search.php?i=80069086>) and to a smaller extent on Twitter (re *The Angel of the North*).

Drawing on Mason et al (2012, see section 6.3.4), from the emphasis placed on locational framing, the assumption seems to be that the imagined reader/user of these materials (and by inference the public art audience more broadly) has either: a) a strong interest in or identification with place (Newcastle, or Gateshead or the 'North East'); or b) a low level of contemporary art or art historical interest or knowledge. Indeed, these resources generally try to avoid what might be perceived as overt 'art language'. While some interest in the artist and their creative process is assumed, bar some inclusions of CV information, little reference is made to other artworks within their wider oeuvre. Apart from some necessary description, these resources certainly offer nothing by way of critique. The focus instead is often on easily-digestible 'facts' about the artworks especially where these can be measured in numbers. These narratives also make appeal to an audience who is strongly appreciative of craftsmanship and effort, especially where this can be related to local skills and industrial traditions or innovations.

In prioritising product-based framings over 'process', this cartography reflects an interpretive weighting also found in many museum art collections (Whitehead 2012) (although as indicated in Fig. 6.14, in this public art cityscape, artist-art world framings are conspicuously downplayed). While Whitehead argues that process-based interpretation (with its greater emphasis on the social practices of art production) can increase audience comprehension of museum-based art (*ibid*: 37) it seems that this is not a route that has been taken up in relation to the public art collection. Instead, what we have is an interpretive cartography that reinforces messages of commissioner intention (typically as expressed through regenerative paradigms of heritage and place). While we do learn about how some of these artworks have been made in material terms, this cartography offers the audience little insight into the practices and politics of the commissioning process itself. Although this could be regarded as essential to a public artwork's biography, this insider knowledge on public art making may be regarded (by the creators of these resources) as perhaps too procedural to be of interest to a broad public audience. It is also perhaps due to this foregrounding of commissioner and artistic intention, that there is little critical distance created within this cartography for wider

contextualisation or curatorial appraisal (and reappraisal) of the artworks produced.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined how the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection and its constituent artworks are presented and framed through institutionally produced interpretive resources. My survey of these resources (in section 6.2) has shown that public art interpretive practice employs formats which are common in museum-based art collections (artwork labels, interpretive panels, print-based guides, online listings, curator-led tours, etc.). A core aim of these resources or annotations to the cityscape is to assist viewer-visitor navigation and identification of the public art collection in-situ. Whatever the way they are used in practice, I have suggested that it is largely in the presence of these materials that the image of the public art cityscape as a collective entity is most visibly projected. I also posited (in section 6.4) that audience engagement with such resources might signal a subtle shift from an everyday mode of (distracted) encounter with public artworks to a more visit-like experience (a subject which I will examine in more depth in my final discussion chapter).

This chapter's investigation has also shown that in the public art field the institutional emphasis placed on (and investment in) interpretive resources is much less than might be expected within the museum collection. Based on evidence gathered in Newcastle-Gateshead, once interpretive material has been produced there seems to be little opportunity for review or renewal. The findings discussed in this part of the chapter would seem to agree with Senie's (2008) observations (previously cited in my literature review in Chapter Two) that the public art field lacks a substantial focus on audience engagement (and ongoing commitment to documentation and education activities) that a fuller conceptualisation of public art collection-hood might imply.

Building on Whitehead's work on the interpretive cartography of the art museum, section 6.3. examined the interpretive framings employed at a textual level within the public art resources previously surveyed. My analysis revealed that framings based on explanations of artistic intention, artwork materiality and scale, and relations to

place were dominant threads within this cartography. In doing so, these materials seemed to be directed towards audiences who would identify strongly with the city's heritage and sense of place and who were assumed to have little art specialist knowledge. As one of my institutional interviewees phrased it, these resources were produced for a 'general' audience. Collectively, as a body of resources, the emphasis appeared to be more on describing the artworks and communicating commissioner intentions than on generating a more critical dialogue around these artworks.

Having examined public art collection presentation and meaning-making from the perspectives of its commissioning institutions, the next chapter considers how this same collection is encountered and understood by its actual, rather than its imagined, audiences. Importantly, the next and final part of my thesis discussion takes us away from textual analysis on the page to explore the performance of audiencing (or the experiential aspect of public art interpretation) as it is activated socially within the cityscape itself. As previously posited in Chapter Five's examination of artwork settings, and as my next chapter's investigation will demonstrate, this is a more polyvocal and potentially disruptive space for public art meaning-making than might be hinted at in the institutional plane of interpretive production so far examined.

Chapter 7. Audiencing a public art collection:

Each artwork has its own unique range of resources: resources of colour, light, shape, form, composition, sound, smell, change, volume, dynamism, text, and so on [...] While a particular audience might engage in particular ways with certain of these potentialities, another audience, because they are working with different elements from the same object's repertoire of resources, may experience that object very differently. Yet the possibilities for multiple interpretations by different audiences are not endless because the potentialities of an artwork are not. The limits of an artwork's potentialities place limits on its effects with an audience (Massey & Rose 2003: 17-18).

7.1 Introduction

This final discussion-based chapter examines the ways in which actual (rather than imagined) audiences experience and make meaning from their encounters with public artworks. The discussion in this chapter focuses on an analysis of conversations generated through public art walking interviews conducted in Newcastle-Gateshead in 2014. The aim of these interviews was to elicit in-situ responses to the artworks visited and through further questioning to investigate how participants had previously experienced the public art collection within their more everyday use of the cityscape.

Generating an opportunity for active conversation around a range of public artworks in the city, the walking interviews created a mechanism for my participants to process their everyday experiences, to formulate new or perhaps previously unvoiced evaluations and to make new meaning from their public art encounters. These are all aspects and functions of 'arts talk' which is argued by Conner (2013) as an essential process for generating arts engagement. For her,

‘an audience member’s pleasure is deeply tied with the opportunity to interpret the meaning and value of an arts event or arts object’ (*ibid*: 1). Further, for Conner, this arts talk is not an outcome of arts engagement, it is the medium through which engagement with an artwork is produced (2013: 23). It is largely through the analysis of my research participants’ public art talk that this final chapter discussion is based.

The chapter is structured in two main parts. The first part (7.3) uses extracts from interview participants’ art talk to explore the different personal interpretive strategies used by my research group in their encounters with the artworks visited. To represent the texture of this talk and the multi-threaded ways in which my participants spoke about their public art encounters, this first half of the chapter uses verbatim quotes from the interview transcripts. (To convey the character of participants’ talk in this chapter I have found it necessary at points to include extracts of some length. On occasion, where these artworks have not been previously referenced in this thesis, alongside the interview extracts I have also included images of the artworks being discussed.) The second main part of the chapter (7.4) then steps back from the interviews themselves to review my analysis against museological models of the artwork-audience encounter, as introduced in my earlier literature review (Chapter Two, section 2.3): the aim here is to bring data analysis and theory together to construct a model of interpretive audiencing that is specific to public art.

Before proceeding to my main discussion, I will briefly introduce the interview participants whose commentaries provide the main source for analysis in this chapter discussion.

7.2 Walking interview participants

For the purposes of this research project, my sample audience comprised a small group of eleven individuals drawn from the local public who self-defined as interested

in and having some familiarity with public art in the city. None of these were art experts or professionals in the field. The participants had different motivations for engaging with my study. Four of them were enthusiastic art-engagers who also visited art galleries. For others, interest in public art was part of a broader interest in the cityscape, its architecture and history. Two of my interviewees were volunteer City Guides. All interviewees held strong affinities with Newcastle-Gateshead, either through residence, education or work. Most participants were long-term residents of Tyne and Wear – indeed several interviewees had lived in the area all their lives. Only two were relative newcomers, having moved to the city from outside the UK in the last ten years. (The process used for recruiting these participants and for carrying out the walking interviews was described earlier in Chapter Three.)

To ground the analysis of the interview data contained in this chapter, Box 7.1 provides a brief profile of each of my walking interview participants. It should be noted that names used here are research names rather than real names; ages and occupations are at the date of the interviews in 2014.

BOX 7.1: Walking interview participant profiles

Alison is a solicitor at a major Newcastle law firm based on Newcastle's Quayside. She is 51 years old. She was born in the North East of England and has lived in Newcastle since 1987. Alison listed her leisure interests as: walking in the countryside, crafts (esp. sewing), going to the theatre, art galleries and museums, cooking, reading and socialising with friends. She is a member of the National Trust and English Heritage. Alison has quite a casual interest in public art. While she had quite a close relationship with one or two artworks (on Newcastle Quayside where she works), for her, public art was more part of her urban everyday background than an object of special interest.

Ben is a retired computer programmer and former librarian. He is 76. He first lived in Gateshead in the 1960s and then moved to London, returning to Gateshead in 1991. He studied at Durham University. Ben is an active volunteer in many local heritage groups, including Newcastle-Gateshead City Guides, St Mary's Heritage Centre, and

Gateshead Local History Society. Ben's interest in public art stems from his voluntary work as a Newcastle-Gateshead City Guide and his broader interest in Art, especially painting.

Carol is a singer and retired music teacher. She has also worked as a singer and general helper for 'an evangelist' and as secretary at a national charity. Carol is 63. She is married to Ben. Carol is originally from Yorkshire but has lived in Gateshead since 1985. Carol describes her interest in public art as being linked to her interest in music and the Arts, particularly painting and crafts.

Daphne is 73. She used to work for a local accountant but retired two years ago. She is a recent widow. Daphne has lived in Gateshead, in Low Fell, all her life. Daphne describes herself as being an active local volunteer. She is an active member of The Friends of Saltwell Park and the Friends of Gateshead Library. Daphne's interest in public art is part of her broader active interest in Newcastle-Gateshead, its architecture and heritage.

Eddie is a self-employed computer programmer. He is 51 and a father of three small children. He has lived in Newcastle-Gateshead all his life. Eddie is currently a trainee volunteer Newcastle City Guide. He is also a founder member of Newcastle United Supporters Trust and a member of the Northumberland and Newcastle Society. Eddie's interest in public art and his motivation for taking part in my research is linked to his broader cultural interest in the history of the city and its architecture, rather than an interest in public art *per se*.

Frank is 56 and is a retired language teacher. He is originally from Belfast but has lived in Gateshead for the last 7 years. Frank describes himself as having an active interest in public art and in visual art more broadly. He's always been interested in going to art galleries but also in looking at what he calls 'outdoor art'. This is something that he says he has always 'enjoyed and appreciated'.

Greg is 31. He is a graduate architect. He has lived in Newcastle-Gateshead all his life. He is married to Hilary. They have a young baby (who also comes with us on our public art walk). Greg lists his leisure interests as visiting the countryside and heritage sites, particularly National Trust properties. Greg has a strong interest in public art and the built environment generally, especially in what he refers to 'installation art'.

Hilary is from Dresden in Germany but has lived and worked in Newcastle for the last 5 years. She is married to Greg. They have a young baby (who also comes with us on our public art walk). Hilary works as a pharmacist. Her interest in public art and her reason for involvement in the research study is really as companion to Greg. Hilary lists her own leisure interests as 'the outdoors', 'exploring the city', yoga, theatre, music and friends.

Ian is a consultant with the NHS. I would estimate his age as being late 50s. He is originally from London but now lives in Whitley Bay. Ian is an active member of The Peoples' Theatre and of the Lit & Phil. He is a regular visitor to BALTIC and other art galleries in the city. He has a strong interest in modern architecture and the Newcastle-Gateshead cityscape.

Jackie is 52. She is in full-time work and has lived in the city all her life. She currently lives in South Gosforth. Jackie describes herself as having a strong interest in architecture, Art and public art. ("I'm interested in the idea of art just dotted around the place – I think it just makes the place look a lot better, not so soulless', she says). She particularly loves the Hilary Paynter mural in Central Station Metro.

Karen is recently retired. She used to work at the Discovery Museum then in a library and previously with the civil service. She now looks after her grandchildren. Karen has lived in the North East all her life. She currently lives in North Tyneside. Karen is a frequent visitor to Newcastle Quayside (which is where we arrange to meet). She knows a lot about local regeneration but also has personal experience of the area in its pre-regeneration phase.

7.3 Public art talk: Processes and strategies for meaning-making

This section explores four aspects of public art engagement and meaning-making that were highlighted through the interview data. These concern the ways in which the individual research participants differently expressed and reflected on their public art engagement, the personal experiences, knowledge and resources they drew on to do this, and the influence of the visual and material affordances or potentialities (Massey & Rose 2003) of the artworks themselves upon this meaning-making

process. In doing so, the discussion starts to illuminate the idea that interpretive encounters with public art are nuanced within a continuum and layering of personal experience that, as the models of museum audiencing examined in Chapter Two (section 2.3) have indicated, begins before and continues beyond the moment of the artwork encounter itself.

7.3.1 Visual thinking and interpretive fluency

Despite having volunteered to take part in my study, not all walking interview participants were particularly fluent or equally competent in articulating their responses to the artworks we visited. In many cases, further prompts and questions were needed to elicit this dialogue. This interpretive reticence has also been observed in the art museum (e.g. in studies carried out by Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri 2001a; 2001b). In my interviews, this reserve might have been due to participants' perception that they lacked sufficient art-appropriate language (particularly when talking with a researcher whom they might regard as an expert), but also a natural difficulty in translating their visual experiences into words, especially in response to unfamiliar artworks.¹⁰⁷ My findings here align with Hooper-Greenhill's observation that: 'visual experience cannot always be articulated verbally, and this makes it more difficult to discuss, to share, to understand. The gut response to colour, the physical reaction to mass, the engagement with the visual that is both embodied and cerebral, remains mysterious' (2000a: 4). This inarticulacy, in voicing responses to visual artworks has also been noted by Tam (2008).

In exploring these participant responses, some parallels can be made with the Housen's work on visual thinking strategies (1987; 2007). This sets out a developmental model of visual literacy mapped through five potentially progressive competency levels. These build from the most basic, 'accountative' level, where viewers create stories about the artwork based on their own direct observations and

¹⁰⁷ Although each walking interview was designed primarily to visit artworks with which the participants were already familiar, some routes also took them to artworks they had not encountered before.

emotional reactions, to a fully developed, 're-creative' level. Here viewers have the confidence and skills, gained through a personal history of art viewing and artwork familiarity, to engage with the artwork almost as a living thing which can continue to offer new surprises and revelations (*ibid*). This is the sort of high-level experience on which Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's research into the nature of aesthetic encounter (discussed in Chapter Two) was largely based. Intermediate levels between these two extremes defined by Housen are: the 'constructive', which brings in wider knowledge and values, including an interest in artistic intention; 'classifying' where viewers take on an analytical or art historical stance to understand the artwork; and what Housen labels as the 'interpretive' level, a more interactive and intuitive encounter that allows an understanding of the artwork to evolve more gradually, perhaps through repeated viewings (Housen 2007: 2-4). While my own research findings on public art audiencing and meaning-making activity around the Newcastle-Gateshead collection are not directly mapped to the hierarchical or developmental basis of Housen's model, her understanding of the complexity and variety of visual thinking strategies is a useful one. In my study, I found that rather than being able to map individual participants' interpretive abilities to these different layers, visual thinking strategies were employed in a more intertwined and often tentative manner. It is to my own findings on aesthetic engagement and interpretive fluency, as enacted by my walking interview participant group, that I will now turn.

Although by no means an art expert, of all my participants, Ian was one of the most articulate in translating his visual experience into public art talk. He often brought an imaginative and playful approach to his descriptions and interpretations and was perhaps the least concerned or interested in officially framed interpretive readings. In this interview extract, Ian offers his on-site commentary to the mosaic *Nocturnal Landscape* sited in the concourse of Gateshead Metro Station (Fig 7.1):



Figure 7-1: *Nocturnal Landscape*

Ian: It's something without people. It's somewhere where you'd like to go, to explore. Yeah, I could imagine going off, having a wander around there. It's somewhere which isn't here. And somewhere where it feels sort of [...] Is it pastoral? Is it populated? [...] The bits over on the left feel a bit like sort of houses [...] Those little bits could maybe be boats on a sea. Could there be people living there? [...] It looks like trees. It could be clouds. The weather doesn't look too bad. It's rather lovely. The turbulence of the water [...] and the hills. It's lovely! The way the water is depicted. And are they rocks, icebergs? I think they're rocks. It's also got a symmetry around the side. It feels like it's an entrance. You're being enticed into a world of imagination. It definitely feels like an island there.

Created in the actual moments of his encounter with the mosaic (despite often using the Metro station this was an artwork which he said he had not really noticed before) and while hesitant at points, Ian's verbalization of the imagery is highly evocative. He enters into an active and visceral exploration of the landscape depicted, at points literally projecting himself into the picture ('I could imagine going off, having a wander around there'). Ian is not sure what or where this place is or what the landscape features are meant to be but for him this does not matter, he is more than happy to speculate. The ambiguity of the image, and the freedom this allows for his own imagination, seems to be a major part of his enjoyment.

Like Ian, Frank was also willing to generate quite detailed and spontaneous descriptions of the artworks we visited. Additionally, of all the interviewees, he was the one who was most reflective in reporting on his own everyday public art encounters. In this next extract, Frank offers his response to *Opening Line* (Fig. 7.2) a large-scale 90-metre-long sculptural artwork that forms a structural barrier across the bus lanes at Gateshead Interchange. This was an artwork Frank knew well as a regular bus traveler. It should be noted that our visit took place on a Bank Holiday when the bus station was very quiet, allowing a rare opportunity to view *Opening Line* in its full length, without the constant obstruction of buses and queuing passengers.



Figure 7-2: *Opening Line* (section, as viewed from bus station interior)

Frank: It's nice and peaceful. And you have the wave on the left-hand side. And the segment of fruit. Maybe an orange or a lemon or something like that. And a seagull. So it's all reminiscent for me of holidays and resting and relaxation. It's a nice part of the sculpture. And the contrast is appealing to me. The grey and then the white [...] It's different on a duller day. Yes on a duller day you won't get the light coming through. It'll be a lot more uniform. It is a bit like church sculptures, with the painted glass, the monochrome work. But it still has a nice effect for me. The shadows that it casts are interesting as well. You get that bit of lacy work or scrollwork. And then further along the shapes are more reminiscent of seaside shells [...] It's the

keel end of the boat. [...] And these must be parts of the sail, represented by the rods. [...] The different icons in the sculpture representing different parts of the journey for the passengers who are starting or finishing their journeys at Gateshead. It's a very imaginative piece.

As with Ian's talk quoted above, Frank's account begins with the visual details of the artwork and the associations these evoke for him. He then shifts his attention towards more stylistic and aesthetic concerns, such as the sculpture's colour and tonal contrasts, commenting on how these are highlighted by the strong lighting conditions experienced at the time of our visit. As we move along to view different sections of the artwork, other details are picked up and the overall boat-like presence of the sculpture is revealed. Automatically relating the artwork's imagery to the bus station setting, or perhaps revealing his previous reading of the nearby interpretive panel accompanying the artwork, Frank suggests that the sculpture represents to him the idea of a 'journey'.

Compared to the evocative and reflexive commentaries offered by Ian and Frank, for some participants voicing their responses to the artworks we visited was more problematic. This particularly seemed to occur when participants struggled to recognise its subject matter or actively disliked the artwork in some way. Married couple Ben and Carol for example shared quite strongly negative views about some of the public art imagery they encountered. There were two artworks that they both found particularly objectionable, *Opening Line* and *Sports Day*, artworks with which both Ian and Frank were more happily engaged. Here Ben offers his own evaluation of *Opening Line*:

It's never said anything to me as a work of art. [...] I can't see what it's meant to represent [...] 'Beautilitarian' is the English word for it. So that it's meant to be Art but it also has a utilitarian role [...] That face to me is ugly. [...] It's too big [...] Yeah. It gives me the willies that eye actually [...] It's because it reminds me of the Freemasonry eye.

For Ben and Carol, the combination of colour, scale and imagery contained in *Sports Day* (Fig 7.3) was similarly off-putting.



Figure 7-3: *Sports Day*.

For them, the central figure's spikey style hair and obvious earring evokes negative associations with the Punk movement. In the interview, Ben declares it 'the ugliest piece of art I've ever seen', while for Carol it simply 'looks evil'. Ben and Carol's responses seem to bear out Zebracki's (2012) own research (discussed in my literature review, Chapter Two), where he indicates that an individual's moral positions can play a key role in public art audiencing, especially where, as in this instance, an audience member seems to object to the public appropriateness of certain imagery.

Rather than the presence of off-putting motifs, for my participant Eddie, it was the lack of recognizable imagery within abstract artworks that he found most problematic. The route taken with Eddie included two such artworks, both labelled *Untitled*. The first of these was Victor Pasmore's twin murals for the Rates Hall at Newcastle Civic Centre and the second, the steel mural by Austin Wright on the external wall of Northumbria University Library. Initially for Eddie, Pasmore's work seemed just 'one

big blob’. Encouraged to look further at the murals, his immediate impulse was to generate some recognisable imagery from them, quickly conjuring a head and a boat from the shapes that he saw (an audiencing strategy for abstract artworks also noted by Stevens & Franck 2016: 144-5). For Eddie, this seemed to be reassuring, allaying some of his frustration with the seeming emptiness of the artwork. He took similar approach in his talk on the Wright mural (Fig. 7.4):



Figure 7-4: *Untitled* (Austin Wright, 1981).

Eddie: But again all I can see from that is an abstract thing. I can't see – you know that could be a wheel at the end – but I don't know what it's meant to be. And I can't say whether I like it or not, I just – I've never even looked at it [...] I don't think it necessarily *gives* anything. I would need to know more about it. You know if it was meant to be this or that.

These two abstract and perhaps unhelpfully untitled artworks offer little scope for Eddie's descriptive or imaginative engagement. As he states in the extract, he feels he needs to know more about the artist's intentions, or what the work is 'meant to be' before he can begin to engage visually or interpretively with them. This is an issue that we will examine further in section 7.3.4. Similar challenges to audience

engagement with abstract (or non-obviously representational) artworks have also been noted in other public art studies (e.g. by Senie 2002; Pollock & Sharp 2007; Stevens & Franck 2016) and in gallery-based visitor research (e.g. as conducted in the UK by Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri 2001a; 2001b).

Having sampled how participants voiced their interpretations and responses to visual imagery, the next section moves on to examine how the spatial setting, the timing of our visit and the physical materiality of the artwork influenced the way my research participants felt and spoke about the artworks we encountered.

7.3.2 Artwork potentialities: Spatial, temporal and material

Perceptions of artwork scale, material and surface quality and how these fitted with or contrasted visually with the object's setting were core aspects of the public art encounter and artwork experience. As well as contributing to artwork meaning-making through our public art talk, the dynamic of material/visual affordance seemed to play an important role in participants' level of awareness of the artworks within the cityscape and the ability of these artworks to capture their attention. As noted earlier in the visit with Frank to *Opening Line*, the timing of the encounter (whether on a weekday or weekend, or in certain types of weather) can have a significant influence on the audience engagement with public artworks.

The contribution of spatial setting in what might be referred to as the initial noticeable-ness of public artworks (Bitgood's attention 'capture' stage) was an aspect that was particularly commented on by Hilary and Greg: as in their joint encounter with the sculpture *Ever Changing*:

Hilary: This I think you definitely notice because it doesn't blend in. It's different to things around here. The old city wall. That new building. The Tyne Theatre. Greg: That's very obvious contradictions isn't it – shiny metal against the Theatre? I wouldn't say I liked it but I would say I would be

attracted to it a bit more. I notice it more than the others.

While *Ever Changing* is highly noticeable in the way its materiality (reflective stainless steel) and shape (a tilted and upended cone) contrasts visually with the architecture surrounding its Westgate Road site (brick and stone buildings and the worn stonework of the old city wall), *Elipses Eclipses* although on a bigger physical scale (and made of similar reflective material) is somehow less imposing. As Greg explains: 'It seems to blur in with this Gate complex. Because it's a similar palette of materials – the metal and the glazing – it's not as striking. It's subtle enough to walk past'. The visual contrast between some artworks and their settings was also strongly highlighted by Jackie in her response to *River God Tyne* where she compares the style and aura of the figure with the otherwise quite strict modernist architecture of the Newcastle Civic Centre:

It's a very formal building but it's got like this mythical God that you've got no idea – is there even a Tyne God? I've never hear of it [...] But I just like the idea of the hyper-practical and then the mythical. Yeah, I think it's a really nice piece [...] it's quite a flowing piece. And I think it's been made of really nice materials. Good craftsmanship. It's quite a modernist building but there's something quite old fashioned and mythological on the side.

These extracts seem to bear out Bitgood's argument (introduced in Chapter Two) on the importance of the initial 'detection' and 'capture' stage in the construction of audiencing (Bitgood 2013). As he suggests, visual stimuli and display conditions, including sight-lines, physical positioning in relation to the object, and sensory distractions all played a role in participant's everyday engagement with the city's public artworks, as enacted and recalled during the walking interviews. Discreet artworks that were integrated within the urban fabric (such as the pavement level *Tyne Line of Text Flow*) were often unnoticed or noticed at only a very peripheral level. This situated and spatial interplay between the 'art engager', the artwork and its setting are theorised by Zebracki as one of the essential 'empiricisms' of public art

Artwork materiality also had emotive effects within the public art encounter and accompanying meaning-making activity. Several participants seemed to hold personal preferences for certain sorts of materials and surface qualities, especially in relation to three-dimensional artworks. Sometimes these were related to wider art interests, as in this reflection from Jackie on why she likes *Elipses Eclipses*: ‘Yes I like that. I like glasswork. I do like that a lot. [...] I’ve just got a liking for glass. Again, things that I would collect. I’ve got some glass pieces. So I quite like the glass’. While Jackie’s liking for *Elipses Eclipses* is linked to her personal aesthetics and art collecting activity, Frank’s material preferences seem more embodied and emotional. This came across strongly in Frank’s encounter with *This Way Up* (Stephen Newby, 2006), a stainless-steel sculpture sited in Saltwell Park (Fig. 7.5). As Frank says:

I don’t really connect well to metal [...] the bash shapes here, I interpret it as a kind of vandalism [...] It’s hard to know [...] whether the artist has done that – or whether it’s been done to it. So for me that’s a negative thing. I come away with a negative reaction to that. I don’t see it as a particularly attractive sculpture [...] It’s like one of those fairground mirrors! As a piece of Art I don’t like that. The squashed shape, the tarnish on it, and obviously some kids have been up on it [...] It seems vandalised [...] I’m not a great lover of imperfection in sculptures [...] I could respond better to it. But it’s all these dents and bashes. That’s upsetting for me. It reminds me of when I had a car and it had damage, dents, bashes – so I have negative feelings about this.

¹⁰⁸ This is one of three empiricisms of public art audiencing, set out by Zebracki (2012). The other two being: people’s aesthetic and moral perceptions of the artwork’s appropriateness; and their wider attitudes on the social, economic and symbolic function and role of public artworks. While, as already noted in sections 7.3.1, the first of these was a feature of my own research findings, the latter empiricism was not one that was specifically highlighted during my walking interviews.



Figure 7-5: *This Way Up*

As indicated in this longer extract, Frank's reaction to the materiality of *This Way Up* is quite complex. Although he later voices his positive and sympathetic response to *Halo* (an artwork made by the same artist, in the same material and using a similar production process), for him, the bashed appearance of *This Way Up* is visually and physically off-putting. Frank is uncomfortable with the distorted reflections the sculpture produces and is disturbed by its dented shape (a condition which he – incorrectly in this case – attributes to vandalism rather than artistic intention).



Figure 7-6: *Give and Take*.

In some instances, object materiality could also play a directly symbolic role within a participant's meaning-making. Here, one might contrast Alison's perception of the timelessness and spirituality of the stone carved *Give and Take* (Fig. 7.6) with symbolic interpretations of the different metals used in other public artworks.

Alison: I think it looks quite spiritual. Do you not? I think it's the fact that it's still [...] it's like a Neolithic stone isn't it. In the sense that he's got the stone and put patterns on it, rather than actually tried to change the stone into something else. I think it looks like a standing stone that you see all over Scotland;

Meanwhile (in *Acceleration*), corten steel is understood by Daphne as a direct allusion to the city's industrial past: 'It's right coppery. I think it brings in mind what they used to do. Leading towards the Tyne with all the shipbuilding and the metal. It's reminding you of the industrial heritage which we haven't got now'. The shininess of stainless steel, (as used this time in *Halo*) on the other hand, is seen (by Frank) as signifying a brighter future for the city: 'In terms of weight, obviously it is quite solid with it embedded in the ground. But the spaces in between for me give it a feeling of lightness. It's bright and shiny. Something optimistic for Gateshead'.

In contrast to the shiny newness of the recently installed *Halo*, the decay and physical damage observed in other artworks offered a different kind of materiality. Although most interviewees could accept a reasonable amount of natural weathering and ageing in the artworks we encountered, signs of more acute decay or obvious human damage usually detracted from their audiencing experience. While present to a degree in some other artworks, this negative materiality came across most strongly in participant commentaries on *The Blue Carpet*. As already examined in Chapter Four, *The Blue Carpet* has become something of a notorious artwork in the city, known now as much for its decay and dilapidation as for its original imaginative design. All four of the interviewees who spoke about this artwork had strong recollections of it in its freshly installed state and compared this to what the artwork had now become, as in this commentary from Jackie:

It really really shimmered. It was lovely! Now it just blends in with everything else. Which is such a shame. Because I love the way you've got the carpet up there, to make the benches. You used to have coloured lights. I don't know if they still do. A blue light under there I think it was. Then you've got the edging. The metal edging all the way up against the building round here. Yeah. It's just like a carpet's been chucked – you know when you put a rug down and you don't get it quite square. I really like it. And I just think it's such a shame that it's all faded off. It's a bit sad actually. It was a lovely vision. It was beautiful! Now, you wouldn't necessarily know you were on a carpet, unless you'd read about it. It has no visual impact any more.

For Jackie and several of the other walking interview participants, the obvious decay of *The Blue Carpet* is met with disappointment and sadness. Without its defining colour, both the original visual impact and the 'meaning' of the artwork seems to have drained away. As Jackie herself points out, without previous knowledge of the artwork in its earlier state one would scarcely now notice its presence. It is the role of this prior contextual knowledge in public art meaning-making that we will now go on to explore.

7.3.3 Personal and socio-cultural contexts

Previously acquired contextual knowledge and the different personal interests of the interviewees played a fundamental role within my participants' public art meaning-making. As in the commentaries provided by Ian, Frank, Ben and Carol discussed in the previous section, my interviewees drew on a rich variety of personal associations and domain knowledges within their own public art talk. Among these, art knowledge and local knowledge were particularly key sources.

For some of my interviewees, their personal interest in public art was linked to their wider enjoyment of other forms of visual art and craft. Several participants described

themselves as regular gallery-goers. While these gallery-based experiences may have influenced their responses to artworks encountered within the wider cityscape, specific reference to this art knowledge was only brought into the conversation by a minority of participants. Although steps were taken to downplay my presence as a 'public art expert', this perception may have had an inhibiting effect for some interviewees in this regard. Having said that, there were moments within several of the interviews where specific art knowledge did play a significant role within their public art meaning-making.

In this extract, Jackie brings her knowledge of art history and, in particular, the role of the female body and of female artists, into her evaluation of Widerberg's *Figure* sculpture (2013, Fig.7.7) sited within the Northumbria University campus.



Figure 7-7: *Figure*.

Jackie: It's just think it's sort of done to death – the naked female torso. It's 'right, okay. Seen better!' So actually I don't think it's hugely interesting. I don't have any issue with naked figures. Although I am aware of the issues around nudes in galleries. There's the Met Museum in New York where something like 80% of the nudes are female, but only 5% of the artists are

female.¹⁰⁹ There's only so much you can say about that. It's just: 'Ah, boring! Can you not think of something more imaginative?

While Jackie focuses on the history of the art institution, other participants used their art knowledge to make stylistic comparisons between the public artworks we visited and other artworks they had seen or read about. In the first of my next interview extracts, Frank makes a connection between the 'chunkiness' of a favourite sculpture in Saltwell Park (*Seedling*, Fig 7.8) and the ancient carved figures of Easter Island; while in the second, Ian sees a stylistic association between a Metro Station mosaic (*Day*, Fig 7.9), and a famous Japanese woodcut. In the third extract, Carol extends artistic connections further, drawing her musical knowledge into her interpretation (of *Nocturnal Landscape*, Fig.7.1).



Figure 7-8: *Seedling* (Daniel Clahane, 2006).

Frank (on *Seedling*): I can really connect with this. Well it's obviously a head resting in the palm of a hand. The representation is repose and rest. [...]

¹⁰⁹ Here Jackie is making a reference to the famous 1989 poster campaign by New York-based feminist artist group The Guerilla Girls, which asked 'Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?'.

And the curves, the general way the item has been fashioned is very appealing to me [...] it seems to capture that feeling of total tranquility very well. [...] I'm sure I do relate it to other things. I'm thinking of the Easter Island statues. It has a throwback to that. The chunkiness of it reminds me of the Easter Island figures.



Figure 7-9: *Day* (Keith Grant, 1983, Gateshead Metro Station).

Ian (on *Day*): It makes me think of Japanese woodcuts: 'The Wave'.¹¹⁰ The colours and the sort of solidity of the wave and the spume on top of it. And you have the solidity of the mountain and the fragility and dynamism of the clouds. And the colour's there. I remember when Gateshead was very Japanese orientated. I think it was when Nissan had first come [...] there was a Japanese restaurant in Low Fell [...] I'd only been here for a few years. And compared with London it was sort of very mono-cultural. And then there was the sense of Japan and Japanese influence coming into the area.

Carol (on *Nocturnal Landscape*, Fig. 7.1): There's the green, see. And then

¹¹⁰ This is a reference to Hokusai's famous print, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1830-33), more commonly known as *The Great Wave*. This association with Hokusai's work is also made in the text of the on-platform Nexus interpretation panel for the Gateshead Metro Station commissions.

the blue, here. And then there's the contrast of colours. This is where there's a link with music. That composers use chords and sounds to create colour. Like painters use colours. And you can colour your voice in different ways. To get different effects. Different emotions [...] Like one of the warm chords they used in the Romantic era. Not discordant, but a warm sort of chord. Yes, now I'm not good on harmony really. But I know what I mean. The warm sound of the Romantic era [...] Schuman, Chopin, Schubert, etc.

In the first extract, Frank expresses an emotional and aesthetic connection with the sculpture as well drawing in wider cultural associations. This intertextuality, where participant narratives weave quickly and seamlessly between a range of different references and associations, is also seen in the second statement: in Ian's case navigating between art-historical, socio-economic and autobiographical associations. In the third commentary Carol, who was more usually reticent in voicing her response to artworks visited, here becomes quite animated: gaining confidence in her analysis of *Nocturnal Landscape* by bringing in specialist knowledge from another area of the arts where (as a trained singer) she feels much more confident in her knowledge and taste.

Interestingly, despite expressing a theoretical interest in artistic authorship and intention, my walking interview participants rarely held any detailed knowledge about the artists concerned. There were one or two exceptions to this. In our conversation around *Give and Take*, for example, Alison did offer that she had seen other work by this sculptor ('It's Peter Randall Page isn't it? And he's also got another piece which I've seen in the Eden Project'). Similarly, also in reference to a fairly well-known British artist, Ian, talking about his previous visit to find the allusive sculpture *Cone* hidden in the woodland in Gateshead Riverside Park, stated that he knew about this artist's other works: 'I know it's Andy Goldsworthy. I know he does a lot of land art'. Although a little vague on names and details it was clear that Eddie also had background knowledge of some of the artists whose work we visited. As in his response to *Pillar Man*, another in Widerberg's series of figurative sculptures sited around the Northumbria University campus:

Eddie: I've heard of him. But I don't know why I've heard of him. Unless it's because he's done stuff around here. I haven't seen this one here. But [...] I'm sure that's a guy who does signature stuff just like heads and shoulders of things. Now, why he does it I don't really know.

While art knowledge was deployed in some of the interview conversations, participants' local knowledge, particularly in relation to the social history of the city and of the wider North East, appeared to play a stronger role in public art meaning-making activity across my participant cohort. 'Local knowledge' being defined as 'a mode of place-based consciousness, a place-specific (even if not place-bound or place-determined) way of endowing the world with meaning' (Escobar 2001, cited in Mason et al. 2012: 137). Given the fact that most of my research participants were long-term residents of Newcastle-Gateshead (or the wider Tyneside conurbation), this was perhaps not surprising. As Hay (1998, cited in Convery et al. 2012: 3) states: 'if a person resides in a place for many years, particularly if that person was raised there, then he or she often develops a sense of place, feeling at home and secure there, with feelings of belonging for the place being an anchor for his or her identity'. This sense of identity is obviously a strong element in the personal context or agenda that each art engager brings to their public art experience (as elucidated in Falk and Dierking's contextual model of the audience-museum-object encounter, examined in Chapter Two, section 2.3.2). The way in which art engagers readily turn to personal narratives of place to make sense of certain types of art, especially when in the absence of art historical knowledge, has also been noted as a feature of art museum audiencing (see Mason et al. 2012).

With many public artworks in the city's collection being specifically commissioned to reflect the heritage of Newcastle-Gateshead (see examination of representational schema and site-specificity in Chapter Five, section 5.3.3) or to engender such narratives, the ability to make explicit socio-cultural place-based connections could be argued as a critical element within the successful audiencing of these artworks (at least from an institutional and intentional perspective). Where such references were signalled within the artworks, these were certainly quickly picked up on by my interview participants. While such connections were more important for some

interviewees than for others, in general (perhaps with the exclusion of Frank and Hilary, the two relative newcomers to Newcastle-Gateshead), as long-term residents, the participant group collectively held a high level of local history knowledge. Indeed, for some participants, interest in and willingness to exhibit and share such knowledge seemed to be a key motivation in taking part in my research study. As the following interview extracts demonstrate (and reflecting my analysis of institutional interpretive framing discussed in Chapter Six), local industry, engineering and maritime heritage and the importance of the River Tyne itself were key themes drawn on in my participants' audiencing narratives, particularly on the Newcastle side of the river.

In this extract, Alison combines her immediate experience of the riverside setting and her familiarity with the history of Newcastle's Quayside (the legal office where she works is located here), to discuss and make meaning from the form, materials and visual detail of *Sandgate Steps* (Fig 7.10):



Figure 7-10: *Sandgate Steps* (Alan Dawson, 1996, detail)

Alison: It curves doesn't it. So I think it's meant to reflect the waves and the tide. And also it's very, very metally isn't it. Which goes with the shipbuilding. The details I think are to go with the waves. The embossing

and the heavy metal. Because I think it's sort of like ships [...] with all the metal work. Although it's waves. It's just, it's very 'heavy industrial' isn't it?

And further along the Quayside at *Swirl Pavilion*, Karen offers the following interpretation as she reads the inscription that runs around the pavilion's interior (Fig 7.11):



Figure 7-11: *Swirl Pavilion* (Raf Fulcher, 1998, interior detail)

Karen: Shipping: Hamburg. Well, Aberdeen's oil. Rotterdam's? Copenhagen? [...] Sea ports. Shipping around the world. And I suppose a lot of ships would have left here. Been built here. Or gone to places all over the world really [...] this is sort of history about the industry. Well it's not really showing industry, but how we were world-renowned. And we went all over the world. So that's what I think about. Because I suppose I see that as a globe. This is sort of grand: 'And we used to go out and sort of rule the world'.

In a different area of Newcastle, Jackie also draws on her local knowledge to explain the significance of *Parsons' Polygon* (a familiar sculpture that she declares as one of her favourite public artworks in the city):

It's Parsons – they used to do power station boilers, turbines. You've got the cogs and the sort of ratchet type systems on there. It's almost like a swan song. Because Parsons is now Siemens. I knew people who worked there. And it's sort of like the industrial heritage of the North East has been condensed into Art. Where in the past it was done for real, it wasn't just done for a representation.

Such place and heritage-based responses may be taken as evidence that many of my walking interview participants did buy into the accepted rhetoric of authorised heritage and of the positive contribution made by public artworks to place-making, especially in relation to the celebration and promotion of local and regional identity. Indeed, with some artworks, participants would generate such connections even where these were not necessarily intended by the artist or commissioner. The sculptural tableau *Man with Potential Selves* (Fig. 7.12) offers a case in point.



Figure 7-12: *Man with Potential Selves* (Sean Henry, 2003, one of three figures).

Although this is a purchased (pre-existing) artwork rather than one commissioned especially for the city, interview participants visiting *Man with* were keen to create some kind of local connection for these figures. Hilary observed that one of the men

'looks quite dirty, like a miner', a reading that was also separately speculated on by Jackie: 'I think they're interesting. And the donkey jackets and that is reflecting the heritage of the area. From the mining. I don't know whether that's a deliberate thing or whether I just picked that up'.

In enthusiastically taking up such local associations, these participants' meaning-making activity around these artworks could be seen as expressions of their own identity-based needs and socio-culturally inflected expectations of what they think public art should do. As recounted in Falk and Dierking (1992; 2013) this type of interpretive agenda has strong parallels with a categorisation of some museum visitors as 'Affinity-Seekers', those whose museum visits are motivated by a perceived match between collection content and their own personal heritage or sense of cultural identity.

On occasion, in my interviews, public art meaning-making was informed by a different kind of local knowledge, based on participants' own observations of physical change within the cityscape. Several interviewees recounted that they had themselves witnessed the installation of the artworks as part of their everyday usage of the city space. Witnessing such activity seemed to create a special sense of mystery and expectation, the memory of which could remain with the interviewee and engender a sense of heightened enjoyment of the artwork. This is expressed in the following extract, where Jackie shares her memory of the installation of *Ever Changing*:

I actually saw them putting up the base. And then the next time I came past the whole thing was up. I went: "Oooh! Where did that come from?" Because you weren't sure what it was going to be at first. [...] The stainless steel. So you were going: 'Is that it?' And then the next time there was quite a lot more. Well, I sort of noticed it changing. Because it happened in a short space of time. And because I really liked it. I just love the fact you've got all the layers of glass and all the lines in it.

This spectacle aspect of a new public art installation was one that several other participants had encountered and commented on in relation to *Halo*, which at the time of the walking interviews had recently been installed as the final stage of Gateshead's Trinity Square development. Of all the artworks visited, this seemed to be the one where the participants were most well informed in relation to authorship and the commissioning process. Several interviewees mentioned that the sculpture had been paid for by Tesco and that it was designed and made by a local artist. With no on-site interpretive material present at the time of our visits, the reason for this unusually high level of knowledge about the commissioning history of the artwork would seem to be the enthusiastic local press coverage generated around this sculpture in the weeks just prior to the interviews, where details of the artist, fabrication and commissioning process had been fully reported. Reflecting my earlier findings on the content of available interpretive resources (Chapter Six) for the majority of public artworks visited in the walking interviews, the commissioning process and the way in which these objects came to be present within the Newcastle-Gateshead cityscape remained something of a mystery. As Karen says: 'You often wonder how things get commissioned and who decides'; and Eddie commented (at *Pillar Man*): 'I would just like to know how old they are apart from anything. How long it's stood there before I've noticed it! If it was inside an art gallery you would probably have something telling you, wouldn't you'. It is to participants' use of available interpretive resources and the role that these played in their public art talk that this chapter discussion now turns.

7.3.4 The use of interpretive resources

For some of my walking interview participants, official interpretive resources, such as on-site artwork labels, panels and printed maps and guides (including those examined in Chapter Six), were considered as important aids to public art engagement. As indicated in Eddie's comment quoted above, in some of our artwork visits, this was noted as a lack or gap in provision. In other visits, interpretive resources became an active ingredient within the interview conversation. Indeed, several participants admitted to doing some 'homework' on public art in the city directly prior to the interview. In Ben and Carol's joint interview, Ben came armed

with his own copy of the *Gateshead Art Map* publication. He read directly from this text at several points during our walk, as in our encounter with *Acceleration*:

Ben: Let's have a look at that. 'No. 10. Acceleration', yes, page six, 'Marks a route between Gateshead Town Centre and Gateshead Quays.' I don't know about that. 'The design concept uses the strong slope of the site. It refers to the Victorian architecture of the old Town Hall.' I wouldn't agree with that either. 'The sculpture takes the form of a repeat ring motif, acknowledging the past, heading into the future. The wheels symbolise the industrial history of Gateshead' [...] As a piece of art it doesn't attract me at all. But again, you appreciate what it says in here about it.

For Ben, here and in other encounters, institutional-produced interpretive material seemed to be an essential framing device and prop for his engagement with the artwork. Sometimes, these official sources served to replace his own voiced responses to the artworks we visited, even though as particularly noted in this extract, he might not necessarily agree with what he reads.

Frank had a rather different mode of engagement with interpretive materials. Always keen to point out any onsite panels and labels that were present near the artworks we visited Frank stated that he is 'someone who likes a point of reference'. As he explains:

It is possible just to have free imagination about what you see. But I always find it's a little bit extra to know what the artist intended. And usually I can agree with the artist. It matches what I would think of. Or we both match what's intended. It's very rarely a contradiction or a conflict. I can see where the artist has come from. And I tend to share my experience with what the artist has had.

While bringing a good deal of imagination and self-reflection to his own public art talk Frank saw the availability of artwork labels and interpretive panels as important tools for developing his understanding of the artwork, its subject matter and intended allusions, aspects which he felt were rooted in the concept of artistic intention.

Within my walking interviews the artwork's title often acted as a starting point for a participant's public art talk. Often this was the only interpretive resource that we had to go on. In the visit with Karen to the sculpture *Siren* the artwork title was the first thing Karen searches her memory for: 'What do you call it? 'Something of the Sea', 'Sirus'? 'Siren'? 'God of the Sea' or something?'. Levinson (1985) states that titles are a key part of an artwork's 'aesthetically relevant features' (*ibid*: 33). As indicated in my interview extracts, they can have an evidential effect on the appreciation and understanding of the artwork (Leder et al. 2006; Levinson 1985). However, for Levinson it is only the original ('true') artist-intended title that performs this role. For him, subsequent 'colloquial' titles given to the artwork by other means or agents can be discounted from interpretive discussion: 'Labels which become affixed to a work through an agency other than the artist's may occasionally be amusing, or enlightening, or suggestive of ways of approach, but they have no claim to determining artistic meaning as do bonafide titles' (Levinson 1985: 33). From the evidence of my walking interviews, intended and invented titles proved equally relevant, both playing their part in participants' public art meaning-making.

For some of my interviewees, having a sense of a title's applicability and appropriateness to the artwork was a major preoccupation. In his encounter with the sculpture *Five Swans* (at Newcastle Civic Centre), Eddie took a very literal approach, being particularly concerned to establish that there were indeed five swans represented. In his typology of artwork titles Levinson (1985) would describe 'Five Swans' as a 'neutral' title, one that (as Eddie was keen to corroborate) simply names the most obvious elements within the artwork. On occasion my participants found an artwork title misleading or confusing, particularly when they perceived some kind of mismatch between the title and the object. Karen was initially confused by her encounter with *Blacksmiths' Needle* (see Fig 4-9) because, as she says, 'I can't see that it represents blacksmiths'. (Actually, the title is intended as a reference to the

makers and the making of the sculpture rather than to its imagery).¹¹¹

Where artwork labels were not present onsite, or where official titles were unknown, my participants would often create their own names or figurative descriptors for these objects. These were not always favourable. *Sports Day* was referred to in one interview as ‘that big funny squashed hedgehog thing’ (Karen). Meanwhile, even though aware of its official title, Jackie thought of the sculpture *Man With Potential Selves* more idiosyncratically as the ‘Man with the White Socks’: this being a reference to the humorous and perhaps rather fond physical annotations to the figures sometimes performed by passers-by and anonymous well-wishers (e.g. in the form of added underwear or knitted scarves).¹¹² Participants often resorted to a ‘looks-like’ approach, an object identification practice also discussed by Senie (1993), when struggling to describe non-figurative artworks. The *Halo* sculpture offers a good example of this, being variously described as looking like: a ‘bicycle chain’ (Ben); or a ‘big tyre’ (Daphne); and more derisively as ‘a load of shopping bags’ (Ian). Similarly, *Ever Changing* was likened to ‘a silver cone - an ice cream thing’ (Jackie). For Frank especially, self-generated titling seemed to be an important activity within his own enjoyment of his encounters with public art. Frank did this extensively with the artworks he had got to know on his regular walks through Saltwell Park. For example: the sculpted stone, *Foliate Carving* (Gilbert Ward, 2006) became for him, ‘The Acorn’; while *Seedling*, a sculpted face resting on its cupped hand, was known by Frank as ‘The Resting Stone’. As with Jackie and others quoted above, this active and idiosyncratic renaming and re-titling seems to cast a sense of positive familiarity and personal ownership over these artworks.

Although conducted in significantly different physical settings, this examination of participants’ public arts talk indicates that strategies employed in public art meaning making do bear similarity with visual thinking activity carried out within the museum

¹¹¹ *Blacksmiths Needle* is a collaborative artwork created by members of the British Artists Blacksmiths Association.

¹¹² A reference to a ‘yarn-bombing’ intervention at the sculpture in 2010 by Newcastle Craft Mafia. See <http://hereatthecoalface.blogspot.co.uk/2010/03/guerilla-knitters.html> (accessed 26.02.17).

(as set out in studies by Hooper-Greenhill and Housen, cited earlier). Just as might be expected in the museum setting, my participants demonstrated different levels of descriptive and interpretive fluency in voicing their responses and readings of the artworks visited, often entwining multiple styles of visual thinking (from the accountative and constructive to the re-creative) within their accounts. These encompassed both engagement with formal/aesthetic elements of the artworks (e.g. reactions to and discussions of colour, shape, composition, mass, scale, etc.) and those focusing on representation and 'symbolic' uses (as described by Franck, Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri and Stevens & Lossau, as previously cited). The variabilities of individuals' personal contexts and especially their cultural and spatial proximities to the artworks (as defined by Zebracki 2011) was a vital element within the responses elicited, both in terms of in-the-moment (in-interview) engagement and recalled encounters. While the representational, aesthetic and material potentialities of the artworks themselves (as highlighted by Massey & Rose) were always the catalyst for engagement, participants' public art talk engendered by these (e.g. as shown in particular in Ian's accounts) could go in very different directions. Meanwhile other participants, or other encounters, might be more closely bound to the artistic intentions behind the artworks visited, especially around what these artworks were meant to represent (a characteristic of several of Eddie's artwork responses). As found in other public art and art museum-based studies (cited earlier in this chapter discussion), abstract or non-figurative artworks proved perplexing for some participants. It was in providing access to understandings of artwork' intentionality that participants use of (or need for) interpretive resources was most directed, although (as shown in Ben's interview), these explanations might provide a catalyst for participant' disagreement and resistance as well as elucidation.

In focusing on the texture of audience engagement with the individual artworks visited on our routes, one key aspect of the walking interviews not so far drawn out in my examination of participants' public art talk was the way in which these encounters were played out in relation to the wider public art collection. As set out in the account of my research design and methods (in Chapter Three), the walking interviews were designed to take in a wide sample of artworks sited within Newcastle-Gateshead (in total 55 artworks were visited across the interview series, 24 being visited by multiple participants). From our in-interview conversations (and pre-conversations made to

plan the route of the interviews with my participants), it was clear that while no one in my participant group had a full awareness of the entire scope of the city's public art collection, each person did hold their own internal self-generated map of multiple public artworks the city. It was on these personal maps or 'sub-collections', gathered through participants' everyday patterns of travel and city use, that our individual public walking routes were based. Similarly, within the interviews themselves, participants often drew in other city artworks, beyond our interview route, as unprompted points of reference or comparison within their art talk.

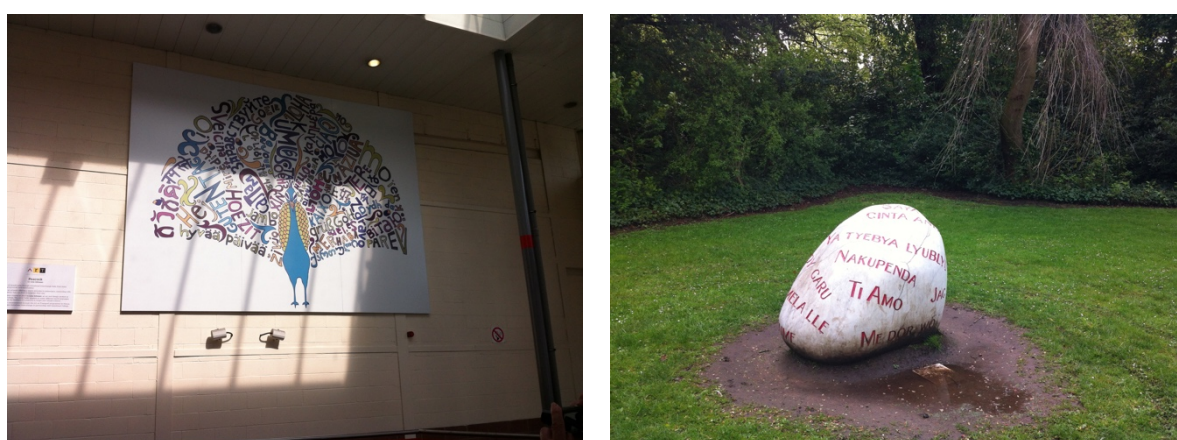


Figure 7-13: Left, *Peacock* (Lisa Johnson, 2011); Right, *The Language Stone* (Gordon Young, 2006)

Ben for example, in his encounter with the text-based mural *Peacock* at Gateshead Interchange, prompts a connection with inscriptions on a sculpture he has previously seen in Saltwell Park (*The Language Stone*) (see Fig. 7.13). Meanwhile, discussions at Gateshead's *Halo* prompted parallels with the *The Angel of the North*, at least one interview participant commenting that it was meant as a representation of *The Angel's* fallen halo, or that (erroneously) the two artworks were created by the same artist. In making such connections, we can see these participants are exhibiting aspects of cross-pollination (as 'linking, thinking' agents) that Whybrow (2011: 81-82) suggests is an integral performative element within urban public art audiencing (as previously discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.2.3). Having summarized the main findings from my examination of participants' public art talk and the meaning-making strategies deployed within this, this chapter discussion now moves on to consider how the activity of public art audiencing and the interpretive encounters that can take place within this might be conceptualised.

7.4 Towards a model of public art audiencing

This final part of this chapter stands back from the examination of public art talk itself to present a wider analysis of the dynamics of public art audiencing. In doing so, I turn back to museological models of the artwork-audience encounter (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson 1990; Falk and Dierking, 1992; 2013; Bitgood 2013), set out in my review of the literature in Chapter Two (section 2.3), recalibrating these understandings to fit the more situated encounters with artworks enacted within the public realm. In particular, and following on from suggestions made in the previous chapter on the function of interpretive resources, in section 6.4.2, my analysis differentiates between two modes of public art audiencing: ‘everyday’ (or ‘passer-by’); and ‘visitor’ mode encounters.

Drawing on these museological models, and on the evidence from the public art encounters enacted and reported on within my own walking interview research, Fig 7.14 posits public art audiencing as a multidimensional and dynamic relationship between three key factors: (A) the material, sensory and representational potentialities of the artwork; (B) the personal contexts of individual audience members; and (C) the socio-temporal-physical contexts of the encounter.

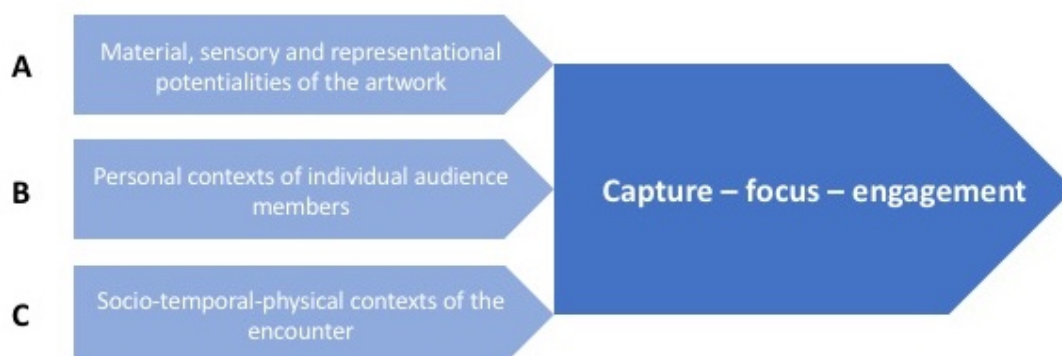


Figure 7-14: Model of public art audiencing

The potential for interpretive (meaning-making) encounters with the artwork, through the invitation to capture-focus-engage (set out by Bitgood), exists in the balance, tensions and connection between these three factors. Where a museum-based environment is designed specifically to invite and encourage interpretive engagement with the artworks on display, the public realm is a far looser, variable and distracting environment for this type of experience. That is especially so if we follow Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's characterization of the artwork encounter in terms of 'flow', which requires an optimal level of consciousness and attention. Evidence from my walking interviews showed that (beyond the special 'visit'-like and focused conditions of the interview itself) within the everyday, public artworks were often experienced in a state of relative inattention.

In elaborating her model of 'arts talk', Conner (2013: 24) references the distinction made by Dewey (1934) between ordinary human 'experience' and 'an experience'. Here, 'experience' is a constant interaction, often 'inchoate' and 'drifting' or 'slack' (Dewey calls this 'anesthetic' experience). In contrast 'an experience' is conscious, requiring a level of intellectual or emotional engagement ('aesthetic' experience in Dewey). For Conner, the opportunity for 'arts talk' is a primary route to this deeper engagement. These distinctions between 'experience' and 'an experience' are important in my consideration of public art audiencing as they serve to advance the idea (posited in Chapter Six, section 6.4) that there are two modes of encounter with public art: the 'everyday' mode (one that is 'drifting' and relatively 'slack') and the 'visitor' mode (which is 'conscious' and engaged). This is obvious in the difference, for example, between encountering public art as part of a curator-led guided walk ('visitor' mode) and experiencing public art in the backdrop to a regular commute.

In my walking interviews, several participants commented that they had not previously consciously noticed the artworks we visited or remarked that they had noted them before only on a peripheral level. Greg reported, during our visit to *Tyne Line of Text Flow*, that although he had noticed that there was something materially different within the space, he had not realised that this feature was intended as an artwork. It is important to note that for him (and for his co-interviewee Hilary), it was precisely this subliminal and fugitive nature of public art that was part of its purpose

and appeal. As Greg puts it:

You don't choose [to visit public art] you walk past it, so it's just like a fleeting moment [...] I think that's just what public artwork is. Just a moment within a journey. It maybe alters your impressions of the space and maybe for a short moment makes you consider things.

Karen expresses a similar sentiment when she states:

You take things for granted. Someone will point something out and 'I never noticed that before! I'm in town every day [...] I've grown up here and I've never noticed that.' [...] you go on holiday and you go on the tours with guides. And sometimes you don't know your own city.

As Whybrow (2011) suggests, my interviews thus had something of a performative quality, converting what might be an everyday encounter into a more conscious and focused visit-like form. In many cases, the interview itself encouraged an entirely different duration of encounter with these artworks than might be usual for these participants. Within the interviews, we sometimes spent up to ten minutes visually exploring and discussing an individual artwork, far longer than participants would normally spend. As previous encounters with these artworks were often reported as solitary experiences, the interview itself created a new and rare social opportunity for 'public art talk', and through this (as Conner argues) a heightened level of art engagement.

For some participants, and with some artworks we visited, the social occasion of the interview also seemed to give my interviewees license to engage with the artworks in a more physically active and intimate way than they might usually do: experimenting with different viewpoints, walking around a sculpture to view its hidden side, stepping back from or going closer in to scrutinize a figurative element or touch a surface detail. These was markedly different from the more distant and glanced everyday

artwork interactions reported by my research participants. As Frank observed in relation to his own public art engagement, some city settings were more inviting than others for the performance of more active audiencing:

Frank: You are free to go up and touch *Sports Day*. There's nothing to stop you doing that [...] Or *Halo* at Trinity Square. There's no boundary with them. But when you're in the park your senses are a bit freer. You don't have people around you. Your senses become more involved. [In the street] I would be conscious of people around me and become a bit more inhibited. People are going to think me a bit strange looking at this statue. Most people are just rushing past with their shopping. I think in an urban environment it's not as easy to spend time with the public art.

The evidence of my Newcastle-Gateshead interviews therefore rather works against suggestions that public artworks offer wider 'freedoms of feeling and action' and interaction than might be afforded within the art museum (Stevens and Lossau 2015: 1). It would seem to agree instead with earlier research (Massey & Rose 2003) that notes a reticence, at least among adults, towards tactile and embodied engagement with public art. As Frank's own observations hint at, public art audiencing is conducted within perceived norms of public space behaviour, where different settings (public square, street, park, etc.) have their own socially-constructed 'rules of conduct' in terms of expected activity (e.g. as examined by Goffman 1963).

As already suggested, while some interviewees did report on previous artwork encounters and already held evaluations and responses, most interpretive activity happened within the action of the interview-visit. This was of course most obvious in relation to artworks on the route that were not previously known to the participants but this also occurred where artwork familiarity and established audience-artwork relationships already existed. This can be evidenced in this longer extract from the walking interviews where Ian makes a return visit to *Halo*.

Ian starts by recounting how he had previously made two special visits to see *Halo* around the time of the completion of the new Tesco's Trinity Square development. As in his previous encounters, in the interview visit Ian's initial response to the sculpture is negative. Perhaps reflecting his wider views on the Tesco-led redevelopment of Gateshead Town Centre¹¹³ for him *Halo* initially looks to Ian just like 'a load of shopping bags!'. However, as our visit progresses Ian's response begins to warm:

I am changing my mind about it actually. It's a nice size – sets it off - It's a part of the regeneration. Looking to the future. Modern – out with the old, in with the new [...] I've never been up! [...] I've never touched it. [Ian does so now.] Umm. It's nice! It's quite nice to lean on. Actually. I think I'm changing my mind. [...] It's something that's not just about doing your weekly shop it's about – I'm thinking - it's got this sort of circle. It's got a weight to it. It's not falling over. A sense of, you know, coming round. And reflecting. Because we are all reflected back from it.

Here, the extended duration and focused attention of our artwork encounter (we spend at least ten minutes discussing and examining *Halo*) and the encouragement to engage with the sculpture on a physical and tactile level, all seem to play a role in stimulating Ian's re-evaluation.

While this type of extended duration and sustained hermeneutic engagement are prioritized in the museological models of audiencing I have cited in my discussion so far, Stewart (2015) writes that distracted and more casual aesthetic engagement also has significance. Where 'sustained engagement refers to a heightened level of concentration and the ability to give one's prolonged attention to a cultural object, distracted engagement occurs when our aesthetic experiences co-exist with other activities' (*ibid*: 152). As Stewart suggests this 'heightened level of concentration' was a necessary condition for the type of interpretive commentaries discussed in section

¹¹³ A reference to the fact that Trinity Square, the setting for this sculpture is a Spenhill Development, which is a division of Tesco PLC.

7.3 to be formulated. However, as he also goes on to argue:

The notion of distracted aesthetic engagement enables us to see that many interactions with cultural objects take place in an absent-minded manner, producing as a series of micro-evaluations that might seem meaningless when considered in isolation but gain significance as part of wider patterns [...] These are feelings that arrive one moment and are gone the next. This does not mean, however, that they lack significance (*ibid*:158).

Stewart's focus on distracted and micro-engagements is one that fits well with my conceptualisation of the everyday 'passer-by' mode of public art audiencing. In public art terms, the accumulation of micro-evaluations are a key constituent of the unspoken contextual knowledge both generated by and folded into everyday encounters with the public art cityscape. As already discussed (in sections 7.2.1 and 7.3.3), audience members draw on a wide range of personally-held knowledges and associations in their public art meaning-making. Some of these are based on partial understandings and snippets of information, sometimes (as in the association of *Halo* and *The Angel of The North*) not necessarily factually true. Along with any new knowledge that may be drawn from institutionally produced interpretive resources, these multiple micro-understandings and evaluations are carried into the mobile and serial activity of public art audiencing as an ongoing personally-held commentary on the cityscape.

While such micro-evaluations may easily become entrenched, given new stimulus and focus they may also have the capacity to evolve and change over time and through serial exposure, especially if that is differently or socially-mediated (e.g. as in Ian's re-evaluation of *Halo* in our interview or perhaps through new provided forms of interpretation or physical changes in the public art cityscape). Although there is always the potential for artworks to become invisible over time and with increased familiarity, this accumulation of micro-evaluations (and possible re-evaluations) could be regarded as being intrinsic to the open conditions of everyday public art audiencing differentiating it from more controlled museum-based artwork encounters

which are more usually bounded within the temporality of a single or special visit.

7.5 Chapter summary

In focusing on participants' public art talk, this chapter has provided new evidence on how public artworks are experienced by audiences and on the different strategies through which individuals attempt to make meaning from their public art encounters. Key strategies identified included visual description (e.g. through the naming of parts), reflections on artwork's materiality and the bringing in of intertextual readings. This examination has also shown how difficult this process of verbalisation and translation from visual and embodied experience to spoken 'arts talk' can be.

Situating my chapter discussion at an intersection between museological models of artwork audiencing (introduced in my literature review in Chapter Two and referenced again in this chapter) and learning drawn from previous public art research, I have demonstrated how the quality of the audience-artwork experience is bounded by the specific temporality, environmental and social conditions of the encounter and the visual and material properties or 'potentialities' of the artwork within its spatial setting. These outer features of what we might now recognise as an interpretive encounter are held in hermeneutic balance with the inner knowledges and personal interests of individual audience members. Within my participant group, it was evidenced that art knowledge but perhaps more so local (place-based) knowledge held special influence within the public art meaning-making generated in the walking interviews. Institutionally-produced interpretive resources, from simple artwork titles provided on-site (or recalled) and longer written texts were also shown to play an important dialogic role, sometimes being a source of affirmation but also on occasion generating a level of interpretive resistance from my participants. It was demonstrated that, while the artworks visited were generally well embedded within the recent history of the Newcastle-Gateshead cityscape (*Halo* being one of the few newly installed artworks visited) and few were obviously controversial works (in either their form or content, at least in the present day), some artworks still proved contentious for some of my participant audience.

In the final part of this chapter, the insights gained through my analysis of the walking interviews were matched against theoretical understandings of the aesthetic encounter to posit a model of artwork audiencing that is more nuanced to the peculiarities of the public art context. As summarised in Fig.7.14, this argues that the potential for audience public art meaning-making is contingent on the balance and tensions between three factors: the physical and representational potentialities of the artwork; audience' prior contextual information or domain knowledges (and perhaps their abilities to make intertextual connections beyond these); and the specific 'in the moment' contexts of the artwork encounter itself. Building on Bitgood's concept of the relationship between attention giving and value, the model suggests that it is only in the successful coming together of these factors that a full level of interpretive engagement with public art can be achieved. While this model goes some way to explaining the structure of public art meaning-making, my analysis also suggested that, in the context of public art (especially when thought of as a distributed collection across a cityscape), distracted engagement (Stewart 2015), serial encounters and the multiple micro-evaluations of artworks that might be made (and potentially remade) within these also has a strong role to play within public art audiencing.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to answer the question: *What new insights are produced in applying museological understandings of 'collection' and 'interpretation' to the field of public art and what might these insights bring to scholarship and practice?*

As stated in my thesis introduction, the term 'collection' is one that has rarely been used in relation to public art in the UK. Similarly, until very recently, little attention has been paid to the collective and material legacy of public art commissioning. These gaps were also reflected within the public art literature. While there is a growing body of work examining the audience use and reception of public artworks, the dynamics of public art meaning-making and the role of institutionally-produced interpretation are subjects that have been touched on by only a few authors and academics. By bringing a discussion of museological concepts to the study of public artworks and public art practice my research begins to address this gap in knowledge within the field. In doing this, my study intersects with other scholarly and sector-based investigations into collections management, visitor studies and theoretical explorations of hermeneutics and the aesthetic experience.

Taking Newcastle-Gateshead as the principal research site in which to explore my research question, the study employed multiple qualitative methods as suggested by Rose's (2012) model of visual enquiry. The topic, themes and context for the study were set out in Chapter One. Chapter Two reviewed key museological theories and models of 'collection' and 'interpretation' and explored how far these had been examined in the context of public art. It identified the specific gaps in the literature that my study has set out to address. Chapter Three explained the methodology for the research and described the tools and processes used in my data collection and analysis. The main examination of the findings from my study was contained in four central discussion chapters. The first two of these, Chapters Four and Five, explored how a public art cityscape might be examined through museological concepts of collection. The second pair of chapters focused on questions of public art interpretive

practice, first through an analysis of institutional interpretive activity and framings (Chapter Six) while Chapter Seven explored processes of audience meaning-making.

To conclude my thesis, this final chapter now brings together the key findings from my research and highlights the contribution made and the implications of the study. It also offers a brief reflection on my research methods and ends by suggesting potential routes for future research stemming from these findings.

8.2 Key findings: research aims and objectives

This thesis examined how museological ‘collections thinking’ relates to the public art cityscape, and what this thinking can reveal and suggest for the material and cultural futures of sited public artworks. It has highlighted both commonalities and contrasts between museum-based and in-situ city collections, most notably in matters of collection care, interpretive practices and attitudes to ongoing audience engagement. Importantly, thinking through this ‘collection’ framing has generated fresh insights into the character of public art production in Newcastle-Gateshead, and into processes of public art valorisation and meaning-making, from both institutional and audience perspectives.

In forming these discussions, this research study was guided by five aims and accompanying sets of objectives, as introduced in Chapter One. The following sections set out the key findings of my research in relation to the first four of these research aims. My findings in relation to Aim Five, the assessment of the potentials and limitations of a collection-based approach to public art presentation, are discussed in section five of this chapter.

8.2.1 Aim One: Explore how museological theories and concepts of collection and interpretation relate to the situated context of public art.

The first aim of the research was to examine understandings of ‘collection’ and ‘interpretation’ as they are presented in the museological literature and to explore their relevance and potential applicability for public art. My review of the literature (as discussed in Chapter Two) showed that neither concept had previously been examined in any great depth within a public art context. While it is agreed that public art constitutes a recognised category or genre of art practice (Decker 2008) and thus can be considered as a collectible entity, at least on a theoretical level, where previous authors (e.g. Senie 2008) have touched on the issue of public art as collection this has mainly been to highlight oppositions between these concepts. Some of these oppositions to the ‘musealisation’ of public artworks were also reflected in the views of public art curators and programme managers I interviewed in Newcastle-Gateshead. Whilst recognising core differences, e.g. between the in-situ character of public artworks and the ex-situ nature of museological collections and the very different focus on object and audience within public art and museological practice, my own (re-)evaluation of the relevance of museological thinking to public art has been more productive, leading to several new avenues of discussion.

In particular, Pearce’s framing concept of the collection as both a temporal and spatial entity proved a useful framework for the discussion of my research findings in Chapters Four and Five. Seen through these twin lenses, a new examination was opened around the changing and relative valorisation of public artworks. Here, so-called ‘permanent’ public art was shown to be essentially time-vulnerable, both in terms of its materiality and in the changing relationships between artwork and site and the instability of valorisation and meaning-making that might be engendered between them. This led on to a discussion (towards the end of Chapter Four) on presumptions of permanence versus the processual nature of artworks situated within the public realm. This latter issue marked clear conditions of difference between the vulnerability of in-situ public art and the ex-situ, conserved and cared for qualities of museum collections.

In taking up Pearce's thinking on the spatial nature of collections, discussion in Chapter Five focused on the lateral relationships between different public artworks within the Newcastle-Gateshead cityscape. This was where my work most significantly offers an extension to previous public art research which has, to a large extent, focused on single artwork case studies. In the UK, only a few projects, including Willet's ground-breaking work on Liverpool (Willet 1967) and AMH's street surveys in Milton Keynes (2006), have sought to explore public artworks (and their audiencing) on a truly city-wide level. I started Chapter Five by first setting out an analysis of the varied topography and typology of Newcastle-Gateshead's public art 'collection', suggesting ways in which the morphology of site, setting and the artwork's materiality and imagery impact on audience experience. In providing a speculative typology of the city's public art authorships, this chapter suggested alternative routes for the comparative valorisation of public artworks beyond their essential relation to geographically rooted notions of place. In part this element of my analysis also posits a reassessment of the position of authorship (and anonymity) in public art practice, as commented on by MacNeill (2012). This draws public artworks into a more art collection-like framing, where (as demonstrated in my exploration of museological measures of significance in Chapter Two, section 2.4.2), questions of artistic provenance and originality and object rarity are prioritised.

As with the concept of collection, the question of public art 'interpretation' (in terms of institutional practice) is a topic that has been rarely explored within the public art literature. Issues around audiencing have been more fully examined, but often more in relation to the analysis of the ergonomic uses and social evaluation of specific artworks than in terms of meaning-making processes. The question of lateral and serial practices of audience meaning-making across a collection of public artworks has not previously been explored: a specific point of contribution made by my own study to this field. (My findings on the topic of audiencing are summarised separately under Aim Four.)

My review of the museological literature identified two formative concepts that were carried forward as themes for my analysis of public art interpretation. The first was the theory of interpretive framing, given currency in the museological field by

Whitehead (2012) but drawn by him from wider frame theory (as initiated by Goffman 1974). This concept was used as the foundation for my analysis of interpretive resources in Chapter Six (summarised under Aim Three). The second key concept drawn from the museological literature was that of the hermeneutic circle or 'spiral' (Landa 2004) which formalises interpretation as an iterative, and ideally, a developmental dialogue between viewer and artwork. This was used to inform the discussion of my findings on public art audiencing (Aim Four) in Chapter Seven. This part of my discussion also drew on three models of the interpretive encounter that have proved influential in the museum field and which had import for my analysis of the audience encounter with public art in Newcastle-Gateshead. These were: Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's formulation of aesthetic experience (1990); Falk and Dierking's 'Contextual Model of Learning' (1992, updated 2013) ; and Bitgood's 'Attention-Value' model (2013) of museum audiencing. The relevance and suggested amendment of these models for the public art field were discussed in Chapter Seven and are reviewed under Aim Four. Together, these discussions present a new contribution to the research literatures by suggesting a fusion between museological theory and public art practice, specifically in relation to understandings of non-museum-based collections and the dynamics of the audience interpretive encounter as enacted within the public realm.

8.2.2 Aim Two: Examine and characterise the public art cityscape of Newcastle-Gateshead as a form of 'collection'?

To date, public and to a large extent academic discussion of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art cityscape has been dominated by the presence of *The Angel of the North*. However, as my own and earlier surveys (e.g. by the Public Sculpture and Monuments Association in the late 1990s) have shown, *The Angel* sits in a wider and eclectic public art terrain, which both pre-dates and post-dates Gormley's work. To enable a contemporary characterisation of this public art cityscape as a 'collection' to be developed, an important first move for my project was to construct an up to date survey that would indicate the size, distribution and diversity of current public art holdings in Newcastle-Gateshead. Encompassing all forms of permanent public art production (not just sculpture), my survey was considerable broader than the PMSA study (Usherwood et al. 2000). It was also unique in that it brought together a fragmented set of commissioner-produced sources and artwork listings into one

holistic resource. By cutting across art form divisions and institutional boundaries, this allowed me to generate a thorough and complex characterisation of the public art collection in Newcastle-Gateshead that is more than just a sum of its individual parts.

As discussed in Chapter Five, my research database listed 240 public artworks sited in Newcastle-Gateshead between 1960-2014, 220 of which were still in-situ at the time of my study (c.2015). This represents a sizable accumulation of public artworks that is at least equivalent to the scale of public art collections in other UK cities, including Cardiff and Milton Keynes. Analysis of my database and of my own fieldwork showed that the Newcastle-Gateshead collection was representative of a broad typology of contemporary (permanent) public art practice, dominated (as in many other UK cities) by a preponderance of sculpture and mural-based forms. Artworks integrated within architecture and the built urban realm made up around a quarter of the public artworks encountered. Viewing this collection of artworks holistically, it was possible to see that as well as having site-specific characteristics in terms of its geography and representations (as discussed in Chapter Five), in its forms and materiality, the city's public art collection is also reflective of wider shifts and trends in late 20th and early 21st Century UK public art practice of this type. Further, this study found that at certain periods within this history, Newcastle-Gateshead has been a leader and innovator in the public art field. In revisiting questions of artistic authorship, my investigations also showed that the city's public art collection has a distinctive profile of locally-based production, with at least 40% of commissioned artists having professional, educational or personal links with the city. In this characterisation, my findings broadly support Gee's (2017) positioning of Newcastle-Gateshead within a shared narrative of late 20th Century Northern English cultural production, i.e. one supported through diverse forms of artistic activity and economy situated firmly beyond a London-centric and gallery-focused art world.

In my exploration of the literature, and through the historical and typological investigations presented in Chapters Four and Five, I argued that there are grounds for thinking of Newcastle-Gateshead's accumulation and current array of public artworks as a 'collection', or at least as a 'collection of collections', built up through the activities of separate commissioning institutions and time-limited programmes.

This is more of an aberrant and distributed collection than might be encountered within a museum context. Further, from my interviews with institutional commissioning bodies, it was clear that this is a public art collection more in a retrospect than in intention. In Pearce's words, it is a collection that seems to have 'crept up on' the city rather than one that has been consciously planned. Although I have used the term 'public art collection' across my thesis discussion, we might now conclude that as currently constituted, this should be more accurately described as a 'proto'-collection: or a collection yet to be realised by its institutional owners and managers.

8.2.3 Aim Three: Investigate institutional public art interpretation practice in Newcastle-Gateshead.

The examination of institutional interpretive practice (presented in Chapter Six) focused on my critical analysis of a range of public art interpretive materials (object labels, explanatory panels, and curator-led tours) all of which have a parallel presence within art museum collections. While basic formats for interpretation are similar across the two domains, my visual survey and the interviews with public art programme managers in the city showed that there was less ongoing institutional investment in and commitment to public art interpretation than might be expected in a museum collection environment.

Apart from materials focused on *The Angel of the North*, in terms of print and online resources, public art interpretation was relatively short-form in content and some was more informational than interpretive. Interpretive materials were often out of date and once written, were rarely revisited. Some on-site resources had clearly out-worn their practical usability. As discussed in my interviews with public art programme managers, this is an obvious outcome of the project-by-project process through which most public art is produced, but also stems from an ambivalence about the value of interpretation. Among these interviewees there was a strong feeling that public artworks could and should be left to 'speak for themselves'. This lack of a vigorous and sustained interpretive strategy also stems from the different approach to audience and production within this sector. Where contemporary museums are increasingly focused on the visitor experience, ongoing audiencing of commissioned

public artworks was, at best, of secondary concern for the public art programme managers interviewed in my study. Gateshead Council was the only one of the three major city commissioning institutions examined in my study to actively facilitate opportunities for audience engagement with public artworks post-installation. With the exclusion of Gateshead, my findings broadly agree with Senie's (2008) observation that the public art sector is relatively unengaged with audience.

Close textual analysis of public art interpretive materials in current circulation in the city (in Chapter Six, section 6.3) revealed that these resources utilised multiple and often overlapping framings for introducing these artworks to audiences. Drawing both on Whitehead's mapping of art museum framings and on direct readings of my data, I identified four main sets of interpretive framings within these materials: object-based; artist-based; process-based; and locational framings. Definitions of these different framings were set out in Table 6.1. As in Whitehead's explorations of art museum interpretation, product-based (or in my study object- and artist-based) framings were the most consistently used. Intentionality, either of the artist or the commissioner, was a key frame of reference within these materials. Locational or place-based narratives which sought to embed the artworks within the historical and cultural locale of the city were strongly emphasised across the range of resources. My findings showed that despite the priority given in these materials to artistic intention, creativity and skills, there was very little content that sought to make connections between their work in Newcastle-Gateshead and the artist's wider output. Similarly, although many resources grouped artworks together in suggested walking routes, no other lateral connections beyond geographic proximity and walkability were made between them in terms of thematic content or their histories and processes of production.

This strongly place-based discourse was reflective of the way the public art audience was envisaged by artwork commissioners. In my interviews with programme managers, beyond a notation of audience as a broad 'public', 'residents' or public transport users, there was no more fine-grained conceptualisation of who the envisaged audience for these resources (and these public artworks) might be. Beyond an isolated project of on-site labelling for blind users (along Newcastle Quayside) it was noticeable that there were no resources, in current circulation at

least, that were aimed at more specific audience groupings: children, young people, or non-English-speakers, for example.

It can also be observed that even though these resources were produced by artwork commissioners (or those working closely with them), little was given away in these materials about the commissioning and design selection processes through which these artworks have been produced. To use museological terminology (Meszaros 2007), the authors of these interpretive materials seem reluctant to share much of their public art 'domain knowledge' with their readers. We might speculate that there may be some wariness among producers of these materials about opening-up the public art commissioning process, especially around matters of artists' selection and the mechanics of project funding, to public scrutiny. Dominated by short-form content (as evidenced in the sample materials discussed), it could also be argued that there is little practical space in which to offer more expansive or in-depth explanations of these artworks, sufficient to stimulate a more fully interpretive (or hermeneutic) dialogue between writer and reader. However, the availability of multidimensional online material surrounding *The Angel* would suggest that this is not an insurmountable problem (given the opportunity of digital space) if the artwork is valorised as sufficiently worthy of audience attention and interest.

Having surveyed the forms of public art interpretive resources and investigated them at a textual level, I went on (Chapter Six, section 6.4.2) to speculate on the role such materials might play in public art audiencing. Bearing in mind the reservations just outlined around the hermeneutic opportunity these might afford, I posited that the use of interpretive resources might signal a shift in audience attention from the peripheral and distracted level of the everyday encounter to something that is more akin to a visitor-mode experience. In doing so, I offer an evaluation of the public art cityscape and its audiencing that broadly concurs with museological understandings around the role of attention, knowledge and value in audience meaning-making. Although as examined in Chapter Seven and reviewed in the next section, my research showed that interpretive encounters with public artworks operate quite differently in some respects.

8.2.4 Aim Four: *Explore the way in which Newcastle-Gateshead's public art collection is encountered by its public audiences.*

My discussion of public art audiencing in Chapter Seven contributes new understanding of the dynamics of public art meaning-making, and especially how 'arts talk' (Conner 2013) is engendered in a public realm context. My analysis of 'public art talk' showed that residents of Newcastle-Gateshead and its immediate area (as represented by my walking interview participants) had disparate and on occasion, quite strong, personal relationships (positive and negative) with public artworks in the city. These relationships and experiences had been built up over time, and in some cases a lifetime, of casual encounters enacted through their everyday use of the cityspace. From these experiences, individuals held their own memory maps of the city's public art collection. These formed the basis for their future encounters and for the meaning-making enacted within the walking interviews.

In examining my interviewees' 'public art talk', it was obvious that there were different levels of interpretive fluency or visual literacy represented within my participant group. Although all the participants had volunteered themselves as having a familiarity and knowledge of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art landscape, for most these public art objects had not before been put under such focus. While participants had a visual familiarity with many of the artworks visited, they had not necessarily verbalized or voiced their responses to them before the interview. Here, my findings reflected Hooper-Greenhill's observations (2000a) that sensory visual art experiences can often be difficult to articulate verbally. While several of my more vocal interviewees (e.g. Ian) were happy to offer visual descriptions and to invent their own connections, in other cases (e.g. Eddie), participants' confidence in voicing their own responses and interpretations seemed to be blocked by an insistence on understanding the artistic intentions 'behind' the artwork. For others, (e.g. Frank), having access to this inside knowledge (through interpretive resources), was enriching of the artwork experience but not essential to his own meaning-making activity.

As with museological models of audiencing, contextual knowledge played an important role in public art meaning-making among my participant group. Personally-held local knowledge, and to a lesser extent art knowledge, were both used by my interviewees as resources for understanding and expressing their experiences of the artworks we encountered or that they recalled. As with institutional interpretation, participants were quick to see meaning in terms of the artwork's relation to place and presupposed site-specificity. In considering the actual, as oppose to the envisaged, usage of interpretive resources, my research found that on the whole, interpretive materials (including artwork titles) did act as useful hermeneutic prompts for audience meaning-making, although sometimes audience responses and readings also elided or subtly disrupted such interpretations. Where participants disagreed with descriptions or interpretations given (as in Ben's reactions to institutional interpretation of *Acceleration*), these materials became stimulus for active dispute. In this respect, my findings broadly correlate with earlier research (e.g. by Franck 2015; and Zebracki 2016) that locates public art audiencing as an agonistic activity, although here in Newcastle-Gateshead perhaps one that is less 'ardent' than reported on in previous (and more contentious) public art case studies.

In the second part of the discussion in Chapter Seven, I further developed the idea (introduced in relation to the role of interpretive resources in Chapter Six) that there are two distinct modes of public art audiencing: 'everyday' and 'visitor' mode. Building on museological models of the aesthetic encounter and attention-giving, I suggested that in the public realm, art-based meaning-making is held in tension between three key factors: the physical and visual potentialities of the artwork; already held audience domain knowledges; and the 'in the moment' socio-temporal and environmental factors of the encounter. While full interpretive engagement may be dependent on the successful coming together of these factors, from the evidence presented in my walking interviews, I also suggested that distracted 'everyday' engagement may be as an important factor as sustained engagement in building a public art experience over time. My research also highlighted the essentially mobile nature of public art audiencing and the way in which audiences are stimulated, as Whybrow (2011) has suggested, to act as cross-pollinators between the disparate artworks that they encounter within the cityscape.

8.3 Reflections on methodology

In Chapter Three, I explained how this research study was undertaken within the broad framework of a visual enquiry. This methodology has allowed me to deliver a multi-dimensional analysis of the Newcastle-Gateshead public art cityscape as a site of production for and the audiencing of a public art 'collection'. Thus, the focus of discussion presented in this thesis moves from: (1) an examination of the temporal process of accumulation of a public art 'collection' within the city (Chapter Four) to: (2) an analysis of this collection's constituent artworks, their spatial distribution and settings of display (Chapter Five); (3) an investigation of the institutional interpretive presentation of these artworks' (Chapter Six), and lastly; (4) to an exploration of their actual audiencing within the cityscape (Chapter Seven). In choosing to examine and follow public art practice through these different conceptual 'sites' and modalities (Rose 2012), I have used an assembly of methods, theory and approaches drawn from several different academic disciplines.

To be more specific, the narrative of public art development in the city presented in Chapter Four and my discussion of artistic authorship in Chapter Five (section 5.4), draws on traditions of art historical analysis, while my exploration of public artworks as a sited and in-situ collection (in Chapter Five) comprises a blend of spatial and taxonomic analysis that is more familiar within cultural geography and museological discussions. In Chapter Six, I presented an examination of public art interpretive framing which used tools from multimodal discourse analysis. Lastly, in my final chapter on public art audiencing, I drew substantially on data generated from ethnographically-oriented walking interviews. While some theorists (including Rose) warn that this multidisciplinary approach might be a potentially risky strategy (opening research findings and interpretation up to possibly incompatible epistemologies), for others (e.g Fox & Alldred 2017; 2015) such methods mixing is part of a pragmatic approach to social and situational research enquiry. While my study was undertaken within rigorous and recognised standards of arts and humanities research, there is a clear recognition here (and in the dynamics of research-assemblage elaborated by Fox and Alldred) that another researcher may have addressed this topic in a very different way and thus come to a different set of conclusions from those that I have presented in this thesis.

Employing multiple research methods to explore the impacts of public art practice is not a new approach, however. Where my study offers most innovation in terms of its methodology, is in my use of the walking interview as a tool for data collection. While static on-site observation and street interviewing have been employed in some previous research projects (e.g. Massey & Rose 2003; Pollock & Sharp 2012; Senie 2003; Zebracki 2015), in my review of the public art literature, I have not found any other studies that have focused on mobile methods to explore public art audiencing.

As suggested in my discussion of research methods (Chapter Three), the walking interviews devised and delivered in my study could be regarded as an outdoor place-responsive (Lynch & Mannion 2016) extension of the 'accompanied visit' form of audience research carried out in some museum-based studies (e.g. Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri 2001b). As explored in Chapter Seven, these walking interviews proved to be an effective way of eliciting narratives, both of live (in-interview) audiencing experiences and participants' reflections on their previous everyday encounters with the artworks we visited. Combining participant observation and the generation of 'public art talk' around these artworks, the interviews provided access to a more situated and emplaced understanding of the processes employed in participants' audiencing and meaning-making than could have been elicited in interviews held off-site or post-visit. Importantly, by visiting a series of artworks rather than concentrating on one artwork or a small selection of case study examples, the walking interviews afforded the opportunity to see how individuals engaged with very different artworks and audiencing environments within the city's public art collection. In following routes that combined visits both to familiar and unfamiliar artworks, the walking interviews also enabled me to understand how these artwork encounters connected with participants' everyday use of the cityscape. Similarly, over the series of interviews, a cross-mapping was created between multiple participants' experiences of the same artworks allowing me to examine how far an artwork's potentialities (Massey & Rose 2003) might be differently perceived.

Alongside these benefits, interviewing my participants on the move within the cityscape did produce some practical challenges. Although adequate for my own play-back and transcription purposes, technically the quality of audio recordings

captured as we moved through the cityscape was not always as clear as recordings made in traditional static or desk-based interviews. Keeping participants focused on the main subject of the interview, over the full duration of the walk, was also sometimes difficult, especially where there were relatively long distances between artworks on our chosen route. Often these 'between' conversations would diverge onto other topics. Having said that, some of this more general talk did prove useful in gaining a more rounded understanding of participants' interests and past experiences and of their everyday uses of the cityscape. As shown in my discussion in Chapter Seven, these personal contexts played an essential role in participants' public art meaning-making.

In sum, I would suggest that the walking interview method does offer a potentially rich resource for public art research and one that could be usefully developed and extended into future studies. While my study specifically used walking as its form of mobility, for some public artworks and settings investigation into other mobile forms of audiencing might also be appropriate. Here, I am thinking of public artworks which have been commissioned for public transport networks, where at least some artworks are designed to be seen by through-travelling audiences as well as platform users (such as in some artworks commissioned for the Tyne and Wear Metro system and the London Underground). Extending the scope of mobile research to include the driving public could also be fruitful in relation to major road-side public artworks such as *The Angel of the North* (advertised as being seen by 90,000 drivers each day) and the equally highly visible *The Kelpies* (Andy Scott, 2013), sited beside the A9 at Falkirk in Scotland.

8.4 Limitations of the study

In taking Newcastle-Gateshead and the time-period 1960-2015 as its primary research site, this study has clear geographic and temporal boundaries. It is also focused on considering only 'permanent' and institutionally-commissioned forms of public art practice. Temporary artworks, socially-engaged projects and artist-initiated or unsanctioned forms of public art (usually described as 'street art' or 'urban art'), have not been considered or examined. As such, this thesis has not sought to

represent the full scope of 'public art' as it is practised or defined today. Nor does it consider ways in which temporary or ephemeral artworks might be brought into ideas of 'collection-hood'. These limitations do not, however, inhibit either the validity or the richness of this research. As set out in the rationale for selecting Newcastle-Gateshead as the setting for my study, this location, the timescale and range of public artworks (and the audience interactions with them), available for investigation within these boundaries, has provided a deep resource for exploring my research question and for achieving the aims and objectives of this project.

In line with my research focus on collection and interpretive practice, only certain voices have been focused on. Primarily, two groups of stakeholder voices and viewpoints are foregrounded: those of institutional public art commissioners, curators and programme managers; and those of local public art audiences. The perspectives of artists are not a specific focus in this study. While highly essential in the making of the artworks themselves, commissioned artists are usually only part-players in terms of the artwork's subsequent presentation, interpretation and audiencing. Having said this, questions of artistic intention do feature quite strongly in my examination of the processes of audience meaning-making. Artists' voices and viewpoints have also sometimes been explicitly referenced within the interpretive resources analysed in this research.

One potentially interesting voice, excluded from this present study, is the important role that the press and media play in the public awareness and interpretation of public art. While searches of media coverage did form part of my early data gathering around Newcastle-Gateshead's public artworks, these materials were not selected for detailed analysis in this study: instead my focus has been on public resources with a more formal art interpretive intent. The active influence of the media as a source of public art information (and sometimes misinformation) only emerged during the analysis stage of my audience interviews.

8.5 Implications of my study

The final and fifth aim of this study was to: ***assess the potentials and limitations of collection-based approach to public art presentation and set out the implications for scholarship, public art and collection practice.***

As discussed in my thesis introduction and literature review chapters, collections are strongly associated with questions of object valorisation and preservation and the idea that a collection is 'more than the sum of its parts' (Pearce 1992). In proposing that public artworks can be placed under a 'collection' frame, as this thesis has argued, certain implications and opportunities are intimated for public art commissioning, curatorial and management practice. Some of these implications were hinted at in my interviews with public art programme managers, reported in Chapter Five. The first, and most obvious in terms of my research, is the shift in focus towards ongoing audience engagement (as oppose to commissioning-stage engagement) that 'collection-hood' implies. As noted by Senie (2008), this shift would impose new responsibilities for public art commissioners (in terms of cultural programming, documentation and archiving) that, at least in two of the three public sector institutions focused on in my study, goes beyond their current remit and will further stretch staff and financial resources. (As my Nexus interviewee put it, the Metro system is not a 'gallery', either in architectural, curatorial or collection management terms.) One further question which might be raised is whether commissioning bodies are best-placed or the most appropriate agents for interpreting the artworks that they themselves have commissioned. What would happen if the role of public art interpretation and curation (and the development of associated audience engagement and education programming) was passed to or at least co-delivered by museum-based professionals with more specific expertise? In suggesting the potential of such partnerships, my research intimates possibilities for connection with emerging projects of the 'dispersed museum' (Bautista & Balsamo 2011; 2016; Söderqvist 2010), where museological expertise and interests are extended (digitally and physically) beyond the museum building into the off-site, mobile and distributed domains of the cityscape.

The second most obvious practical implication of 'collection-hood' is the presumed

duty of care and conservation towards the artworks themselves: the idea that public artworks should be kept as a legacy for future generations. This is problematic, both in terms of ongoing resourcing (in what is usually a project-by-project-based funding and production culture) and in terms of an urban development context. It is possible that the long-term preservation of public artworks (as proposed by Historic England's listing process) might become an obstacle to new city development. (Whether that is in itself a positive or negative outcome is of course open to debate.) This is an ironic prospect given that many public artworks are commissioned as contributions to an urban regeneration and development process. For some public art professionals, artists and audience members, the musealisation of public art as a formal collection may also detract from the serendipity of the informal and seemingly personal encounter with public art: what at least one of my interviewees referred to as the playful 'stumble-upon' nature of some public artworks.

Recognising these implications of a collection-based approach to public art commissioning and management, my findings suggest that proposed 'collection-hood' also presents new avenues for development within the public art field. As noted at several points within my thesis argument, accessioning an object into a collection is both a reflection of that object's perceived value and significance (at least from the collector's/curator's perspective) and an action which serves to increase the cultural capital of that object. Accepting that at present Newcastle-Gateshead's public artworks are at a 'proto-collection' stage, formalising these artworks (or at least a selection of them) as a collection would be step towards potential revalorisation for some of the city's more forgotten public artworks, within and beyond the small number that have achieved heritage 'listed' status.

In encouraging thinking along these lines, my study links back to earlier critical discussions on the politics of collection value initiated by Pearce. Pearce's framework of high and low collection values, set out in Fig. 2.4 (Chapter Two, section 2.4.1), invites us to consider where public artworks, and perhaps public art as a genre of artistic practice, might be placed between these values of 'masterpiece' and 'artefact'. While considering the relevance of these polarities, we might also be stimulated to ask whether artworks produced for and presented within the processual

public realm can carry the burden of (continuing) excellence required for 'masterpiece' status. Certainly, my findings encourage reflection on whether they can do this without sustained curatorial support. Having said that, my own project in this thesis has not been to place a 'value' on the Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection per se (this would need to be a collaborative and participatory process and certainly involving many other perspectives and voices rather than just my own). Instead, it argues that thinking about public art in a collection frame allows questions of value to be more critically considered. In this thesis, I have speculated on different ways in which this might be approached.

Drawing on museum collection development models proposed by Wickham, Reed, Arijis and others (introduced in Chapter Two), I have explored and in some places experimented with various criteria that might be employed to make such an assessment of value and significance (Chapter Five). One of the key arguments made in this thesis is that accessing this type of comparative analysis tool is one of the benefits of a collection-based approach to public art, allowing better and potentially more transparent decisions to be made about the deployment of resources, artwork conservation and care and potential decommissioning. Reed's (2012) schema, which proposes review from multiple geographic, stakeholder and community perspectives would, I argue, be a particularly useful type of approach for assessing the value and significance of public art, both at a collective and individual artwork level.

Additionally, I would also posit that thinking in collection terms is advantageous in helping to create a more developed concept of the cultural and public 'use value' (Keene 2005) of permanent public artworks, beyond their perceived contribution to urban regeneration and place promotion (public art's original 'exploitability' factor). Following Keene, other values that a collection approach might help one to consider include: educational value (learning about contemporary art practice, city history and local heritage); research value (as an in-situ archive / storage collection); identity work and personal pleasure (both being audiencing aspects of public art that were evidenced in my Newcastle-Gateshead walking interviews). As within the museum sector, Keene's suggestions have real implications for public art commissioners in

terms of their duty of care for their collections. Following Keene's argument, this is not just about the material preservation of commissioned public artworks but also implies a responsibility to extend and develop (or at least to maintain) their 'use value'. As Senie has suggested, for some commissioning bodies, such responsibility would represent a significant extension of current institutional remits and perceptions of what public art commissioning practice entails.

In highlighting correspondences between museological and public realm processes of audiencing and interpretation, it is suggested that my findings could also inspire new collaborations and partnerships between public art managers, museum sector professionals and local interest groups (e.g. heritage and cultural volunteers) to develop cross-institution and participatory strategies for public art interpretation, archiving and exhibition making. In that sense, my findings are of relevance to museum curators with broader interests in the character of regional art collections and specifically in a collection's relationship to city and place. Additionally, my findings could also hold interest for researchers working within the visitor studies field who are concerned with exploring the notion and role of 'distracted engagement' within the museum environment or who are working to better understand the dynamics of audience 'arts talk' within this context.

8.6 Suggestions for future research

I close this thesis by highlighting several potential areas for future research that have been identified through this study. Some of these arise from limitations in the scope of the current investigation while others stem from new insights gained through the research itself or from external developments in the field that emerged over the timescale of my project.

As this study has shown, my investigation into public art collection-hood in Newcastle-Gateshead has been in relation to what can be understood as a 'proto-collection', rather than a collection that is been more fully realised in a curatorial or

management sense. While my research was informed by visits made to more acknowledged public art collections (e.g. in Milton Keynes and Folkestone), direct comparisons between Newcastle-Gateshead and these other public art histories and strategies for collection development and interpretation were not specifically sought within this study. To further develop understandings of the nature, potential advantages and indeed disadvantages of collection-hood to public art's afterlives, case study research with a range of more established public art collections in the UK, and perhaps also internationally, would be necessary.

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, until my own study the subject of institutional interpretive practice is not one that has been much examined in the public art field. My research thus represents a unique contribution in this area and an initial investigation which requires further critical development. From the survey of institutionally-produced public art interpretation in Newcastle-Gateshead undertaken during my study (and as reported on in Chapter Six), it was clear that some of the city's interpretive resource (especially that provided on-site) was reaching, or had already reached the limits of its practical usability. This would seem to offer a good opportunity for some useful action research to refresh and reinvest the city's public art interpretation provision. Furthering this through a collaborative practice-led research project, bringing in the different expertise and interests of public art managers, local city museum curators, art interpretation specialists and some of the city's commissioned artists, could create a valuable test site for bridging the disciplinary gap seemingly present between museum collections and public art practice. Beyond a review of interpretive framings and the development of new textual content, such research might also expand the scope of existing interpretation to include experimentation with mobile digital platforms, new live activity or spatial reinterpretation e.g. through temporary relocations and artistic re-presentation, which (as noted in my literature review in Chapter Two) have emerged elsewhere as potential afterlife strategies for permanent public artworks.

A second potential area for collaborative action research lies in further exploration of the question, opened-up in this study, into the use and suitability of 'collections thinking' tools in assessing the continuing value and significance of public artworks.

Again, partnership working with a mixed stakeholder group made up of experienced museum collections managers, public art professionals, art historians and audience members to trial the assessment criteria modelled in Chapter Five could be a revealing future route to take with my research. Linking up with historic environment professionals involved in Historic England's public art listing programme, this could potentially feed into future and more open public discussion and decision making on issues around public artwork conservation and decommissioning both within Newcastle-Gateshead and other city public art 'collections'.

While I have presented these possibilities as research which engages specifically with practice, the findings from my study also suggest opportunities for furthering more theoretical and methodological interests. One of these, already noted in the introduction to this thesis, is the way in which heritage thinking might provide an alternative paradigm for understanding public art's potential for collection-hood. Historic England's new interest in giving 'listed' status to some post-war public artworks certainly indicates that the future of permanent public artworks may now be shifting from a 'contemporary art' to a 'heritage' framing. As indicated by Harrison (2013), exploring this emerging trend towards the 'heritagisation' of public artworks would offer an interesting alternative trajectory to my research especially in relation to furthering discussions around public art's audiencing and its 'visitability' as a cultural experience (*ibid*: 84). Moving my research in rather a different direction, the suggestions made (in Chapter Seven) on the role of 'distracted engagement' in the serial experience of everyday public art audiencing, also offer an intriguing avenue for further investigation. Not so far substantially explored in my own study or in other academic research, this perspective is one that could add significantly to the new body of work on understandings of everyday cultural participation, e.g. as explored in the 2012-17 'Understanding Everyday Participation' (UEP) research project (as recently reported on by Miles & Gibson 2016; 2017).

As already indicated in my reflections on the methodology of this study (in section 8.3), my own introduction of the mobile walking interview as a methodological tool for public art research is one that could be more fully explored. This is a method which also represents useful linkage with UEP's interests in exploring the role of mundanity

and routine in everyday cultural life. In furthering my own research in Newcastle-Gateshead and in building on newly published literature on the impact of identity (gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.) on public art meaning-making (Zebracki 2016; Zebracki & Palmer 2018), an obvious step would be to extend the walking interview series to a broader mix of participants than the primarily White-British, adult and long-term local resident grouping who engaged with this present study. Working with research participants who have less awareness of North-East heritage (especially in terms of authorised narratives) and a different sense of ownership of the cityscape and its histories (perhaps young people and newer arrivals to Newcastle-Gateshead, e.g. those from minority ethnic communities) would be especially useful in testing current emphases in place-based interpretive framings.

A final new trajectory touched on within my review of the existing research on public art audiencing (set out in Chapter Two), concerns how public art engagement is remediated through digital space (see Gressel 2013; M. Zebracki 2016). Pilot research carried out in the early stages of my PhD in relation to audience engagement with public artworks on the photo-sharing site Flickr (a cultural platform which has been the subject of several museum-based research studies) and on Twitter (specifically in relation to the mobile audiencing of *The Angel of the North*) indicated that there was potential for further investigation in this area. While there was not sufficient space to develop this investigation fully during this current study, the scope for digital remediation and circulation of public artworks is an aspect of public art's afterlives that I would certainly like to revisit in future research.

Lastly, and building on the suggestions already made, I would like to end by making a more general call for enhanced relationships between researchers working in the public art, museological and heritage studies fields. Based on the insights gained through my own study, it is reasonable to suggest that combining knowledge and expertise from these fields adds a fruitful new dimension to the existing interdisciplinarity of public art research, especially in considering the realities of public art's material and cultural afterlives as they enter a potentially heritagised future.

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Appendix A. Newcastle-Gateshead public art collection (1960-2015) database.

ARTWORK TITLE	ARTIST NAME 1	ARTIST NAME 2	DATE	LOCATION	LOCATION 2	LOCATION 3	LOCATION 4	COMMISSIONER/CUSTODIAN	PROGRAMME	ARTWORK TYPE
Spiral Nebula	Geoffrey Clarke		1962	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Newcastle University/H	Newcastle University		sculpture
Untitled	Victor Pasmore		1963	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Civic Centre	Newcastle City Council	Newcastle Civic Centre	mural/relief
River God Tyne	David Wynne		1968	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Civic Centre	Newcastle City Council	Newcastle Civic Centre	sculpture
Swans in Flight	J.R.M. Wynne		1968	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Civic Centre	Newcastle City Council	Newcastle Civic Centre	sculpture
Seashore Heads	J.R.M. Wynne		1968	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Civic Centre / Tower	Newcastle City Council	Newcastle Civic Centre	architectural interven
Etched Window	John Hutton		1968	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Civic Centre	Newcastle City Council	Newcastle Civic Centre	architectural interven
Articulated Opposites	Raymond Arnatt		1969	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Swan House Roundab	Newcastle City Council		sculpture
Screens and Flameau	Charles Sandbury		1969	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Civic Centre	Newcastle City Council	Newcastle Civic Centre	architectural interven
Newcastle Through the Ages	Henry Collins Joyce Pallot		1974	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	British Home Stores	British Home Stores		mural/relief
Man with Pigeons	Andre Wallace		1976	Newcastle	city centre	building/interior	Eldon Square / Hotspur	Newcastle City Council/Eldon Square		sculpture
Golden Front	Raf		1978	Newcastle	neighbourh	park/greenspace	Leazes Road	Newcastle City Council	Art on Transport	sculpture
Untitled	Austin Wright		1981	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Sandyford Road/Northu	Northumbria University (Newcastle Polytechnic)		sculpture
Abstract Murals	Simon Butler		1983	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/interior	Jesmond Metro	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Night and Day	Keith Grant		1983	Gateshead	city centre	building/interior	Gateshead Metro Stat	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Nocturnal Landscape	Keith Grant		1983	Gateshead	city centre	building/interior	Gateshead Metro Stat	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Parson's Polygon	David Hamilton		1985	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Blackett Street / Blacket	Nexus	Art on Transport	sculpture
Buttle Bank	Richard Hains		1986	Gateshead	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Riverside Sculpture Pa	Gateshead Council	Riverside Sculpture Park	sculpture
Sports Day	Mike Winstone		1986	Gateshead	city centre	streetscape	Gateshead Interchange	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Windy Nook	Richard Cole		1986	Gateshead	neighbourh	park/greenspace	Whitehill Drive/High He	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Victorian Baker's Shop	Neil Talbot		1986	Gateshead	neighbourh	building/exterior	Carlisle Street/Sunderla	Gateshead Council		mural/relief
Window	Colin Rose		1986	Gateshead	neighbourh	streetscape	Rawling Road/Whickha	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Magic City	Basil Beattie		1987	Newcastle	city centre	building/interior	Manors Metro	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Derwent Walk Express	Andy Frost		1987	Gateshead	city centre	streetscape	Derwent Walk Country	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Metro Morning	Anthony Lowe		1988	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/interior	Regent Centre Metro	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Peace Sculpture	Dawn Whitworth		1990	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Charlotte Square	Northumbria Police / Newcastle City Council		sculpture
Tippling Off the World	Andrew Burton		1990	Newcastle	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Newcastle Business Pa	Newcastle Business Park	Newcastle Business Park	sculpture
Elephant under Moroccan Edifice	Andrew Burton		1990	Newcastle	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Newcastle Business Pa	Newcastle Business Park	Newcastle Business Park	sculpture
Lon	Andrew Burton		1990	Newcastle	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Newcastle Business Pa	Newcastle Business Park	Newcastle Business Park	sculpture
Uniford	Lloyd Lloyd		1990	Newcastle	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Newcastle Business Pa	Newcastle Business Park	Newcastle Business Park	sculpture
Things Made	Jenny Cownen		1990	Gateshead	neighbourh	building/exterior	Heworth Metro Station	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Untitled	David McMillan		1990	Newcastle	river/Quay	urban square	Newcastle Business Pa	Newcastle Business Park	Newcastle Business Park	sculpture
Rolling Moon	Colin Rose		1990	Gateshead	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Riverside Sculpture Pa	Gateshead Council	Riverside Sculpture Park	sculpture
Spheres	Richard Cole		1990	Newcastle	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Newcastle Business Pa	Newcastle Business Park	Newcastle Business Park	sculpture
Cone	Andy Goldsworthy		1990	Gateshead	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Riverside Sculpture Pa	Gateshead Council	Riverside Sculpture Park	sculpture
Untitled Painted Bridges	Jenny Moncur		1990	Gateshead	neighbourh	streetscape	Stalhes South Bank	Gateshead Council	Stalhes South Bank Festival	mural/relief
Gas Works Wall	Jenny Moncur		1990	Gateshead	neighbourh	streetscape	Stalhes South Bank	Gateshead Council		mural/relief
South Tyne Eye Plan	Mike Clay		1990	Gateshead	neighbourh	building/interior	Heworth Metro Station	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Black Rhinoceros	Christine Hill		1991	Newcastle	city centre	park/greenspace	Hancock Museum	Time and Wear Archives and Museums		sculpture
Small Animals	Tim Hill		1991	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Corporation St	Evening Chronicle/Newcastle City Council	Time International (1990)	sculpture
Wor Jackie	Susanna Robinson		1991	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Corporation St	Evening Chronicle/Newcastle City Council		sculpture
The Family	Gordon Young		1991	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Civic Centre	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Flat Fish	Piper James Turner		1991	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	University of Northumb	Northumbria University (Newcastle Polytechnic)		sculpture
Once Upon a Time	Richard Deacon		1992	Gateshead	river/Quay	building/exterior	Riverside Sculpture Pa	Gateshead Council	Riverside Sculpture Park	sculpture
Goats	Sally Matthews		1992	Gateshead	river/Quay	park/greenspace	Riverside Sculpture Pa	Gateshead Council	Riverside Sculpture Park	sculpture
Bookstack	Fred Watson		1992	Newcastle	city centre	park/greenspace	Northumbria University	Northumbria University (Newcastle Polytechnic)		sculpture
Brought to Light	Sarah Richardson		1992	Gateshead	neighbourh	building/exterior	Crawcrook Library	Gateshead Council		architectural interven
Cockerei and Sun Stile	Chris Sell		1993	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Fossilised Insect	Gilbert Ward		1994	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth/Beamish	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Carved Seats	Chris Sell		1994	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth/Beamish	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Boy with Wet Feet	Edwick		1994	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth/Beamish	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Phoenix Cobble	Maggie Howarth		1994	Gateshead	neighbourh	streetscape	Old Redough Bridge Vie	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Untitled Way-marker	Gilbert Ward		1995	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth/Hedley Hi	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Sign Post	Matthew Jarrott		1995	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth/A6076	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Marker Post	Chris Sell		1995	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth/Bowes Ra	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Siren	Andre Wallace		1995	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Sa	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Marker Post	Chris Sell		1995	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Jackie Milburn	Tom Maley		1996	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Strawberry Place/Newc	Newcastle United Football Club		sculpture
Sign Post	Chris Sell		1996	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth / Beamish	Great North Forest	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
West Wind	Laurent Keynes		1996	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
River God	Andre Wallace		1996	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Sa	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	East Quayside	sculpture
Metroland	Simon Pym		1996	Newcastle	neighbourh	park/greenspace	Benwell/Hodgkin Park	Newcastle City Council	West End Regeneration	furniture/signage
Paradise, Oasis / Lovers' Gates	William Pym		1996	Newcastle	neighbourh	park/greenspace	Benwell/Hodgkin Park	Newcastle City Council	West End Regeneration	furniture/signage
Metroland's Arbour / Nine Lives	William Pym		1996	Newcastle	neighbourh	park/greenspace	Benwell/Hodgkin Park	Newcastle City Council	West End Regeneration	furniture/signage
Column and Steps	Andrew Burton		1996	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Kd	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	East Quayside	sculpture
Rudder	Andrew Burton		1996	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Kd	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	East Quayside	sculpture
Decorative Glasswork	Watkinson		1996	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Kd	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	East Quayside	architectural interven
Famous Faces	Bob Olley		1996	Newcastle	city centre	building/interior	Monument Metro	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural
Viewing Platform	Maurice O'Connell		1996	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	hillside east of Angel Vi	Gateshead Council	Four Seasons Project	sculpture
Keelrow	Neil Talbot		1996	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Sa	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	East Quayside	mural/relief
River Tyne	Neil Talbot		1996	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Sa	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	East Quayside	mural/relief
Circling Partidges	Graciela Alinsworth		1996	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Sandgate Steps	Alan Dawson		1996	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Sa	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	Art on the Riverside	furniture/signage
Floating Rocks	Colin Rose		1996	Gateshead	neighbourh	park/greenspace	Watergate Forest Park	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Komatsu Ceramic Mural	Christine Constant		1996	Gateshead	city centre	building/interior	Gateshead Library/Gate	Gateshead Council		mural/relief
Bridge	Laurent Keynes		1996	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Washingwells Wood	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Blacksmiths' Needle	British Artist Blacksmiths Association		1996	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside/Sa	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	East Quayside	sculpture
Sadling	William Pym		1997	Newcastle	neighbourh	park/greenspace	Benwell/Hodgkin Park	Newcastle City Council	West End Regeneration	sculpture
Stones Garden	Alberto Carneiro		1997	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	nr Derwent Walk	Gateshead Council	1996 Year of Visual Arts	sculpture
Axiom	Furda		1997	Gateshead	river/Quay	park/greenspace	nr Dunston Stalhes	Gateshead Council	Riverside Sculpture Park	sculpture
Untitled (The Benwell Bird)	William Pym		1997	Newcastle	neighbourh	streetscape	Benwell/Colston Street	Newcastle City Council		sculpture
Swire Pavilion	Raf		1998	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Newcastle Quayside	Time and Wear Dev Corp/Newc	East Quayside	sculpture
Angel of the North	Anthony Gormley		1998	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	A167 / A1	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Herads	Ray Smith		1999	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Northumberland Street	Newcastle City Council		sculpture
Journey's Echo	Ellnor Eastwood		1999	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/interior	Longbenton Metro	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Confluence	Sue Woodhouse		1999	Newcastle	river/Quay	streetscape	Manners Wharf	Art on the Riverside	Art on the Riverside	sculpture
Sundial	Helen Law		1999	Newcastle	river/Quay	building/exterior	Quayside/Weathervane	Art on the Riverside	Quayside Weathervanes	architectural interven
Fire Sculpture	Cate Watkinson		1999	Newcastle	river/Quay	building/exterior	Cophone Hotel	Art on the Riverside	Quayside Weathervanes	architectural interven
Signage Sculpture	Helen Law		1999	Newcastle	river/Quay	building/exterior	Eldon Chambers, Quay	Art on the Riverside	Quayside Weathervanes	furniture/signage
Live Theatre Glass	Lucy Broadhead/Malcolm Smith		1999	Newcastle	river/Quay	building/interior	Live Theatre	Art on the Riverside	Art on the Riverside	architectural interven
Quayside	Edwards Pasolunzi		2000	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Central Square North	Parabola Estates Ltd	Central Square	sculpture
DNA Spiral	Charles Jencks		2000	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Times Square	International Centre for Life		sculpture
Canopy	Cate Watkinson		2000	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/exterior	Saltors Bethel	Art on the Riverside	Quayside Weathervanes	architectural interven
Stepney Bank Stable Gates	Fiona Gray		2000	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/exterior	Stepney Bank Stables	Ouseburn Art Project	Ouseburn Art Project	architectural interven
Shoulder to Shoulder	Ray Smith		2000	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Haymarket	Newcastle City Council		sculpture
Grainger Dedication	Charlie Holmes		2000	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Grainger Street	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	furniture/signage
Seats with a View	Bridget Jones		2000	Newcastle	neighbourh	park/greenspace	Cumberland Arms	Ouseburn Art Project	Ouseburn Art Project	furniture/signage
Nine things to do in a bench	Cate Watkinson		2001	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Grey Street	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	furniture/signage
Here you used and displayed?	Nic Armstrong		2001	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/interior	Grey Street	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural
Steady Eddy	Cate Watkinson		2001	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/interior	Grey Street	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural
Tag Tile	Simon Jones		2001	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/interior	Longbenton Metro	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural
Wind Vane	Richard Wood		2001	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Windmill Hills Town Pa	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Ouseburn Waymarkers	Lewis Robinson		2001	Newcastle	neighbourh	streetscape	Ouseburn Valley	Ouseburn Valley Partnership		sculpture
Circuit	Richard Cole		2001	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Monument Metro Stat	Grainger Town Partnership/Nexu	Grainger Town Project/Art on	mural/relief
The Blue Carpet	Thomas Heatherwick		2002	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Adjacent to Laing Art G	Newcastle City Council		sculpture
Reaching for the Stars	Kenneth Arncliffe		2002	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Central Square	Parabola Estates Ltd	Central Square	sculpture
Cardinal George Basil Hume Memo	Nigel Boonham		2002	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	St Mary's Cathedral	Cardinal Hume Memorial Trust/G	Grainger Town Project	sculpture
Head Cubes	Simon Watkinson		2002	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Grey's Monument	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	sculpture
Theatre Royal	Watkinson		2002	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Grey's Monument	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	architectural interven
Full Circle	Ron Haselden		2002	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Nexus House, Westgate	Grainger Town Partnership/Nexu	Art on Transport	sculpture
Wire Horses	Daniel Reed		2002	Newcastle	neighbourh	building/exterior	51 Lime Street	Ouseburn Trust		sculpture
Shields Road Square	Artiscope		2002	Newcastle	neighbourh	urban square	Shields Road, Byker	Newcastle City Council		mural/relief
New Moon Rising	Colin Wilbourn		2002	Newcastle	neighbourh	urban square	Shields Road, Byker	Newcastle City Council		sculpture
Ribbon Railings	Alan Dawson		2002	Gateshead	neighbourh	streetscape	Waterfront Business Pa	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Pub	furniture/signage
Untitled	Colin Wilbourn		2002	Newcastle	neighbourh	urban square	Waterfront Business Pa	UK Land Estates		sculpture
Diving Lamps	Artiscope		2002	Newcastle	neighbourh	urban square	Shields Road, Byker	Newcastle City Council		furniture/signage
How Long	Rupert Clamp		2003	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Grainger St/Westgate R	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	furniture/signage
Man with Potential Selves	Sean Henry		2003	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Grainger Street	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	sculpture
Grainger Town Map	Hanson		2003	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Neville Street	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	sculpture
Threshold	Lou Quinn		2003	Gateshead	city centre	streetscape	Gateshead High Street	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Pub	sculpture
Pillar Man	Nicolaus Widerberg		2004	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Northumbria University	Newcastle City Council	Hidden Rivers	sculpture
Objects of Beauty	Gilly Rodgers		2004	Newcastle	city centre	building/interior	Grainger Town Project	Newcastle City Council	Grainger Town Project/Art in	sculpture
Tyne Wave	Christine Constant		2004	Gateshead	neighbourh	building/interior	Metro Centre (red mat)	Capitol Shopping Centres Plc	Metro Centre	mural/relief
Welcome Mats (Under Your Feet)	Catherine Bertola		2004	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Grainger Street	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	furniture/signage
Grainger Town Plaques	Rupert Clamp		2004	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Grainger Street	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	furniture/signage
Opening Line	Danny Lane		2004	Gateshead	city centre	building/exterior	Gateshead Transport Ir	Nexus	Art on Transport/Town Centre	sculpture
Beacons	David Pearl		2004	Gateshead	river/Quay	streetscape	South Shore Road	Gateshead Council	Gateshead Quays Public Art	sculpture
From the Water to the Sea	David Pearl		2004	Gateshead	river/Quay	streetscape	South Shore Road	Gateshead Council	Art on Transport	sculpture
Salween Willowherb	Bridget Jones		2004	Gateshead	neighbourh	building/interior	Salween Towers/Salween	Gateshead Council		architectural interven

Blaydon Races	Dick	Ward	2004	Gateshead	neighbourhood	building/interior	Blaydon Shopping Precinct	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Put	mural
Lookout	Cate	Watkinson	2004	Gateshead	neighbourhood	building/exterior	Metro Centre	Capital Shopping Centres Plc	Metro Centre	sculpture
Ascenda	Marlin	Richman	2004	Gateshead	neighbourhood	building/exterior	Metro Centre Retail Park	Marks and Spencer plc	Gateshead Council	sculpture
Star Ceiling	Jo	Fairfax	2004	Gateshead	neighbourhood	building/interior	The Sage Gateshead	Gateshead Council	Gateshead Quays Public Art	sculpture
Ribbon of Colour	Kate	Maestri	2004	Gateshead	neighbourhood	building/exterior	The Sage Gateshead	Gateshead Council	Gateshead Quays Public Art	architectural intervention
Cummings and Gonga	Bridgeet	Jones	2004	Newcastle	city centre	building/interior	Haymarket Bus Station	Newcastle City Council		architectural intervention
Mangate	Bridgeet	Jones	2004	Gateshead	neighbourhood	building/exterior	Mangate/Team Valley	UK Land Estates		architectural intervention
Tolame	Sushella	Jamieson	2004	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Gosforth Central Park	Newcastle City Council	Parks, People and Sense of Place	sculpture
Sculpted Seat	Sushella	Jamieson	2004	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Benwell Nature Park	Newcastle City Council	Parks, People and Sense of Place	sculpture
Hedgehog & Snail	Sushella	Jamieson	2004	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Gosforth Central Park	Newcastle City Council	Parks, People and Sense of Place	sculpture
Sensory Garden Artworks	Sushella	Jamieson	2004	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Nunsmoor Park	Newcastle City Council	Parks, People and Sense of Place	sculpture
Bronza Reliefs	Sushella	Jamieson	2004	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Heaton Park	Newcastle City Council	Parks, People and Sense of Place	sculpture
Graffiti Rocks	Sushella	Jamieson	2004	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Walker Park	Newcastle City Council	Parks, People and Sense of Place	sculpture
Decorative Banners	Jill	Brewster	2004	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Walker Park	Newcastle City Council	Parks, People and Sense of Place	sculpture
Give and Take	Peter	Randall-Page	2005	Newcastle	neighbourhood	urban square	Trinity Gardens	Silverlink Holdings (Clouston Group)		sculpture
Tributary	John	Maine	2005	Newcastle	neighbourhood	streetscape	The Side	Newcastle City Council	Hidden Rivers	floodscape
Tyne Line of Text Flow	WN	Herbert	2005	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Thornton Street	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project/Hidden Rivers	floodscape
Big Market Gates	Matthew	Fedden	2005	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Big Market	Grainger Town Partnership/Com	Grainger Town Project	floodscape
Everchanging	Ellis	O'Connell	2005	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Westgate Road	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	sculpture
Chinese Arch	Yonglai	Zhang	2005	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Stowell Street	Grainger Town Partnership	Grainger Town Project	furniture/signage
Ellipsis Eclipses	Danny	Lane	2005	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	The Gate, Newgate Str	Land Securities/Grainger Town	Grainger Town Project	sculpture
Golden Angel	Emily	Young	2005	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Mangate/Team Valley	UK Land Estates		sculpture
Flowering of Lort Burn	David	Goard	2005	Gateshead	city centre	building/interior	Hopper Street	Newcastle City Council	Hidden Rivers	sculpture
Blue Subway	David	Goard	2005	Gateshead	city centre	building/interior	Barns Close	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Put	mural/relief
Orpheus Subway	John	Creed	2005	Gateshead	city centre	streetscape	opp Old Town Hall	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Put	sculpture
Acceleration	Elizabeth	Wright	2005	Gateshead	city centre	building/interior	Gateshead Metro Station	Locus+Nexus	Art on Transport	mural
Thornbird Railings	Marcela	Livingston	2005	Gateshead	neighbourhood	streetscape	Gateshead Riverside	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Put	furniture/signage
Sea Song Sings	Andy	Conley	2005	Newcastle	neighbourhood	streetscape	Ouseburn	Seven Stories		sculpture
Watermark sculptures	Danny	Clahane	2005	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Watermark/Derwenthal	City and Northern		sculpture
Counterpoise	John	Creed	2005	Gateshead	city centre	streetscape	Gateshead International	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Put	sculpture
Entrance Feature (St James Boule	Graeme	Hopper	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	urban square	St James Boulevard/Ga	Gateshead Council	East Gateshead Partnership	furniture/signage
Entrance Feature (Rose Street)	Graeme	Hopper	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	urban square	Powerside Park/Rose St	Gateshead Council	East Gateshead Partnership	furniture/signage
James Hill Monument	Peter	Coates	2006	Gateshead	city centre	streetscape	Bottle Bank	Gateshead Council	East Gateshead Partnership	sculpture
Penny Circus	Matthew	Blackman	2006	Gateshead	city centre	streetscape	St Joseph's RC Primary	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Put	mural/relief
Escapology	Cath	Campbell	2006	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Northern Stage	Northern Stage		architectural intervention
Untitled (mosaics)	Space Invader		2006	Gateshead	city centre	streetscape	Gateshead Metro Station	Baltic	off-site element of Spank the	mural/relief
Greenheart	William	Pym	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	streetscape	Watergate Forest Park	Gateshead Council		furniture/signage
Time To...	Cate	Watkinson	2006	Newcastle	neighbourhood	streetscape	Line Square, City Road	Meter/Newcastle City Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Foliage Carving	Gilbert	Ward	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Saltwell Park	Gateshead Council	Install Sculpture Trail	sculpture
This Way Up	Stephen	Newby	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Saltwell Park	Gateshead Council	Install Sculpture Trail	sculpture
The Language Stone	Gordon	Young	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Saltwell Park	Gateshead Council	Install Sculpture Trail	sculpture
Seeding	Chanel	Clahane	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Saltwell Park	Gateshead Council	Install Sculpture Trail	sculpture
Pavilion for Cultural Exchange	William	Pym	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Saltwell Park	Gateshead Council	Install Sculpture Trail	sculpture
Chrysalis	Sam	Brewster	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Saltwell Park	Gateshead Council	Install Sculpture Trail	sculpture
Juxtaposition	Hideo	Furuta	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Saltwell Park	Gateshead Council	Install Sculpture Trail	sculpture
Veritact	Cate	Watkinson	2006	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Saltwell Park	Gateshead Council	Install Sculpture Trail	sculpture
Rise and Fall	Lulu	Quinn	2007	Gateshead	neighbourhood	streetscape	Pipewellgate	Gateshead Council	Town Centre Partnership Put	sculpture
Nocturne	Nayan	Kulkarni	2007	Newcastle	neighbourhood	building/exterior	OE11 Metro Bridge	Nexus	Art on Transport	architectural intervention
Community in Motion	Dan	Savage	2007	Newcastle	city centre	building/interior	Eldon Square Bus Stati	Newcastle City Council		mural/relief
The Fire Tales	Matt	Stokes	2007	Newcastle	neighbourhood	building/exterior	Newcastle West and Ea	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue	Art at the Station	architectural intervention
Glass Bench	Cate	Watkinson	2007	Gateshead	city centre	park/greenspace	Civic Centre	Gateshead Council		furniture/signage
Journal	Nicolaus	Gray	2007	Newcastle	neighbourhood	streetscape	Warwick Street	Newcastle City Council		sculpture
Three Figures	Nicolaus	Widerberg	2008	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	UNN City Campus East	Northumbria University	UNN percent for art program	sculpture
Bishop's Ave. Elswick	Charlie	Carter	2008	Newcastle	neighbourhood	streetscape	refurbishment	Bridging Newcastle Gateshead		furniture/signage
Stanhope Street	Charlie	Carter	2008	Newcastle	neighbourhood	streetscape	Stanhope Street	Newcastle City Council		furniture/signage
Five Figures	Nicolaus	Widerberg	2008	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	UNN Elison Quadrangl	Northumbria University	UNN percent for art program	sculpture
Untitled (Over the Wall)	Barton	Hargreaves	2009	Newcastle	neighbourhood	streetscape	Northern Print	Northern Print	Northern Print Biennale	sculpture
Four Questions (Central Library w	Kathryn	Hodgkinson	2009	Newcastle	city centre	building/exterior	Central Library	Newcastle City Council		architectural intervention
Ouseburn Barrage	Michael Dan	Archer	2009	Newcastle	neighbourhood	building/exterior	Ouseburn	Newcastle City Council		architectural intervention
Rainbow Code	Adinda	van't Klooster	2009	Newcastle	neighbourhood	building/interior	Ouseburn	Newcastle City Council		architectural intervention
Canopy	Sue	Woolhouse	2009	Newcastle	neighbourhood	building/exterior	The Media Centre, Ouse	Unknown		architectural intervention
Way Markers (x5)	Jim	Roberts	2009	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Watergate Forest Park	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Oak Leaf/Acorn Seat	Jim	Roberts	2009	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Watergate Forest Park	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Out of the Darkness	Jim	Roberts	2009	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Watergate Forest Park	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Triangular Leaf Seat	Jim	Roberts	2009	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Watergate Forest Park	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Cricket	Jim	Roberts	2009	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Watergate Forest Park	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Notice Board	Jim	Roberts	2009	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Watergate Forest Park	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Canon	Lothar	Goetz	2010	Newcastle	city centre	building/interior	Haymarket Metro Stati	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural/relief
Entrance Feature	Keith	Barrett	2010	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Gateshead Riverside	Gateshead Council	Gateshead Riverside Sculpt	furniture/signage
Leaf Cone and Bell Flower	Danny	Clahane	2010	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Beech Drive and Mead	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Riverside Rivets	Andrew	McKown	2010	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Gateshead Riverside	Gateshead MBC	Gateshead Riverside Sculpt	sculpture
Foliage Forms	Gilbert	Ward	2010	Gateshead	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Gateshead Riverside	Gateshead MBC	Gateshead Riverside Sculpt	sculpture
Crowd	Graeme	Mitcheson	2010	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Harbottle Park	Unknown		sculpture
Untitled (Peacock Design)	Lisa	Johnson	2011	Gateshead	city centre	building/interior	Gateshead Transport In	Nexus	Art on Transport	mural
Sir Bobby Robson Memorial Garde	Graeme	Mitcheson	2011	Newcastle	city centre	park/greenspace	Gallowgate	Newcastle City Council	Newcastle United Football Club	sculpture
Insider Art	Red Nile		2011	Gateshead	neighbourhood	streetscape	Kibblesworth	Keelman Homes/Frank Haslam	Milan/Gateshead Council	floodscape
Secret Bunker North	Lucie	Potter	2012	Newcastle	neighbourhood	streetscape	Kenton	Newcastle City Council		furniture/signage
Generation	Joe	Hillier	2012	Newcastle	city centre	urban square	Newcastle University	ONE NorthEast		sculpture
Untitled (Ship Inn Mural)	The London Police		2012	Newcastle	neighbourhood	building/exterior	The Ship Inn, Ouseburn	The Ship Inn/Unit 44	White Walls Gallery	mural
CoMusica Graffiti Wall	?		2012	Gateshead	neighbourhood	streetscape	nr The Sage Gateshead	Unknown		mural
Yesterday, Today, Forever	Xceptional Designs		2012	Newcastle	neighbourhood	park/greenspace	Scotswood village green	Scotswood Village Residents As	Make Your Mark (NCC)	sculpture
Untitled (Ship Inn Mural)	Gaia	Red Nile	2013	Newcastle	neighbourhood	building/exterior	The Ship Inn, Ouseburn	The Ship Inn/Unit 44	White Walls Gallery	mural
End of Broadcast	Red Nile		2013	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Tyne Tees site, City Ro	Northern Developments	U-Student Property Developm	mural
Figure	Nicolaus	Widerberg	2013	Newcastle	city centre	streetscape	Northumberland Road	Northumbria University	UNN percent for art program	sculpture
Italo	Stephen	Newby	2014	Gateshead	city centre	urban square	Trinity Square	Tesco/Spennill Plc	Town Centre Partnership Put	sculpture
Steenberg's Glass	Effie	Burns	?	Newcastle	neighbourhood	building/interior	Steenberg's Building, O	Home Housing and Byker Bridge	Ouseburn Art Project	architectural intervention
Flames to Flowers	Graham	Hopper	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Tainfield Railway Path	Gateshead Council		sculpture
Bulbous Form	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Tainfield Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
I am not a knot	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Tainfield Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Giant's Feet (x2)	Felicity	Watts	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Tainfield Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Wagonway Relief	Felicity	Watts	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Tainfield Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Museum Piece	Felicity	Watts	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Tainfield Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Walk	Matthew	Jarratt	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Tainfield Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Totem Poles	Kibblesworth	Karvers	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Tainfield Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Butterfly Stone	JK	Aplin	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Burdon Moor	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Frog	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Burdon Moor	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Flower Stone	JK	Aplin	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Burdon Moor	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Carved Seat	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Burdon Moor	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
September	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Burdon Moor	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Carved Seat	Kibblesworth	Karvers	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Bowes Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Summer Seat	Keith	Barrett	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Hedley Hall Wood	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Winter Seat	Keith	Barrett	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Hedley Hall Wood	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Stone Insect (x3)	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Hedley Hall Wood	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Standing Stone	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Bowes Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Come Rain, Wind or Shine	Richard	Calkin	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Bowes Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture?
Avian Form	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Bowes Railway Path	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Burnt Wood Seat	Bruce	Tuckley	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Kibblesworth	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	furniture/signage
Reptilian Form	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Bowes Valley Nature R	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture
Foliage Form	Gilbert	Ward	?	Gateshead	countryside	park/greenspace	Lamesley Pastures	Gateshead Council	Marking the Ways	sculpture

NOTE: grey entries = decommissioned works

Appendix B. Newcastle-Gateshead public art curators and managers interview guide.

CORE TOPICS	CORE QUESTIONS	PROMPTS
1) Your role re public art in N-G. 10-15 mins.	Can you describe your involvement / role in relationship to public art in Newcastle-Gateshead?	How long have you been involved in this work (in N-G)?
	What is your official your job title?	Can you tell me a bit about your background before this job?
	Does your organisation have a formal public art policy or strategy?	If so, would you be willing to share this document with me?
	Do you have a budget for this work?	How is this work funded?
	Can you tell me about some of the public art programmes or projects you've worked on?	Recently or historically.
		Why have you offered these particular programmes/artworks as examples?
	Have these been mainly commissions or acquisitions (purchase of existing works)?	
2) Managing public artworks (10-15 mins)	Who officially owns these artworks?	
	What happens to these artworks once they have been installed / launched?	Who looks after them?
	What documentation do you keep about the artworks that you have commissioned/purchased?	e.g. commissioning process, artists, maintenance plans, condition reports, installation photos, press cuttings, etc.

	What is your approach to the issue of artwork disposal or relocation?	Do you have a policy on this?
		Can you give me an example of how you have managed this process?
3) Public art information and public engagement activity (10-15 mins)	Are these public artworks actively promoted in any way?	E.g. within your organisation's marketing material, publications, press releases, social media?
		Is there a particular time when you do this (e.g. just at launch of new work) or is this a regular activity?
IF POSSIBLE DISCUSS AN EXAMPLE	Do you provide any ongoing information about these artworks?	E.g. Onsite labels or 'interpretation boards' or off-site (print or digital) material, or publication?
		What audience(s) is this aimed at?
		How do you envisage this will be used by them?
	Can you give me an example of how you have approached public art information provision in relation to a specific artwork or commission programme?	What were/are the key messages or stories you wanted/want to communicate about these artworks?
	Have you done or commissioned any research about how public audiences respond to or engage with these artworks?	Was this formally written up? If so, would you be willing to share this document with me?
4) Public artworks and the N-G cityscape (10-15 mins)	How far is an awareness of / relationship with existing N-G artworks a consideration when commissioning or acquiring a new public artwork?	Can you give me an example of when this has been a consideration?
	What term would you use when referring to the multiple artworks that you have responsibility for?	i.e. all the artworks that you have commissioned / purchased for your organisation / location over the past ? years

Would you ever use the word 'collection' in relation to these artworks, for example?

Why would you not use this word?

What constitutes a 'collection' in your view?

In your view which are the most important or significant public artworks in the city (say 1960-present day)?

Ones that you've been involved in / or more generally.

What criteria are using in making that selection?

5) Is there anything you'd like to add?

Many thanks for taking time to talk with me today. I hope you have enjoyed talking with me about your work. Your contribution to my research project is greatly appreciated.

Appendix C. Walking interview guide.

CORE TOPICS	MAIN QUESTIONS	SECONDARY QUESTIONS	PROMPTS
1) About you	<p>What is your occupation?</p> <p>How long have you lived / worked / studied in N-G?</p> <p>How old are you?</p> <p>What sort of things do you do in your leisure time?</p>	<p>Where do you work / study?</p> <p>What sort of things are you interested in?</p>	<p>sport, arts, games, film, music, outdoor activity, history, heritage....????</p>
2) You and 'public art'?	<p>How would you describe your interest in 'public art'?</p> <p>Have you ever been on a formal guided public art walk or tour in the N-G?</p> <p>Have you read anything about public art in N-G?</p>	<p>What do you think of as 'public art'?</p> <p>Or in any other city?</p> <p>Or more generally about 'public art'?</p>	<p>e.g. 'enthusiast'? 'informed'? 'occasional visitor'? 'regular passer-by'?</p>
3) Route / selection of public artworks	<p>What public artworks would you like to visit / take me to on our walk today?</p>	<p>Can you tell me why you have chosen this route / these artworks?</p>	

On the walk

4) Responses to individual artworks	<p>How many times have you seen / visited / passed by this artwork?</p> <p>How would you describe it?</p> <p>What do you 'know' about the artwork?</p>	<p>Where did you get that information? e.g.</p>	<p>e.g. to a friend who hasn't seen it</p> <p>e.g. title, artist, history of, material,</p>
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	friend, guide book, media, internet, etc?	subject matter, commissioner?
How does it make you 'feel'?		
Is there anything that you particularly 'like' / 'dislike' about it?		
What do you think it 'conveys' or 'says'?		as an object / about the location? / the city?
Do you think this artwork 'works' well here?		in this location / space / the wider City?
Can you remember what this space looked like before it was here?		
Does it remind you of any other artworks you may have seen?		in gallery / exhibition / in N-G / or city / place?
Have you ever talked about this artwork with other people?	Can you remember what was said about it?	e.g. with friends, relatives, visitors, work colleagues



CLOSING


1) Are you happy to end our
interview at this point?


2) Do you have any questions for me? About the interview / my research project?

Many thanks for taking time to talk with me today. I hope you have enjoyed our walk and talking with me about the artworks that we have seen. Your contribution to my research project is greatly appreciated.

Appendix D. Sample pages from walking interview transcript.

Start: Outside Gateshead Metro Station	Walking interview No.8
[F uses this about 3 times a week – coming into Gateshead for shopping and to go to the new Trinity Square cinema. Occasionally uses the buses to go on day trips in the region. E.g. he recently saw ‘The Angel’ from the bus on his way to Chester-le-Street. He didn’t get off to visit it though: ‘I’ve just seen it from the window.’]	
00.01 Artwork 1: ‘Opening Line’ Gateshead Interchange	
I So you’re quite familiar with this.	
F Oh yes, I’m quite familiar.	
I And have you read about it?	
F Yes two or three times. [He’s read the interpretation poster/panel in the Interchange building.] It’s quite informative. A lot of detail about it.	
I Did you notice the work before you’d seen the panel? What drew your attention to this?	
F Well I think it was the brass plate. Rather than the newer one. The date on it. That drew attention to something artistic here. [Loud echoey noises of other people in the Interchange] You have to look round. Do like a 90 degree turn. [meaning = to either see the artwork or read the poster]. What I find with the glass it’s kind of obscured a bit. You’re looking through something. It’s not as if you can really go up close.	
I Yes and it’s got: ‘Keep off the road’, ‘Keep off the artwork’. They don’t want people to be on this road.	

F	It's a dangerous thoroughfare there. It impedes you from going up a bit closer. It's not like the park where we were [meaning = on our previous walk, Walk 5] where you can really appreciate the pieces that you're seeing.	
I	Yes we were going up and touching things. This is such a different environment to the parkland. Where things were arranged in the landscape.	
F	This is quite a busy working environment. Totally different. A dangerous environment as well. So it is quite a contrast to the Saltwell Park venue. And this of course is very long, very linear [meaning = 'Opening Line']. You can't take it all in with your eye. It must be about 500 yards long.	
I	Do you have a section of it that you know better than the rest, because that's where you wait for your particular bus?	
F	Yes for instance I know quite well – there's a reclining face, a resting face. It's very similar to the Saltwell 'resting' statue. That brings that up for me.	
I	The dark head. Here. The silhouette, with the eyes?	
F	Yes. It's nice and peaceful. And you have the wave on the left hand side. And the segment of fruit. Maybe an orange or a lemon or something like that. And a seagull. So it's all reminiscent for me of holidays and resting and relaxation. It's a nice part of the sculpture. And the contrast is appealing to me. The grey and then the white. It's a good contrast.	
I	And today, it's sunny, so we've got the light. It looks different on different days.	
F	It will. It's different on a duller day. Yes on a duller day you won't get the light coming through. It'll be a lot more uniform. It is a bit like church sculptures, with the painted glass, the monochrome work. But it still has a nice effect for me. The shadows that it casts are interesting as well. You get that bit of lacey work or scrollwork. And then further along the shapes are more reminiscent of seaside shells.	
I	The ones at the bottom?	
F	It's an unusual sculpture in being so long.	

I	And have you deliberately sort of walked along it to see it all?	
F	No. Because of the buses coming through. And the warning signs. I haven't been able to walk the entire length. But I suppose it's possible on the pedestrian side.	
I	You're in these bays.	
F	There's more obstructions and obstacles to get along. But in saying that it is an unusual sculpture. It's length. It's very unusual for Gateshead.	
I	Have you seen it from the other side? Do you always see it from this side?	
F	More often I'd see it from this side. This is where I'd be waiting to get my bus. I never really thought about going to the other side and getting a different perspective of it. I'm sure the design is the same from the other side.	
I	So the far end of it over there you haven't explored?	
F	It's always been the point I would board or get off my bus. More as a stepping off point or a stepping on. So no I haven't explored the entire sculpture.	
I	And do you normally use this exit here? [We've walked to the High Street end of the Interchange building.] What do you make of the element here at the top which is quite different? Have you noticed it? It's very sparkly today,	
F	It's the keel end of the boat. The journey.	
I	Is that how you see it?	
F	Yes I would see it as part of a journey. And these must be parts of the sail, represented by the rods. And then the glasswork and the steelwork. The different icons in the sculpture representing different parts of the journey. For the passengers who are starting or finishing their journeys at Gateshead. It's a very imaginative piece. A lot of imagination has gone into it.	
I	What do you think it does for the bus station?	
F	I think it takes away just from the functionality of the bus station. It adds an artistic appeal to it. The harsh shapes of the bus stands. It brings a bit of fun into the venue, the Interchange. And it is a very unusual place to find an art sculpture right in the	

middle of where buses are coming and going and where passengers are trying to negotiate their way around. People don't always have time to stand and look at the sculpture.	
I It's quieter today because it's 10 in the morning and it's a Bank Holiday. But there's still endless buses coming back and forth. [Very loud bus passing].	
When you see it when you are waiting here for your bus on a regular basis, do you see the same things in it or do you see different details? Or different elements at different times? Or think differently about it?	
F By in large it's the same elements and the same reminiscences that come up for me. But I guess as the seasons change maybe my own mood would be different on a different day. I would pick something up that would not be the same perhaps as the week before. I think it is open to different interpretations. But by in large because my days take on the same pattern it does bring up the same memories it sparks the same ideas for me.	
I So it's part of habit, your ritual of everyday?	
F It is, yeah.	
I Since you haven't seen it, let's see if it does look any different on this side. [Crossing over to other side of the Interchange.] The main thing is the light is different.	
F It's actually a bit duller from this side. We're not getting the light coming through. In the evening as the sun is coming round we might get a different perspective on it. But you can still make out the ship effect. It's still a really stunning piece. Compared to some of the Saltwell pieces which are really miniscule this scale is fantastic here. It's a little bit reminiscent of the Tyne Bridge in its grandure. It picks up the sailing theme. The boats. It's very much a strong theme in Gateshead and Newcastle.	
I We didn't see much of that in Saltwell. There was the bridge.	
F There was the bridge, yes. Just a token to the industrial part of Gateshead. This sculpture doesn't seem to have weathered at all. It's stayed intact. No vandalism or real weathering which is nice.	
I It looks quite fresh.	END OF SAMPLE

Appendix E. Walking interview participant consent form.

Consent Form: Walking Interviews

Newcastle University

International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies

PhD research project: *Looking beyond the 'Angel': Framing and interpreting a public art collection in Newcastle-Gateshead.*

Researcher: Rebecca Farley **Email:** r.farley@newcastle.ac.uk

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study and for sharing your interest in public art with me. The purpose of today's interview is to find out what you think and feel about the artworks that we will visit on our walk. I will also be asking you to tell me a bit about yourself and your wider interests. The purpose of this form is to tell you about my research project and to inform you about your rights as a research volunteer. Please ask any questions that you may have or that come to mind as you read the form.

Project overview: 'The Angel of the North' may be the UK's most famous public sculpture, but Newcastle-Gateshead is also home to 200 and more other permanent public artworks. Borrowing from work in the gallery, museum and heritage sector this research study asks how ideas of 'collection' and 'interpretation' may relate to public artworks commissioned in the city since 1960. Can a reconsideration of these artworks as a 'collection' offer new opportunities for curators, commissioners and audiences? This project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Confidentiality: Unless you prefer this option, your real name will not be used in any publications or presentations that report findings from the interview. Records directly identifying the names of research volunteers in this study will not be publicly accessible.

If you agree, as the interviewee, to the following statements, then please sign both copies of the consent form and retain one of these for your own records.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the outline of the research project and have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I may have about it.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the interview and the project at any time, without needing to give a reason.
- I am happy to give the researcher permission to use audio recording and photography during the interview. I understand that this recording and any photographs taken will be used for the purpose of this research project and its related academic activities or publications.
- I give the researcher permission to contact me via email/phone in the future regarding any further questions related to this research.
- I prefer my contribution to this research, including photography, to remain anonymous – YES / NO

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Research volunteer	Date	Signature
 Rebecca Farley		
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Researcher	Date	Signature