

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Ulster University		
Unit of Assessment: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory (32)		
Title of case study: Photography, Video, Spaces and the Legacy of Conflict in Northern Ireland		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2007 - 2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Prof Willie Doherty	Professor of Video Art	1998 - present
Prof Donovan Wylie	Professor of Photography	2009 - present
Dr David Coyles	Senior Lecturer in Architecture	2010 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The Art, Conflict & Society thematic group at Ulster engages with legacies of division, politicised urban planning, and socio-economic deprivation that persist in post-conflict Northern Ireland (NI). The research articulates unique multidisciplinary perspectives on complex issues and creates impact in three areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Among arts organisations, museums and members of the public nationally and internationally by enhancing understanding of the precarious nature of peace and reconciliation in a post-conflict society, through the artistic medium of video and photography. 12. Among practitioners and institutions by advancing new forms of artistic expression in the representation of conflict, through the production of contemporary cultural artefacts and engaging artistic expression. 13. Among communities affected by deprivation as a legacy of the conflict by influencing community regeneration and development, leading to job creation, inward investment, urban regeneration and increased community capacity, through community co-creation. 		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research carried out by Doherty, Wylie and Coyles from 2007 to 2018 engages with some of the so-called legacy issues following the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998. These issues include unsolved murders, compensation and support for victims, housing policy and an agreed process of memorialisation, that were not resolved as part of the Agreement and continue to put pressure on the fragile peace in this post-conflict society. The research interrogates how processes of memorialisation are expressed within the public and private spheres. The research provides insights into how specific architecture and sites, associated with past acts of violence, surveillance and control, continue to resonate in collective memory and imagination and may undermine reconciliation processes. Doherty's <i>Ghost Story</i>, 2007 (R1) single-screen video installation, forefronts the use of video and narrative fiction to explore the trauma triggered by revisiting sites where memories of violence continue to resonate. <i>Ghost Story</i> unfolds in several rural and urban locations accompanied by a voiceover that suggests the presence of a lingering residue of pain embedded within the landscape itself.</p> <p>Wylie's <i>Outposts</i>, 2011 (R2) and <i>North Warning System</i>, 2014 (R3) interrogates the role photographic art has in the preservation and memory of historical military architecture sites. These two volumes were published as the Tower Series which included one earlier volume <i>Watch Towers</i> (2004), focused on Northern Ireland, with photographs recently acquired by National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI, 2017) and the Tate (2020). <i>Outposts</i> (R2) and <i>North Warning System</i> (R3) extends the transient nature of military architecture beyond NI to Afghanistan and the</p>		

Canadian Arctic. As global challenges evolve in response to the 'War on Terror', military structures are now designed for flexibility and are ultimately transient in nature, leaving little or no trace of their former presence.

Further research engages with the negative impact of military planning of housing policy during the 1970s and 1980s in NI. It provides insight into how poor-quality social housing has had a detrimental effect on individuals, families and communities living with high levels of economic deprivation. The insights show how continuing intimidation and violence have further exacerbated this situation. Doherty's *Remains*, 2013 (R4) is filmed in several housing estates in Derry. These places have been used as sites for 'kneecapping', a form of punishment shooting, since the 1970s. The work highlights the generational nature of cycles of violence, retribution, coercion and control. Coyles and Wylie's *Housing Plans for the Future*, 2018 (R5) and Coyles' *Journeys through the Hidden City*, 2017 (R6) reveal the impact of military planning of Housing Policy during the 1970s/80s. Between 2010 and 2018, the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded Hidden Barriers research programme (Grants G1 and G2 below) provided new evidence of a little-known but expansive body of physical interventions put in place between 1976 and 1985 to permanently segregate Catholic and Protestant communities in Belfast. The research revealed how these Hidden Barriers were created during a confidential process of security planning undertaken by the UK Government. This research maps Hidden Barriers across Greater Belfast and analyses their impact on social and physical division through collaborative research engagement across six case-study communities. The findings demonstrate that these Hidden Barriers considerably extend the scope of extant conflict-era architecture that continues, promoting social physical division, enforcing ethnic segregation, restricting mobility of neighbourhood residents and reinforcing divisive cultural attitudes and behaviours. Coyles disseminated preliminary findings to the Irish Government Department of Foreign Affairs, UK-Irish Secretariat working group (2016), advising on policy for 'Implementation and Reconciliation' set out in the Stormont House Agreement (2014). Wylie's invited talk at the Business & Investment Conference New York (2019), represented the arts on the *Alternate Histories of the Future* panel with a focus on social change in Belfast.

3. References to the research Outputs can be provided by Ulster University on request.

Publications include multicomponent practice-based outputs and peer-reviewed papers.

R1: Doherty, W. (2007). *Ghost Story: 52nd Venice Biennale*, 2007, Exhibition, 15mins. **Multi component output:** 19 Exhibitions (2007-2020), 3 collections (Tate, NMNI, Dallas Museum of Modern Art)

R2: Wylie, D. (2011). *Outposts*. Steidl Verlag. **Multi component output:** 1 book, 9 Exhibitions (2010-2017), 2 permanent collections (Arts Council Northern Ireland (ACNI), Martin Parr Foundation (MPF), The Bradford Fellowship (A1)

R3: Wylie, D. (2014). *North Warning System*. Steidl Verlag, World. **Multi component output:** 1 book and 1 Exhibition 'Vision as Power' (2013/14), 2 permanent collections of 3 artefacts (National Gallery of Canada, MPF)

R4: Doherty, W. (2014). *Remains*, Kerlin Gallery, Dublin. Exhibition, 15mins. **Multi component output:** 12 Exhibitions (2013-2020), 4 collections of 7 artefacts (Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) Dublin, DePont Museum Tilburg, Harvard Art Museums Cambridge, NMNI)

R5: Wylie, D & Coyles, D (2018), *Housing Plans For The Future*. 1 edn, Steidl Verlag, Gottingen Germany. **Multi component output:** 1 book and 1 Exhibition (2018), 1 collection (MPF), 1 invited talk), 2 Research grants (G1, G2)

R6: Coyles D. (2017) *Journeys through the Hidden City: Giving visibility to the Material Events of conflict*. *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 35 (6): 1053-1075. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0263775817707528> * This article was subject to blind peer review by an international editorial board and is associated with 2 Research grants (G1, G2)

Grants and awards:

A1: Bradford College, the University of Bradford and the National Media Museum 15th Bradford Fellowship (2010/2011)

G1: Coyles, D., Wylie, D., Spier, S., (2011-2013) Communities as constructs of people and architecture: Historically assessing the spatial legacy of The Troubles in inner-city Belfast, 1969-1994, [AHRC \(AH/J011878/1\)](#) (GBP27,177)
G2: Coyles, D., Wylie, D., Hamper, B., Lloyd M.G., Lane, L., Power, E. A. (2015-2018) Communities as constructs of People & Architecture [AHRC \(AH/M001342/1\)](#) (GBP312,276)

4. Details of the impact

11: Among arts organisations, museums and members of the public nationally and internationally by enhancing understanding of the precarious nature of peace and reconciliation in a post-conflict society

Through an established relationship with the Ulster Museum NMNI, Doherty and Wylie's research has had a significant impact on their visitors through acquisitions, exhibitions and public engagement. Doherty's **R1** and **R4** have featured in the following NMNI exhibitions: The Art of the Troubles (Ulster Museum, 2014), The Troubles and Beyond permanent gallery (2018-present) and the Making a Future Project (2019). Senior Curator of Art at NMNI states that **"through the research and artworks by Willie Doherty and Donovan Wylie it allows National Museums NI the capability to examine our recent past while moving forward as a post-conflict society"** and, through **"the use of their artworks the Ulster Museum has been able to interpret and enhance the public's understanding of the legacy of the Troubles in a post-conflict society"** (C1). The Art of the Troubles attracted **65,000 visitors**. An evaluation carried out by NMNI found that: 27% were overseas visitors; 37% were under 25 years old and had no first-hand experience of the Troubles; **Doherty's R1 and R4 "were continually mentioned in the feedback, becoming the second most recorded impactful artworks in the exhibition" (C1); 52% learned something new; and 50% said it made them think differently about the relationship between art and the Troubles.** One visitor expressed that **"art is very important in healing, understanding and forgiving"** and another how **"art is helping put the troubles into perspective and make it less painful"** (C1). An NMNI evaluation of Troubles and Beyond (2019) showed that: 46% were overseas visitors; 45% were under 25 years old.; **96% said that it had an emotional impact on them (C1).**

NMNI, along with a consortium of leading cultural organisations including the Nerve Centre, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and Linen Hall Library, launched a EUR1,820,000 (01-2019) EU-funded project under the PEACE IV Programme (2019). *Making the Future* 2019-2020 is a cross-border North/South Ireland cultural programme with the aim to empower people to use museum collections and archives to explore the past and create a powerful vision for future change. The exhibition has been shown at the Ulster Museum, then toured to cross-border venues including Lisburn, Enniskillen, Monaghan and Armagh. Data collected by NMNI shows a diversity in visitors with both sides of the community represented; **11,000 people had viewed to date** and one visitor said the exhibition **"highlighted the difficulty in expressing complex trauma and its legacy, personally, politically and socially [and] the almost impossible task of expressing personal experience of trauma and the effect of longstanding conflict and observed effects of conflict which echo into near generations"** (C1). **R1, R2, R3 and R4** have been acquired by **11 museum's permanent collections** internationally including **5 books within the Martin Parr Foundation collection**. The collective research has been exhibited extensively with **42 exhibitions** in a variety of national and international contexts ranging from national museums and regional venues. The Collections Curator at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), home to Ireland's national collection of modern and contemporary art, states Doherty's work (**R4**) **"is consistently featured among practitioners and institutions aiming to advance the understanding of a post-conflict society"** (C2). IMMA's Engagement and Learning Programmes Curator adds that **"Doherty's practice has been central to artistic and public discourse in Ireland has enhanced understanding of the precarious nature of peace and reconciliation in a post-conflict society"** (C2).

Doherty's *Remains* (**R4**), uses the authentic lived experience of specific location (The Creggan, Derry) and indicative events such as kneecapping (punishment shooting) to directly represent societal experiences in cycles of violence, retribution, coercion and control. IMMA has included

Remains in seven exhibitions since its acquisition in 2014: nationally at the IMMA Collection: A Decade exhibition (2016/17), attracting **73,420 visitors**; and internationally at Art Sonje South Korea (2017) and currently at *Where / Dove*, Fondazione Modena Arti Visive, Modena, Italy (C2). De Pont Museum (Netherlands) has collaborated with Doherty on multiple projects including exhibitions and educational outreach programmes around themes of conflict legacy. A solo exhibition *UNSEEN* in 2014/15 in partnership with Matt's Gallery, London and The Nerve Centre, Derry was attended by **21,910 visitors (4,974 of which were children and students born after the conflict ended)** (C4). *Conflict and Struggle*, an educational programme with secondary schools in the Netherlands, extensively featured Doherty's work (R4), **allowing the children to address the conflict in NI, a chapter of history that is not part of the regular Dutch curriculum**. Head of Education, and Curator of the De Pont Museum Exhibition, has stated with confidence that **"Willie Doherty's work has made a significant impact on the museum and its audiences in advancing the understanding of the complexity of conflict and the situation in Northern Ireland in particular. His work painfully makes us understand why a conflict does not easily become a thing of the past"** (C4).

I2: Among practitioners and institutions by advancing new forms of artistic expression in the representation of conflict

One of the most critical aspects of Doherty's and Wylie's outcomes from their research (R1-R4) has been that **"they have allowed the Ulster Museum to interpret the Troubles in a way that our audiences can engage with, consider and ultimately learn about our recent past"**. Doherty's and Wylie's work are described as **exemplary** and allowed **"National Museums NI the capability to examine our recent past while moving forward as a post-conflict society"** (C1). IMMA acquired Doherty's *Remains* (R4) in 2014 under section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA 1997), which **"marked one of the most significant acquisitions to the Collection"** (C3). The TCA provides tax relief to taxpayers who donate heritage items to Irish national collections. This acquisition recognised Doherty's work as **"an outstanding example of the type of item involved, pre-eminent in its class, whose export from the State would constitute a diminution of Ireland's accumulated cultural heritage"** (C3). It was recognised by a committee made up of the Directors of the National Cultural Institutions, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and the Department of Finance that *Remains* (R4) constitutes a remarkable and vital contribution to the cultural heritage of Ireland. C3 states that *Remains* addresses some of the most complex and difficult aspects of contemporary Irish history and society with great sensitivity. Commenting on the acquisition, Director of IMMA stated **"These major works by one of Ireland's most lauded and influential contemporary artists make a unique contribution to the National Collection of Modern and Contemporary art by consolidating the importance of video art as a new form of artistic expression in the representation of conflict"** (C3). The Museum has testified that the work is **internationally acclaimed for its depiction of post-conflict NI** and that the range of media employed by Doherty has advanced new forms of artistic expression in the representation of the conflict (C3).

Wylie's work is unprecedented in representing conflict. It is highly unusual for any photographer to spend time in a military setting, especially for research purposes. Wylie who the IWM describe as **"one of Britain's leading contemporary photographers"** (C5), has significant prior experience in conflict photography. This empowered a collaboration between the IWM and the National Media Museum **"to embed Wylie in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, at the point of the Canadian forces withdrawal, making him the first IWM official photographer to work in a war zone since the end of the First World War"**. (C5). This Canadian link continued with North Warning System (R3), the third in his Towers series. Based in the Arctic, these Canadian cyber radar stations contrast military suppression with a focus on conflict avoidance yet represented similar to Outposts in situation and purpose. **Two photographs were acquired for the permanent collection (2015)** by the National Gallery of Canada. Commenting on the uniqueness of his decade of research, the IWM outline how **"Wylie's practice as an artist and photographer has allowed him to use his own power as an observer, to reveal mechanisms of control through understanding and communicating his vision to others"** (C5). In 2020 the IMMA exhibited *Northern Lights*, from the promised gift acquisition by *The David Kronn Photography Private Collection*, a significant archive of 1,100 images depicting Northern Ireland's conflict,

positioned with an international context. The exhibition includes works from Wylie (R2, R3) and colleague Paul Seawright, with IMMA describing their photographs as **“a new tradition of ‘art-documentary’” (C6)**. Similarly, the IWM describe Wylie’s work as **“a new perspective on how we view conflict and architecture” (C5)**.

I3: Among communities affected by deprivation as a legacy of the conflict by influencing community regeneration and development

Hidden Barriers (R5 & R6) involved a series of skills workshops, including preliminary work (2012/13) with the majority from 2015 (G2), led by Coyles in collaboration with EastSide Partnership, a Belfast-based Non-profit Organisation and AHRC project partner. These activities engaged with local community workers from the Diamond Project, a grass-roots community development organisation based with the inner East, a designated Neighbourhood Renewal Area in Belfast, and an **area placed within the ‘top 20’ most deprived in Northern Ireland by the NI multiple deprivation measures**. These workshops helped to **empower the Diamond Project** through research findings to generate new community-based knowledge **leading to GBP30,000 seed funding from the NI government (2015)** for physical enhancement of The Mount area. This initial funding unlocked **over GBP2,000,000 investment, bringing about demonstrable impact (C7)**. A permanent full-time project officer, several social enterprises targeting long-term unemployment (such as local cleaning and maintenance services) and educational and training programmes that specifically target disadvantaged young people (including a local ‘Health Hub’) were established. The Health Hub offers a community gym and bike workshop providing training for young people interested in pursuing careers in personal training and fitness, with trainees gaining the opportunity of part time employment. A derelict apartment block was renovated in 2017 to provide 4 three-bed houses, 4 one-bed apartments and a community youth hub for summer schemes or after school activities organised by the Diamond Project. Several Hidden Barriers have been renovated, alongside the upgrading of local roads, footpaths and landscaping, providing physical enhancement to The Mount area. A range of historic sectarian paramilitary political murals have been removed and replaced with non-sectarian community-based murals, reflecting positive changes in local attitudes and behaviours. One resident stated **“our place was a dump and a dumping ground - nobody wanted to live here. Now it is great. I am proud of our area and want to bring up my children here” (C7)**.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- C1. Testimonial from Senior Curator of Art NMNI, outlining the benefits from Doherty and Wylie’s work in enhancing public understanding.
- C2. Testimonial from IMMA Curator: Collections outlining the centrality of Doherty’s practice in artistic and public discourse and its audience impact on post-conflict societal knowledge.
- C3. Testimonial from IMMA Senior Curator: Head of Collections describing National Importance of Doherty’s work.
- C4. Testimonial from Curator, De Pont Museum outlining the value of Doherty’s Remains to the Collection and the impact on audience of Doherty’s work in Denmark.
- C5. Imperial War Museum: Donovan Wylie: Vision as Power Press Release, outlining how Wylie’s research impacted upon the IWM and its audiences.
- C6. IMMA Northern Light: The David Kronn Photography Collection, Exhibition guide
- C7. Testimonial from EastSide Partnership outlining the impact of Coyles’ research on communities affected by deprivation, contributing to the regeneration strategy and funding.