

1. A History of the World by Jeremy Deller (1997)

Social archaeology

Using a combination of strategies, including social cartography, and social archaeology channelled through a pop-cultural sensibility, Deller's work is recognised as a diverse formatting of a citizen-led mapping of place. Such cartography emphasises the dialogical possibilities of under-represented historical situations and questions the historical project of capitalism, particularly its ongoing impact on communal and traditional forms of life.

Figure 35

A history of the World. Deller.



Much of his ongoing research highlights how relationships generated by working communities in a post-industrial society should be celebrated as unique histories in the context of folk archives. He refutes the idea that, by the nature of the vernacular construction of folk archives they are often regarded as a collection of un-validated de-politicised outsider histories operating with their own cultural boundaries. Deller promotes the communal responsibility that is inherent in the construction of these archives. He recognises that any participatory work (in collecting) that draws upon community history celebrates the importance of the cultural material produced from the overlapping of specific alliances. These alliances occur when communities come together. When the themes that are confirmed in these alliances are then processed in a fine art environment by Deller, it positions the vernacular as resistance. How material reflecting the culture of the worker is represented when the 'folk archive' is acknowledged in a fine art environment validated by the Establishment is pivotal here. Deller asks, how can the history of the individual be properly contextualised in a post-industrial environment without the possibility of nostalgia interfering? How can a worker's experience of history be presented in an appropriate fashion without compromising either the material chosen for this task? What eventually is communicated when vernacular history becomes framed by the Establishment?

Curatorial practice addresses these questions. Collaborating with both large and small institutions allows Deller to format a variety of outcomes allowing both artist and those he participates with to fashion new perspectives from storytelling, performance, and repositioned objects in new settings. A descriptor from the IHME Contemporary Art Festival in Helsinki (from 2015) is a useful descriptor for Deller's practice:

'The Artist as Curator.' How can the methods, the stages of production or the concept of the exhibition used in a curator's work in themselves also be tools of artistic expression? And, on the other hand, can a curator work like an artist, and what does that mean? (Deller, 2015).

For the Helsinki festival Deller offered a project called Do not Touch.

... the artist will take exhibits from Helsinki's museums and present them in public spaces. For an instant, past and present are one, as people are encouraged to hold and examine anything from a piece of a meteorite to a packet of fake Viagra. (Deller, 2015).

Do Not Touch accessed a variety of locations in Helsinki including museums, shopping malls, and railway stations. In this balance of Establishment and commercial venues, Deller sought to unravel the complexity of capitalism's mission to normalise commodity-based environments as holding areas for consumerist communities. Deller 'sees past the fetishisation of civilization which produces our subjectivity', instead he desires to create 'stratigraphic records' of situations that refocus the voice of the citizen when new narratives are formed (Deller, 2013 pp.82-83).

The artist's most successful interventions are those that are regarded properly as being socio-affective, that is, when the outcomes properly reflect specific historical points of trauma. This is most evidenced in his definitive film work, *The Battle of Orgrave* (2001), a recreation of a 1984 conflict between protesting miners and an Establishment-representing police force. This battle challenged the narrative of Thatcher's England and signalled the end of the traditional power that the unions once had to represent the workers against the Establishment. As an artwork, *The Battle of Orgrave* delivers historical data in the form of an audio-visual monument. It commemorates a key transitional moment in British working-class history by focusing on the power and immediacy of the actual clash in Orgrave recreated with the participation of those who originally took part. Deller held that, in the historical balance of how the battle was to be filmed as artwork the voice of the citizen was to be a key element for a recreation of the battle.

The film as artwork also functions as a conventional documentary for how an industry was dismantled, one that supported vast communities who never recovered from the consequences of the 1984 strike. In the ongoing promotion of *The Battle of Orgrave*, both as artwork and conversation piece, Deller allows the subject to function as an art-based conduit led by the voice of the British working class. It is a significant design

linking both documentary and fine art responsibilities from an activist point of view. It is a reminder that the consequences of 1984 are ongoing as a subject of contention and even class war.

A useful comparison to *The Battle of Orgrave*, in regard to the subject being processed as art, is another film work. *The Miner's Hymns* is a treatment by the British multimedia artist Bill Morrison who shaped his artwork around a commissioned score by the composer Johann Johannsson in 2010. Morrison produces elegiac sequences that can be read to be at odds with the political matter, potentially rendering the project fixed and slightly sentimental, whereas Deller's factual/counterfactual documentary approach was designed purposely to be participatory and open ended (Cain, 2011). Deller is acutely aware that all contemporary artworks feature in an exceptional economy. The discourses that surround the means of production and exchange in this economy must be carefully considered before performative outcomes based on social memory are inserted into it.

Another work that shares a conceptual overlap with *The Battle of Orgrave* is James Coleman's *Linge de Foi* (1991). On residency in the US South, Coleman discovered that a famous Civil War print, *The Battle of the Bull Run*, by Currier and Ives was factually incorrect in that this particular battle was won by the South.

The print did not suggest this. Consequently, the incident was being subsumed in the general narrative of the North's winning of the Civil War. The piece originally used a slide projection designed to last the length of the battle where Coleman slowly overlapped the image of the print with a recreated image of the battle. Like Deller, he used a historical re-enactment society to recreate the actions need for imagery. Coleman's intention was to address the 'culturally infected nature of our own perception' (2016). The approach to the historical conditions differed from Deller as Coleman's outcome includes him being heard directing the actors to remain 'frozen' in the video version. A series of 'takes' are conducted as he fails to get the configuration between the 20th century photographic image and the 19th century print. The artifice involved in constructing the concept is a major component in focusing the subject. It provokes questioning on how meaning is constructed and how an image accrues meaning.

In a non-ideological fashion, the human legacy of the English industrial project is a central theme in a majority of Deller's work. Curiosity, and a responsibility to present subject matter in a contemporary light, demands that a variety of strategies are required if both fine art and civil outcomes are to be balanced in processing historical-based work without compromise. Research must be positioned to properly communicate if the core essence of resistance is not to be regarded solely as being presented as documentary. In regard to the north of England, a narrative of failure has been forced on certain historical periods to serve contemporary programs.

Deller negates the process of normalisation that can be associated with any reading of history that has been owned for political ends. Instead, he reveals the presence of negating activities, which constitute resistance.

The proletariat-as-negating-agent has taken different forms in different times; it can be the industrial worker, the mass worker, the multitude of the social factory, the masses

of the colonial world, and so on. Sometimes it is a matter of alliances, of worker and peasant, or later of worker and student. Sometimes it is a matter of agents from the sphere of reproduction rather than production, such as feminist and queer ant capitalist agency (Wark, year).

A key strategy fo Deller in mediating social memory is inversion. This allows for the reformatting of tropes of power by foregrounding the voice of the citizen. This can take place in a gallery, it being a cultural arena supported by the Establishment. Assessing material in this space he asks, what determines a true history? Who owns it and how can a history of the public be delivered for a local and wider audience and function properly as dialogue instead of description? Inversion is most evident in Deller's curatorial work where the vernacular conditions of folk artefacts are refocused alongside new work for a museum or gallery environment. The folk staple of the procession or carnival is also included in this. The carnival in particular offers opportunities for new dialogue by interrogating the conditions that come together in community-based processions. In prioritising these performative conditions Deller celebrates new configurations by encouraging radical changes in the design of street processions describing this as the 'inverted spectacular' (year p.). The term 'Social Surrealism' has been used to critically evaluate this type of work when speculative components are included (Ades, 2015 p.96).

Deller highlights the space between an increasingly contested notion of heritage and the ownership of history by the people. In this new dialogical space he critiques descriptors of heritage and history, questioning capitalism's ambition to format heritage into consumerist elements. Deller sees elements of resistance in folk art where the people reclaim their own history and refuse to let it be sold back to them. In carnivals and event-based work, folk history now becomes a disruptive force.

An important early work by Deller is the wall drawing *The History of the World* (1997). The drawing functions an ongoing artwork that is offered to institutions as a conceptual work, which requires it being constructed anew each time. It is a concise example of how a historical subject can support macro and micro outcomes when processed for a fine art environment. It remains a deceptively simple sketch of loose historical and cultural points, but embedded in this graphic is a critique of how youth resistance features in the landscape of the English industrial project and how the legacy of this draws on disparate, even counterfactual, points when it is to be represented. It inserts the vernacular contribution of a youth-based community as a cultural factor previously regarded as an aside overshadowed by the grand narrative held the collapse of the project of the Industrial Revolution and the legacy of conservative politics of the 1980's.

Amongst references to wider historical points, the drawing links understated points of subcultural resistance and celebrates the political consequences started by a community of young dancers in the north who came together in the late eighties. From 1986-1990 a youth-based community developed a unique dance-based culture based on the (then alien) imported electronic sounds communally known as 'Acid House' music. As befits the workings of a subculture, this community sought to remain outside the confines of capitalism by functioning as a separate social economy and

celebrated their outsider status initially in illegal events and weekend long parties. This is the complete reversal of adult responsibility where recreation is neatly packaged as a reward for a week's work. Deller recognises the legacy of Acid House as understated but has significant cultural capital when contextualised as an outside (and eventually outlawed) movement that existed in the North.

He recognised that by its nature the Acid House movement contested the 19th century concept of 'rational recreation'. This refers to the industrial programmes' ideal of workers making 'constructive use of leisure time meant to enrich the mind, cultivate one's critical faculties and ultimately help a human being become a proper and useful citizen' (author, year p.). Leisure, by the authorities, was seen as a contained component of the working week. The *History of the World* makes the case that by their subcultural standing alone, the Acid House community should feature in the context of resistance in a holistic review of the history of the industrial North.

The legacy of communal resistance and place embodied in Acid House revolves around the significance of the large gatherings of youth who appropriated vacant industrial space for communal and tribal means. It is the incongruity of a community redefining space via imported electronic music and incongruous fashion amongst the deteriorating landscape of the industrial north in the mid-eighties that is key for Deller.⁶⁴ He recognised that the colourful practice of 'raving' constitutes folk culture and as such it resisted a de-humanised conservative description of the North as a failed place marked by the ruins of the 19th century. Also, it was important to contextualise this activity as constituting a political act. The temporary appropriation of space by the youth instigated by the acid House movement featured heavily in bringing forward the UK Criminal Justice Act of 1994. For the Establishment, the use of abandoned or empty industrial spaces hosting large gatherings of unsupervised youth signified unconformity and rebellion featuring as anti-authoritarian resistance. The Criminal Justice Act eventually criminalised any unauthorized gatherings that were based on groups congregating in places where repetitive beats featured. This was a unique and unprecedented response to a youth-based movement and one that Deller was most conscious of being under-represented outside its own vernacular recording in the history of British popular music.

The first iteration of *The History of the World* took the form of a speculative historical map. The North was dismantled in an attempt to register and connect the lineage of generational expression Deller saw both in the communal music of the brass bands of the 1880s and the music created by the Acid House producers of the 1980s.

This lineage established graphically by *The History of the World* suggests that the long-standing working class tradition of community embodied in brass bands was mirrored in the tribal gatherings associated with Acid House events of the late eighties. Though aesthetically disparate, Deller emphasises that both music-based communities share a commonality and a sense of place epitomised in how the environment forged the music that was produced from the North. Both the brass bands and the electronic expressions of the Acid House pioneers represent distinctly Northern identities that are now linked by how they manifest a community response to the environment and

64 The term 'interzone' as defined by the discipline of biogeography is pertinent here. It is an area characterised by a particular set of organisms, whose presence is determined by environmental conditions.

conditions of the North. The linking of both represents a cultural response and when recognised as such this functions as a reference for any conversation resisting a conservative reading of the North as a failed place. The link contests any remaining suggestion of the dominant identity of an industrial community being based solely on 19th century economic descriptors of the worker participating simply as a component.

As an art piece, *The History of the World* was originally intended for conventional gallery display but it is now complemented by a citizen-led performance-based work called Acid Brass which complements the artwork. After contemplating the connections made in the project, Deller contacted the Williams Fairey Band, a traditional colliery brass band, to score some of the most popular 'uplifting' music of the Acid House music events. This incongruous act of validating modern electronic music through traditional means was an unintended and welcome offshoot of the original concept that extended the cultural thesis into popular culture. It also linked the communal ethos of Acid House music with the longer legacy of community-based music held in the history of Northern brass bands. Such links, and the ongoing success of the 'Acid Brass project' (2006–?) confirm the propensity of music in the everyday and the importance in acknowledging its ability to affect social rhythms. *The History of the World* is a simple, direct, and necessary account of place in that it challenges the historical constraints that can feature in conventional timelines. Deller's correlation of the old and new is simple and direct, foregrounding the space of the factory as a pivot for contemporary linkage.

Factories were a new world of moral chaos, extraordinary places, full of danger, where the youth of both senses were often in heated proximity, deafened by the noise of the machines that shook their buildings and their bodies. Just the kind of experiences sought out and replicated in clubs and warehouse parties – parties that for a short time in the late 1980s took place in the same buildings where the machines and workers, (possibly ancestors of the party's attendees) once laboured. (Deller, 2014 p.13).

Historical procedure, at this almost speculative level, is not designed to accommodate the vast gap that exists between the century old culture of mining that is represented in brass bands and the youth subculture that appropriated the space in 1986–1993.

In an uncomplicated highlighting of the link between the two Deller maps for alternative thinking, he uses keywords relating to place and contentious events to offer a lateral exposition of social memory. This resulting map (approximately measuring 30 foot by 20 foot) is activated with directional lines and subtexts relating to both phrases, interspersed with terms such as 'Advanced Capitalism', 'Civil Unrest', 'Privatisation and Civic Pride'. The viewer links events and concepts as they see fit, with the realisation that this is, above all, a non-linear political map of Northern England and a testimony to the endeavours of its inhabitants resisting descriptors enforced on the area by the rhythms of advanced capitalism. Deller's discourse here underlines the project's ongoing human legacy by inviting the audience to assemble their own narrative where

new ways of speaking contest the traditional historical boundaries that have come to be associated with the land of the North of England.

The map then became a template for a performance-based event. When the Williams Fairey Brass Band (from Manchester) play they extend the project for the commercial /populist arena (Deller, year). By the nature of its design and ongoing practice the performance Acid Brass, continues to celebrate community in terms of resistance that critiques the 'grim' narrative imposed on the North by those who seek to gain from portraying its landscape as a failed industrial space. The egalitarian insight of Deller's ongoing project is based on a reformatting of the historical conditions that are associated with the environment to create a trans-historical moment. Conceptually, this work can now be managed by both the public, who are invited to present the work both commercially (by booking the brass band), and institutionally (by showing the drawing.) When Deller promotes both these options as linked outcomes he reactivates dormant historical traces (represented by brass band) and mediates them through a speculative reading of place (the drawing) for an ongoing conversation. Such promotion recalls the Situationist International's concept of an 'Architecture of Play' as 'one that welcomes disorientation' (Simon, 1997 p.).

2. Representing the Work of the Activist

State Britain, Mark Wallinger

The social politics of site and the accompanying dialogue that occurs for the representation of activist-led fine art work is the basis of Mark Wallinger's 2007 work State Britain. This installation was first exhibited in the Tate Gallery, London (2007) and contained the contents of a protest on the Iraq war by British citizen, Brian Haw. Assisted by the public in his protest, Haw accumulated a vast collection of material filling 40 metres of pavement outside Westminster's Parliament Buildings from 2001

Figure 36

Need a caption for this.



until 2007. In 2007, the majority of the collection (and Haw's habitat) was officially removed under Section 132 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act, 2005. This ruling designates that permission to protest must be obtained if it takes place inside a one kilometre zone around the parliament buildings.

This restrictive legislation was to feature as a resource for Wallinger who had befriended Haw while documenting his protest. In tracing the evolution of the protest site, he recognised that the narrative of the protest itself encapsulated the issue of the Iraq War and the physical boundaries set by the law to manage an issue of freedom of expression. *State Britain* highlighted the invisible boundaries set by this directive by rebuilding Haw's protest structure inside the Tate. In deliberately foregrounding the zone in an institutional setting, this piece highlighted the Tate's institutional identity as a condition or the artwork as it fell within the circumference of the boundaries set by the authorities to manage the protest.

A meticulous reconstruction of Haw's protest material was installed in the gallery's Deveen Halls where it stood in stark contrast to its institutional setting. Wallinger designed the installation to run parallel to the halls long sides to take in both sides of the invisible boundary. This rendered *State Britain* half inside and half outside the border set by the authorities and established the conceptual basis of the work.⁶⁵ This positioning rendered it both illegal (in a civic sense) and protected (validated by the position of the Tate as an institutional Establishment) at the same time. This tension was accentuated by the horizontal layout of the installation in the gallery, which also introduced a monumental quotient to Haw's vernacular assemblage. Altogether, the layout emphasised that the concept of boundary was essential to an activist reading of the installation. Wallinger was very aware that the very idea of the monument is to create context for place.

In Wallinger's reframing of the material that confronted Westminster the viewer now reads Haw's collection of messages and protest slogans in the Tate in sequence. This is how one would process the material at the sites of official war memorials.⁶⁶ The visual rhetoric commonly associated for war memorial construction has come to be based on the horizontal. This is intended to signify the contemplative and is most associated with the Maya Lin's 1982 design for the Vietnam Memorial in Washington

State Britain also featured images of the artist's team remaking the banners and signs. This documentation added to the sense of reverence Wallinger felt for the project. It also confirmed that due care featured in shaping the work for a major institution. In an accompanying leaflet, echoing the polemic of Haw's banners, Wallinger's own text calls the government to order by combining quotations from Tony Blair and George Orwell on the subject of freedom.

The continuation of activist work of Haw, by the artist, lies in his exploration of the syntax associated with the notion of the boundary and its limits. In presenting a consideration of the underlining politics of legally regulated space when they intersect with the regulations of a state-owned gallery, he directs the conversation from the perspective of the citizen. The work addresses how the issue of freedom of expression in managed a public space.

65 A standard reading of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 suggests its powers were designed purely to counter protests in the proximity of parliament.

66 Material left behind daily by visitors at the Vietnam Veteran's memorial is collected and stored in the Museum and Archaeological Regional Storage Facility creating an ongoing vernacular narrative at the site.

The limits of the official boundary and the delegated authority enforcing the law outside in Parliament Square were found wanting after being legally challenged by Haw himself. (The ruling in his favour stated that material three metres high, three metres wide and one metre deep did not fail conditions set by the police when they tried to implement its removal according to the law as it was set out and this remained). The issue of the activist versus aesthetic limit of the Tate reconstruction remained in its:

ugly-ness as it took its place alongside the other exhibits. The cheapness of the cardboard signs were magnified in an institution setting magnifying as they did the ineffectual limits of the slogans written on the cardboard i.e. 'Love', 'You Lie Kids Die, Blair', 'My Country Right It's Wrongs' (Campbell, 2007 p.3).

Haw's traditional construction and desire for simplicity, assembled in part by the public, physically existed to make the lawmakers uneasy. He simply dedicated the last years of his life to bear witness and Wallinger correctly registered his vigil as a witness, as a historically significant act of activism. In becoming involved, the artist did not seek to extend the process of bearing witness, instead he sought to deal with the intangibility of the protest as magnified by the site itself. The protest was extended by how Wallinger negotiated the conceptual and physical material through the institution. Channelling the spirit of eighties political artists such as Hans Haacke, *State Britain* addressed his integration of the site of the protest and the Tate not as separate static entities that came together, but a joint representation of the effect and context of specific social relations (Deutsche, 2015 p.142).

In representing the erosion of civil liberties, Haw's citizen protest was framed in the Tate as cultural pause. Its presence there testified to the complexity of a wider process by which the original protest was both castigated and legitimised by the authorities. An awareness of this, in the context of an art piece, mirrored the complexity and double standards of the British government's stand on Iraq. Wallinger has guaranteed that *State Britain* now exists as a memorial for the dual standards that marked that situation and the subject itself will be referenced in this 'state' forever. *State Britain* contemporises the strained conditions of traditional protest in addressing it in a format that reactivates the specifics of the subject matter of civil liberties and the illegal invasion of Iraq each time it is displayed.

One could of course have focused on the slogans and vernacular artwork of *State Britain* as a continuation of Haw's protest, but the artwork was intended to function differently. It was not intended to extend the protest in the manner of how Haw had physically lived it. The work in the Tate was a reconstruction that inserted itself into the conversation begun by Haw and factored the politics of his departure into the work. Its presence in the Tate also queried the politics of reception surrounded by the creation of such fiercely analogue work in the digital age. Included in this were notions of boundary, the politics of territory, the reach of protest and its limits. Wallinger was able to present the issues of a traditional activist in the 21st century in a fashion that seemed to implement the Establishment via the institution of the Tate Gallery in Haw's protest.