



School: Creative Industries

Researcher: Richard White

Project Title: (Dis)enchanted Walking: Walking/Multimedia Arts Practice as Interdisciplinary Research

UOA: 34 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

300-Word Statement

White's practice-as-research blends a 'walking-with' strategy (Sundberg, 2014) with digital and print media, examining how a participatory, multi-media walking-arts practice can bring 'reluctant heritage' (Tomory, 1997) into present consciousness, including how the participatory elements of social media can be harnessed during the walks to generate affective encounters towards social justice issues. This multi-component output spans two interrelated projects: 'Sweet Waters' (2016-17), based on participatory performative walks along the River Avon between Bath and Bristol that sought to sense the legacies of slave-ownership, and 'Honouring Esther' (2015-17), which transposed the route of a Nazi Death March to England and returned it to Germany. Outputs comprise documentation of these projects' live phases, extended phases, and installation media, with a journal article as contextual information.

Co-funded by Arts Council England and commissioned for Bath Festival Fringe, together these projects create a new multi-media methodology for interpreting cultural heritage. Manifesting as a shared corporeal experience on foot, the practice incorporates a rigorous participatory media process using readings, audio testimony, social media, notebooks and photographs, as walkers co-curate the experience of uncovering aspects of the past. A key insight emerging from this research is that, through the agency of a participatory multi-media walking practice, people can discover their own stakeholderhood in cultural heritage, finding traces of their lives in places, images and relics, drawing contemporary resonances from these fragments.

Over 350 people in Bath and Bristol have joined the walks to date, as well as key heritage sites in the region including the Holburne Museum, Bath Preservation Trust and Saltford Brass Mill. An installation emerging from the research was exhibited as part of Museums Week: Journey to Justice Bristol and Black History Month in 2017, and the work has been discussed on local BBC radio and on BBC TV regional news.