

## The Art Gallery and its Audience: Reflecting on Scale and Spatiality in Practice and Theory

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### Abstract

This paper explores scale and spatiality in the practice and theory of the art gallery. Through the example of *Des Hughes: Stretch Out and Wait*, an exhibition at The Hepworth Wakefield, I unpick the construction of scaled notions such as 'local', '(inter)national' and 'community', in particular, a 'local' versus '(inter)national' binary; and explore how we may seek alternatives to such hierarchized thinking and practice. By testing and developing Kevin Hetherington's approach of analyzing the topological character of the spaces of the museum (1997), I treat the space of *Des Hughes* as one which is complex, contingent and folded around certain objects on display. In so doing, this paper argues that scale and spatiality should not only be attended to as a subject of study for museums, galleries and heritage; but that they can also form a useful methodological lens through which productive alternatives for the knowledge and practice of these organizations may be explored.

**Key words:** Art Gallery, scale, spatiality, material semiotics, topology

The Hepworth Wakefield is a large, modern and contemporary art gallery situated on the outskirts of Wakefield city centre, less than 10 miles from the more metropolitan city of Leeds. Opened in 2011, it has a growing historical, modern and contemporary art collection, which is exhibited alongside an exhibition programme largely featuring contemporary artists, and has recently received the significant national accolade of being named the Art Fund's 2017 Museum of the Year.

In the process of attempting to make sense of the space of The Hepworth Wakefield and the development of its relationships with its audiences, it has become apparent that the Gallery's ambitions and responsibilities are intimately bound up in scaled notions of 'local', 'national' and 'international', as constructed and articulated by staff, stakeholders, as well as key funders.<sup>1</sup> My discussions with staff regarding the identity and purpose of the Gallery were often anchored in scaled conceptualizations of place, underpinned by a fundamental binary conception of a local community in contrast to an international art world.<sup>2</sup> This tension is clearly expressed in the following statement from a member of the Visitor Services Team concerning their understanding of the vision and mission of the Gallery:

Two split missions that sometimes collide: 1. To engage the *local community* and provide a thriving cultural and lively venue and exhibition centre. 2. To expose the area with contemporary art exhibitions from artists currently fashionable in upper elite art circles existent in the *art world*.<sup>3</sup> [author's emphasis]

These sentiments, and similar concerns regarding apparent dichotomies of excellence/access and Art/outreach, are nothing new, and have long been a concern of museum studies (Karp *et al* 1992; Watson 2007; Crooke 2007; Golding and Modest 2013). Indeed, Vera L. Zolberg describes a similar tension in the Brooklyn Museum in the early 1990s:

the museum has tried to reconcile two frequently incompatible aims: on the one hand, as befits a venerable institution, to maintain standards of quality and stay

in touch with national and international trends; on the other, to play an active role in the life of the community (Zolberg 1992: 120).

The similarity of this statement to the 'two split roles' described above is striking, and indeed a binary opposition between collections and communities seems set in the minds of many. There persists an endemic belief that these concepts are essential and at odds, where committing to one will be at the detriment to the other, resulting for some in a perception of an existential challenge to be overcome: 'But it feels like we are trying to attract this art world audience and be on the map, but then to survive we also need all these local people to be using us. How do you do that?'<sup>4</sup>

How do we move beyond these dualisms to a more productive mode of thinking and practice? This paper will argue that by employing a methodological approach of material semiotics and attentiveness to spatiality (treating the museum as an assemblage of material and social relations), it is possible to unpick such constructions of a local/international binary, and to seek alternatives to such hierarchized thinking and practice. I will do this by testing and developing Kevin Hetherington's approach of analyzing the topological character of the spaces of the museum (1997), applying this concern for complex topologies to the space of The Hepworth's Spring 2016 exhibition, *Des Hughes: Stretch Out and Wait*. In so doing, I will treat the space of *Des Hughes* as one which is complex, contingent and folded around certain objects on display.

### **Spatiality and the Material Semiotics of the Museum**

The discipline of museum studies has largely favoured textual readings of museums, predominantly treating them as discursive and coded spaces where attention is to material culture, interpretation and meaning making practices (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 2000; Pearce 1994). In this sense, the focus is on objects and material culture; how they can be used as expressions of social status (Bourdieu 1984, 1990) or in performances of identity, whether that be gender, class, race and so on (Appadurai 1986). These approaches are people centred, where the emphasis is on how people make meaning - materiality and its agency are missing. There has, however, been increased attention to materiality which foregrounds the agency of objects, and the role of the non-human in shaping meaning and action (De la Fuente 2010; Cerulo 2009; Gell 1998). This has its roots in Science and Technology Studies (STS), and how 'truth' is negotiated in the processes or relations of practice and materiality.<sup>5</sup> But most significant is the development and influence of Actor- Network Theory (ANT), and its key concept of tracing the enactment of material and social heterogeneous relations (Law 1992, 2015; Callon 1986; Callon and Latour 1981; Latour 1987, 2005). In this heterogeneous network of relations there can be no pre-existing givens. Essential divisions such as human/non-human, society/nature, macro/micro, and local/global are broken down. They are understood as not given in the order of things, and instead are to be taken as relationally constituted (Callon and Latour 1981; Law 1999; Massey, 2005).

This foregrounding of materiality and spatiality is key, and my use of these concepts is in the interplay of ANT, particularly post-ANT (Law 1999; Law and Mol 2002; Hetherington and Law 2000), spatial and relational developments in geography (Massey 1991, 1993, 2005; Thrift 1996, 2007; Harvey 1989; Harvey 2015; Herod and Wright 2002; Elden and Crampton 2007), and how these approaches have informed the study of museums, where the focus has shifted to such notions of materiality, agency, complexity, and the multiplicity of realities and space-times. As such, this paper is situated in a clear trajectory of museum studies that considers notions of assemblage and the museum – or rather the museum as an assemblage (Nail 2017; Bennett and Healy 2009). This sees an attentiveness to heterogeneous networks and their relational assembly, treating the gallery as a becoming, emergent process (or rather becomings and processes). A key proponent in this vein is Sharon Macdonald (2009, 2013), and the work of Rodney Harrison, Sarah Byrne, and Anne Clarke (2012, 2013) unpacking and reassembling the collection has also been important for this project's thinking through 'assemblage' and assemblage perspectives in the museum. Additionally, work unpicking and problematizing the concepts of place and scale in heritage has been vital for considering The Hepworth Wakefield and its practices; such as Rhiannon Mason, Christopher Whitehead

and Helen Graham's exploration of the interrelation and complexity of place and the art gallery (2012, 2013), and David C. Harvey's appeal to interrogate the work that scale does in heritage (2015). Indeed, Sharon Macdonald's call to move beyond the national museum raised some particularly useful questions (2003), and Rhiannon Mason's excellent response to Macdonald's paper is important for unpicking scaled categorizations of museums' as 'local', 'national', 'transnational', 'universal' and so on (2013). In sum, my research draws on such theories that trouble and refute traditional binaries such as local/(inter)national, and which instead advocate for ontological flatness and attention to complex topological spaces and the tracing of connections, relations and contingences between people, places, times and spaces.

Why is this a useful approach? Why is it useful to explore how objects may mediate action? Why might it be productive to treat the spaces of galleries as ones which are topological and complex? I argue that it is in the bringing together of these theories *alongside* the exploration of discursive/coded spaces which enables us to move beyond binary, counter-positional and/or hierarchical thinking and practice towards more productive ways of working with and through complexity.

### **The Space(s) of the Museum: Euclidean, Discursive and Folded**

Hetherington begins with a simple question: how are we to consider the space of the museum? He proposes that spaces can be viewed in different ways and with different levels of complexity; summarizing these differences as three 'types' of space: Euclidean, discursive and folded (1997: 200). The first space, Euclidean, has mathematical origins in a concern for lines, boundaries and volumes. It reduces the complexity of lived experience and three-dimensional reality to two dimensions – to be mapped and represented, and is 'an issue that has come to dominate much spatial theory over the past decade' (Hetherington and Munro 1997: 155). Hetherington proposes that discursive space overlays the geometric space of the Euclidean; as discursive space proposes that space is like text, it can be read, and in so doing, its effects 'in terms of power and agency' can be revealed (Foucault 1977; Hetherington 1997: 200). These discursive spaces form the basis of much work in museum studies, in explorations of the narrative(s) of the museum and the production of meaning through the discursive and non-discursive.<sup>6</sup> The final space, and the most crucial for Hetherington, is that which is topologically complex, and 'folded around certain objects on display' (Hetherington 1997: 199). In Hetherington's attentiveness to the topological complexity of folded space, we see a development of the work of Deleuze and Guattari, in which spaces are to be treated as 'rhizomic and uncertain in their assemblage' (Deleuze and Guattari (1987) 2004; Deleuze (1986) 2006; Hetherington 1997: 200). The aim is not to flatten out these folds and homogenize them, but to think of them instead as 'scrumpled geography' (Doel 1996), where the fold acts as an 'and', as a fixative, a gluing together; where such folded topology has the potential of connecting a space to other time-spaces (Law and Mol 1994).

For Hetherington, the relationship of these folded spaces to discursive and Euclidean spaces is fundamental. He argues that we must consider how they are each folded into the other, and how they are folded into time, place and materiality. Hetherington considers these relationships between spatiality and material culture in the spaces of The City Museum and Art Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent, focusing particularly on a seventeenth century slipware jug, with the affectionate title of 'Ozzy the Owl'. Key to Hetherington's approach is that the object's position in the museum is contingent, and that its placement in a specific location can perform 'new topological arrangements in a space', which may then reveal 'the friability and partial connectedness of [the museums] narrativity' (1997: Abstract). I will explore these possible alternatives for understanding the practice of the museum or gallery by attending to The Hepworth Wakefield's complex spaces, folds and connections. To do so, I will make a journey around The Hepworth, layering these different approaches to analyzing its spaces, progressively reading the gallery as Euclidean, discursive, then folded, each move increasing complexity of our understanding of the gallery and its practices.

### The Journey to *Des Hughes: Euclidean Space and The Hepworth Wakefield*

In Hetherington's article, before we are able to go into the ceramics gallery and encounter Ozzy, he first describes the journey we take to get there. To encounter the *Des Hughes* exhibition we too must make a journey through The Hepworth Wakefield. To satisfy the necessary limits of the space of this paper, let us now imagine that we are a familiar visitor to The Hepworth Wakefield, eager to see the new exhibition. As such, we may rush through its spaces, those with which we think are well acquainted, to get to this new show. We may hurry through the entrance, across the foyer and up the wide staircase; emerging in to the bright, white space of Gallery 1. Turning immediately to Gallery 2 on our right, impatient to get on with our journey, we may then pass through the chain of gallery spaces, each leading on to the next; a blur of objects, white walls and grey, concrete floors passing us by, as we wind our way through plinths, sculptures and doorways that stand between us and Gallery 6, where *Des Hughes* resides.



*Fig. 1. Installation view of Des Hughes: Stretch Out and Wait, including school children's work seen to the left of the image. Photo: Stuart Whipps. Image courtesy The Hepworth Wakefield and Des Hughes.*

Arriving at our goal, we are greeted with a clean, bright room, where a range of objects and materials are neatly arranged on walls, shelves and a long central plinth, which diagonally cuts across the space in front of us (Fig. 1). Inspired by a particular moment of local history, when Henry Moore gifted his *Draped Reclining Figure* to Castleford in the 1980s, Des Hughes traces the story of this gift and the effect it had on the town. The exhibition includes Hughes's artwork and research documents from the Wakefield Permanent Art Collection Archive, as well as two working models for his new outdoor sculptures, one to be placed outside The Hepworth Wakefield, and the other outside Castleford Academy. An important element of this exhibition is the project 'Castleford Inspires', which saw Hughes, along with other artists and members of the Learning Team, work with over 70 school pupils from six local schools to creatively engage with the making process, inspired by Moore and Hughes' work (The Hepworth Wakefield 2015a). What sets this exhibition apart is the inclusion of pieces made by the school children in the same space as the rest of Hughes' art, not at some remove in a

sanctioned and separated community or learning area (Figs. 1 and 2). This is a particularly important given the socio-economic profile of the city, which is struggling in comparison with others in the region, as well as being below average in areas such as health, education, and so on.<sup>7</sup> The Hepworth was created as an integral part of the Wakefield Cultural Strategy, which saw huge investment in arts and culture across the district as part of the regeneration plan for the city of Wakefield, and as such, projects like 'Castleford Inspired' explicitly speak to communities and issues that the Council's regeneration plan seeks to address.



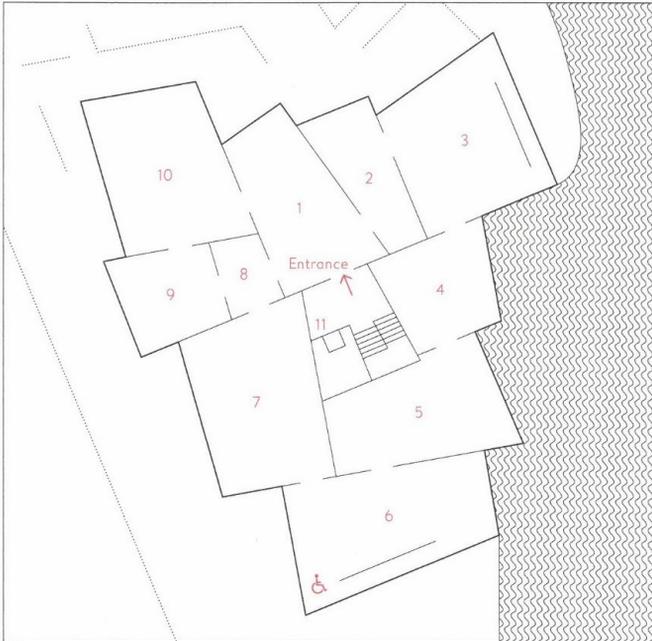
*Fig. 2. Detail of school children's work included in Des Hughes' exhibition, Stretch Out and Wait. Photo: Stuart Whipps. Image courtesy The Hepworth Wakefield and Des Hughes.*

Like Ozzy, these little 'Castleford Inspired' sculptures will form an important part of this analysis, but for now, let us return to our journey. Having taken in the distribution of objects across the space of the room, we may decide to approach each of these shelves in turn, inspecting the heterogeneous mixture of photographs, letters, textiles, drawings; alongside objects that appear to be made from bronze, plaster, metal and wood. Moving from one to the next we make our way around the central plinth, and once we close this loop, our experience of the Des Hughes exhibition is complete. We may then retrace our steps, exiting the gallery the way we entered, or we may choose to complete the circuit of gallery spaces, perhaps now meandering through the remaining rooms, which are filled with a Martin Parr retrospective. Either way, we arrive back in Gallery 1, to descend the stairs and cross the foyer back to the entrance which has now become our exit.

What are we to make of this brief tour around The Hepworth? Merely a simple description of a visitor's journey? 'Simple' in the sense of being a Euclidean representation of space as a fixed, given entity, rendered viewable and intelligible for the eye, to be read as a representation of objects distributed in knowable and quantifiable space (Heidegger 1962; Haraway 1988, 1991)? 'Simple' in contrast to an approach which is attentive to the topological complexity of space, and sees space as constantly under transformation (think twisting, squeezing, stretching and folding), where relations and connectivity are key (Couclelis 2005)? Before proceeding with our exploration of the different modes of analyzing the space of The Hepworth to help us

understand its practice, it is worth reiterating the ambition to move beyond such dichotomies of simple versus complex, or, simple (bad) versus complex (good). As John Law and Annemarie Mol explain, the aspiration is not only to 'allow the simple to coexist with the complex', but also to find 'ways of describing the world while keeping it open' (2002: 16-17). Is the above brief description useful in that may help us navigate our way to the exhibition? Yes certainly, and more information would perhaps be superfluous, and even distract from the task in hand. Is such a description telling us much about the practice of the institution, the process(es) of meaning making that may take place in its spaces? No, for that we also need to consider different space, and 'increase' the complexity of our analysis. For example, the above 'simple' description of our journey could be met with another 'simple' point about agency in the Gallery. We could say that this is a journey which contains *choices*, where the agency is solely with the visitor to choose where they go: 'Simple description, simple choices, agency is solely with the visitor as an act of volition' (Hetherington 1997: 201). Yet, as Hetherington goes on to suggest, there is a 'more complex level' regarding the journey we take through the galleries, 'this passage means moving through a series of connected spaces that are architecturally designed so that one moves in a certain direction while being given a series of choices' (1997: 201). The architectural design of The Hepworth mediates our navigation of the space, so that we have no choice but to follow the chain of gallery spaces (Fig. 3); the stairs we ascend to the galleries, the numbered room panels, the guides that we hold, all leading our way.

The (heterogeneous) materiality of the space thus informs and mediates our 'choices'



to navigate this space. This is not only in the sense that there are doors (openings), walls, stairs, lifts, shop cabinets and so on; but there are also literal, material signs, 'signs that point the way, sign that tell us what we are looking at, signs that perform in relation to other signs' (Hetherington 1997: 201). Within The Hepworth, each gallery space is clearly numbered, these numbered spaces clearly labelled in the *What's On* guide, which itself often (though not always) contains a floor plan of the (numbered) galleries to help people navigate their way around. These signs *help* us choose the 'correct' way; correct in the sense that this is the way the Gallery wants us to look. In this sense, 'Agency is now mediated by the space itself and the semiotics of its heterogeneous materiality' (Hetherington 1997: 201).

Fig. 3. Map of galleries which form a closed circuit. *What's On: Summer 2014*, The Hepworth Wakefield.

By holding together these two ('simple') approaches to considering space, we have now added a little complexity to understand something further about The Hepworth and the effect of its materiality. Extending Hetherington's argument I would also reaffirm that one approach is not 'less good' than the other; what could be taken as simple description of Euclidean space can be met with notion of material agency of the gallery building itself, to add complexity to or understanding of the journey we take to the exhibition. By attending to each, exploring what

they foreground or suppress allows us to build a more complex picture of the elements that constitute the assemblage of The Hepworth at that moment, as we shall see in our exploration of the next mode of analysis, that of 'discursive space'.

### Barbara Hepworth and Modernist Art Discourse: The Museum as Discursive Space

We understand that the gallery space itself is mediating the agency of its visitors, but our progress is also being mediated by our education and cultural capital, by our ability to decode the code of the museum (Bourdieu 1984, 1990). Let us now consider the code of The Hepworth, and the narratives that it is aiming to construct. To put it briefly, the Gallery is formed of 'collection' and 'exhibition' spaces. The collection galleries (Galleries 1-6) largely feature modern art, most often by Barbara Hepworth and her contemporaries, and are habitually used to showcase the Wakefield art collection, which includes the historical works related to Wakefield and the wider Yorkshire region. Alongside these 'collection' galleries, The Hepworth also has a programme of temporary exhibitions (Galleries 6-10), usually, but not always, consisting of contemporary artists who are seen as significant within the art world, significant in the sense of an artist that would be recognized and thought interesting by the national and or international art world discourse. For example, in Spring 2016 the *Martin Parr* retrospective fulfilled the desire for national, if not international, significance due to his prestige as an artist; receiving such accolades as 'arguably Britain's greatest living photographer'.<sup>8</sup>

Not only is the ambition here to have multiple entry points into the Gallery, catering for a range of tastes and interests, but also to ensure that collections and the contemporary always have a 'relationship' and are 'complementary',<sup>9</sup> whether that be in terms of their materiality, forms or relationships with the (Yorkshire) landscape; this is seen by the curators as a way to help people access or understand the work.<sup>10</sup> These mutually supporting visual, if not conceptual, relationships are seen to facilitate visitors understanding through the opportunity to make 'connections' between them.<sup>11</sup> These narratives can be said to be constructed in two ways, firstly, *between* the various gallery spaces, their stories reinforcing and developing understanding of a particular narrative; and secondly, *within* each space through the particular placement of objects and the interpretation in the space. Indeed, we find these narrative connections between *Des Hughes* and other gallery spaces of The Hepworth. These include narratives of material, where evocations of bronze and plaster clearly relate to Hepworth's work; narratives of form, including the organic shapes of Hughes's sculptures mirrored in *The Hepworth Family Gift*, which can be glimpsed through the opening to Gallery 5 (Fig. 4), as well the recurring motif of the figure, most significantly the reclining figure, which explores the important theme of Henry Moore's work; and, narratives of place, where explicit links to Yorkshire are constructed though the focus of Wakefield's neighbour Castleford (Moore's birthplace), and thus the importance of the region for the influential artists Hepworth and Moore.

Within the space of *Des Hughes* this overarching narrative of place is developed into a very particular local narrative, concerned with the community/communities of Castleford and their relationship to Moore's artwork as constructed through the placement of archive material, photographs and letters all relating to the development and reception of Moore's gift. This narrative of local community is then further developed by the placement of the local school children's objects in the same space, in dialogue with this archive material, with Moore's gift and with *Des Hughes*' artworks. This strong community thread is key, and it is significant that the planning and development of the exhibition was different from the usual approach at The Hepworth. One of the Gallery's curators was keen to assert that an important feature of this exhibition was that it was driven by both a curator and a member of the Learning Team, working together in partnership, rather than Learning being brought in at the end to 'merely' respond to the finished exhibition.<sup>12</sup> They went on to say that within the arts (or specifically arts management) there are some who have the vision for the potential of shows like this, and then there are some who are very cautious about the inclusion of community or socially engaged practice within the 'proper' gallery spaces, let alone into the core of the artistic programming. This is very much to do with notions of artistic integrity - will the work produced be any 'good', or indeed, of artistic 'excellence'? What value might it have to peers on the international arts scene?



Fig. 4, Installation view of *Des Hughes: Stretch Out and Wait*, looking through to *Barbara Hepworth's* work in Gallery 5. Photo: Stuart Whipps. Image courtesy The Hepworth Wakefield and Des Hughes.

Such sentiments are directly implicated in the local/(inter)national dualism set out at the beginning of this paper. As Declan McGonagle points out, the issue is the perceived marginal position that community arts has within culture, and exhibitions such as this can face 'regular attacks on grounds of quality of practice or that it was somehow not concerned with art at all but was simply "sociology by other means"' (2007: 426). If this kind of exhibition is not valued and embraced by the leaders of arts organizations, that is to say, an organization wide refusal of the hierarchized binary of (local) community in contrast to (inter/national) art, then they will never be more than one-offs or special events rather than at the core of the organization and all its practices. Even in this case, we see these tensions still at play, made manifest in the two text panels included in the space. The panel directly to your right as you enter the exhibition is titled *Des Hughes: Stretch out and Wait*, and the panel to the left of the students' work is titled *Castleford Inspires: Henry Moore, Des Hughes and the Reclining Figure Project*. This is clear manifestation of the material in the space acting in tension, challenging each other, pulling in different directions. Although the children's objects create a folding in of school, community, amateur, the text panel performs an acknowledgment of difference, of holding separate. What is produced here is a very particular type of narrative, one that is semiotically encoded as 'other' or 'peripheral' to the core of the Gallery's mission and values; or even transitory and temporary compared to the dominating and relatively stable spatial narrative of the gallery spaces.

Following Hetherington's lead, thus far we have discussed the Gallery as a Euclidean space, and, as a signifying and classifying (discursive) space; exploring particular interpretation and meaning-making practices. We have even, following Stuart Hall, begun to explore the notion of certain codes taking dominance in the Gallery's representations (1992). Regarding the exhibits encountered in The Hepworth, I would argue this dominant code is that of internationally significant modern and contemporary art as seen through the gaze of modernist aesthetics and display techniques. In this process the art works, and the narrative that they help to construct, signify 'art world' to those who are seeking this significance and would recognize them as such. According to Hetherington, 'Some visitors may happily accept that code. Others may

object' (1997: 202). Some visitors may, in fact, 'bring to bear an oppositional code'; they may question where the current, living city of Wakefield and its communities are to be seen in the Galleries representation. Where are the practising Wakefield artists and their work? Where are the interests and concerns of the people who live within the Gallery's direct vicinity? This type of questioning takes us back to the binary again, the tension felt by staff and stakeholders between 'local' and 'international' ambitions and responsibilities, and where and how these concepts are (or are not) represented in the spaces of The Hepworth.

So where has this taken us? This type of exploration of discursive space has explored the interpretation of material culture in meaning-making practices in the Gallery, to result in a conceptualization of *The Hepworth Wakefield* as modernist aesthetics and (inter)national significance. However, materiality and its agency are missing in the account thus far. If we are to take up the concept of heterogeneous materiality, we must think beyond the social. We must acknowledge that organizations are made up of lots of *things*, lots of *matter*—buildings, art works, policy documents, and people; and that, according to Law, these 'bits and pieces from the social, the technical, the conceptual, and the textual are fitted together' and are converted or translated in to *The Hepworth Wakefield* (1992: 381); and, as such, we must consider its more complex, topological space.

### The Hepworth Wakefield as Complex Topological Space

To explore this topological complexity at the City Museum in Staffordshire, Hetherington takes a detailed look at one object, Ozzy the Owl, and explores Ozzy's particular spatial effects; how this little slipware jug opens 'lines of flight down which we can pursue topological connections of time, place, space and things' in the heterogeneous materiality of the museum (1997: 205).<sup>13</sup> The act of Ozzy's insertion in the space of the City Museum is the key, as Ozzy displaced another object from its collection, an historically important book about Staffordshire pottery. Hetherington asserts that before he can begin to explore the spatial effects of this (dis) placement, we first have to consider the materiality of the space in which this displacement occurs; its history and development. Hetherington argues that Josiah Wedgwood is the central figure in the City Museum's collection; asserting that Wedgwood and his objects should be understood as 'a node, what Latour (1988) has described as an obligatory point of passage, in the heterogeneous network that constitutes the gallery; he is its organising principle through which everything else in the collection comes to make narrative sense' (1997: 210-211).

At The Hepworth, Barbara Hepworth and her artworks play a similar role. Galleries 4 and 5 - *Hepworth at Work* and *The Hepworth Family Gift* - form the only permanent exhibition spaces, and are thought of by the organization as its centre-point. Indeed, a curator described these spaces as acting 'like the central piece of interpretation that explains the whole ethos of the building and the Gallery'.<sup>14</sup> These galleries, and the narratives they perform, then become 'the pole star around which others will turn' (Serota 2000: 55); this operates in both a physical sense, in that the entire building was designed around the specifications of the work that forms part of *The Hepworth Family Gift*, as well as the perceived importance of these galleries to facilitate visitor understanding, to enable aesthetic and conceptual connections between work in the collections and exhibitions spaces. In this sense, Barbara Hepworth and her artworks may play a similar role to that of Wedgwood in The City Museum in Staffordshire. She forms the node, the obligatory point of passage through which the rest of The Hepworth's displays makes narrative sense, through the importance of her work and the relationship between making and process, collection and contemporary galleries:

So if you think about the gift [*The Hepworth Family Gift*], and that whole dialogue between the gift and the artist as maker is really, really strong. So hopefully that will always be there as a theme that runs throughout. It is about accessibility and making contemporary art have a connection to collection, and therefore be more accessible because you can approach it in that way.<sup>15</sup>

We saw from our exploration of the Gallery as a Euclidean and discursive space that there exists a curatorial intention to construct particular narratives; the ambition is not to produce a chronological history in the spaces of the Gallery, but to tell stories, whether they be about

material, landscape, process, and so on. Within this narrative intention lies particular ambitions, or perhaps stipulations. The narrative is to be firmly rooted in modern and contemporary art of national and international significance. The curators are not just using any old objects or materials to tell their stories. The discourse performed in these spaces is centred upon aesthetics and place. Here we encounter art with a capital A, we are told of the significance of Hepworth as an artist nationally and internationally, and therefore the significance of Wakefield and Yorkshire nationally and internationally as the place (and landscape) in which the artist developed.<sup>16</sup> Place in this instance is highly aestheticized, the focus being on the Yorkshire landscape and how its forms informed the work of Barbara Hepworth (and Henry Moore).

As Hetherington found in Staffordshire, in the materiality of Hepworth's work we encounter this discourse through 'a Kantian aesthetic associated with connoisseurship [of canonised modern British art] in the knowable geometry of a Euclidean space' (1997: 213). The discourse of place in this performance is key, as the ambition was for Wakefield to be improved as a place through the Gallery's representation of Hepworth's work and the narrative of her significance as an artist, her relationship to the place of Wakefield and Yorkshire, and thus the significance of that place (also by drawing in the relationship to Henry Moore). Embodying and fixing this discourse in the material space of the Gallery was seen as a way to pull Wakefield out of its decline by Wakefield Council in their regeneration strategy,<sup>17</sup> to improve Wakefield as a place through the display of high modern and contemporary art and the concomitant moral and aesthetic enlightenment of its citizens (Duncan and Wallach (1978) 2004; Duncan 1995). This was repeatedly raised in my conversations with members of Wakefield District Council, not only that 'As the council, the primary audience we are interested in is local people', but also in their concern for the local, the place of Wakefield by 'raising the public profile of Wakefield as cultural place and a good place to come and invest in and to live as well'.<sup>18</sup>

So how might these discourses be troubled in the space of *Des Hughes*, by the introduction of the school children's objects in to these highly aestheticized notions of art and place? Hetherington argues that the introduction of Ozzy into The City Museum creates a fold in its discourse. Ozzy brings with him something different, as 'his aesthetic is a popular aesthetic'; and 'with the arrival of Ozzy and his popularity, suddenly slipware, that product of domestic production, rather than the products of Wedgwood's famous factory, is the focus of attention' (Hetherington 1997: 213). Hetherington asks us to consider Ozzy as a fold in the narrative that ruptures the discourse of improvement and connoisseurship. He argues that 'Ozzy escapes the discourse of the museum space and brings to bear a blankness upon which other discourses about survival and fame come to be written' (1997: 209). This concept of functional blankness asserts that the agency of objects does not reside *within* them, but that their blankness allows for meaning to be generated by the heterogeneous network and inscribed *upon* them. Hetherington and Lee (2000) use the blank tile in a dominos set as an example, as the blank tile is indifferent to play of the game, it can fit in at any point, at any time. However, the 'blankness' of this blank tile should not be taken as a lack in comparison to the other tiles. The opposite is true. Rather than lacking their properties, the blank tile contains all of them *within* its blankness, to enable it to become many things - to become this *and* that (see also Middleton and Brown 2005).

This 'and'-ness has resonances with the 'is' to 'and' development of Deleuze and Guattari ((1988) 2000). Indeed, in their approach to 'The Fold' the focus is on becomings and multiplicities as opposed to territorialization and fixity. Their rhizome is about *and*, instead of *is*, as they state, 'the rhizome is the conjunction, "*and... and... and...*,"' (25). And this is the key point; to acknowledge these multiple (and partial) connections (Haraway 1988; Strathern 1991). When objects such as Ozzy enter a space and challenge the existing discourse, the rhizomic nature of the space can be revealed. The space is not split by Ozzy, rather it is folded. It is vital to acknowledge that within this space multiple and partial connections co-exist, which may be working with or against each other. Indeed, the challenges that objects can affect are necessarily contingent, as they are engendered by the very heterogeneity of the network that the gallery is constructed upon, and the heterogeneity that it performs in its displays (Hetherington 1997: 214-215). Like Ozzy, the inclusion of children's artworks within the *Des Hughes* exhibition creates a fold in the discourse. These little objects create ruptures in The Hepworth's performance of high modern and contemporary art, which is enabled through the

dominant representation of objects that are recognized as significant within the discourse of the art world. These folds have significant effects that change the topological complexity of the heterogeneous network of the Gallery, and we will explore this complexity now.

### The Folded Space of Des Hughes: Stretch Out and Wait

The inclusion of the children's sculptures creates a fold in the space of the Gallery, bringing to bear other spaces of school/youth, community, and amateur; as well as engendering connections to a different space-time – to the *Henry Moore and the Children of Castleford* exhibition at Wakefield Art Gallery in 1980. This was another exhibition of school children's work, one which took place 'in honour' of Moore's gift to Castleford. Indeed, the exhibition poster travels directly to us from this other space-time, resurrected from the archive and displayed in the centre of present day school children's objects (Fig. 2). In fact, these 'objects' are identified by the text panel as 'reclining figures'. Situated immediately to the left of their work, the panel states: 'This cabinet includes a selection of reclining figures produced by young people from Castleford Academy, Ackton Pastures Primary School, Castleford Park Junior Academy, Half Acres Community Primary School, Smawthorne Henry Moore Primary School and Three Lane Ends Academy' (The Hepworth Wakefield 2015b). Thus, although it makes no efforts to identify the individual producers of each of the figures, the panel is using the same language to identify their work as it uses to refer to Moore's. The children have produced reclining figures as Moore produced reclining figures. Developing the importance of the reclining figure motif, the text sets out Moore's 'obsession' with this theme, explaining that it was a 'subject that viewers could immediately identify and allowed him to freely explore more surreal and abstract ideas', going on to state that, 'these young people explored themes around the reclining figure and public art, creating sculptures and drawings in creative visual art workshops. All the resulting work, including sculptures, drawings and photographs are on display in our Learning Studios' (The Hepworth Wakefield 2015b). Although there was, in fact, a separate 'Learning' display, it is significant that these objects have been chosen to migrate 'up stairs' into the gallery spaces proper, to be placed on this special cabinet, in the special space of the *Des Hughes* exhibition. In this placing, these objects are indifferent to the pre-existing order of the gallery space, and so can occupy multiple positions; including that of a reclining figure, a school project, a representation of community, an amateur object, and so on. Moreover, they may take on a different and very personal meaning if encountered in the space of the Gallery by the child who made the object; such as pride or validation. Indeed, feedback from participating students included comments such as: 'I've felt proud because I took part in the project', and 'You don't have to be perfect to make a good piece of art'.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, we are beginning to see an increasing complexity in the space of the *Des Hughes* exhibition; the folding in of certain notions of 'local' community, amateur art, and the different time-space of Castleford in the 1980s. This space becomes even more complex if we consider the other material within it and their spatial effects. The first is that of the significance of Henry Moore and his relationship to the region. The text panel that we see on our right as we enter the space makes Moore's regional connection, and thus connection to the place of the Gallery, clear, stating that Hughes' exhibition is 'inspired by Castleford born Sculptor Henry Moore (1898-1986)', and that 'Castleford, [is] his birth place and a near neighbour of Wakefield' (The Hepworth Wakefield 2015c). So place, again, is being performed through the materiality of the space through Moore, his forms and material. The space is indeed full of Moore, full of his reclining figures, we cannot escape them. This makes up the very form of the children's work we have just discussed as well as Hughes' own sculptures. As such, the presence of Moore is performed through this recurring reclining figure motif, but also through texts and photographs that have been included from the archive. Because of this inclusion of such items from the Wakefield Permanent Art Collection other space-times are folded in to the space of the Gallery; we see 1980s Castleford, we see Henry Moore by his sculpture, we see his writing, we see others writing about him.

This material from the archive is the foundation of the exhibition. The archive chronicles the development of the former Wakefield Art Gallery's collection and the exhibition programme through 'numerous letters from artists, including Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, press

cuttings, photographs, exhibitions catalogues and other related ephemera' (The Hepworth Wakefield 2015c). We are told, by the text panel, that this was the inspiration for Hughes' exhibition. He was invited to explore the archives, and once there, we are informed, he 'was captivated by the level of detail in which the life of this work by Henry Moore was documented'. In particular, it was Hughes' recognition of the changing relations between place and artwork, between Moore's *Draped Reclining Figure* and the town of Castleford, which formed the basis of the exhibition. Hughes' interest was in these changing relations to Moore's sculpture, from its celebration to its ultimate removal. Gifted to Castleford in 1980, Moore's sculpture was originally situated outside Castleford's Civic Centre. Following the town's initial celebration (such as the honorific exhibition in Wakefield City Art Gallery), the sculpture was progressively affected by vandalism, and then due to fear surrounding a spate of thefts of public artwork in 2012, it was removed and placed in storage, for it to be finally re-displayed 'in the new Castleford Forum Museum' (The Hepworth Wakefield 2015c). As explained in the panel, 'Through letters, photographs and paperwork, we can observe the changing meanings, associations and attitudes towards a major work of art sited in the public realm: in this case, the artist's home town'; and that 'Hughes suggests that these interlinked, and at times problematic, narratives present an opportunity to reconsider the status and function of public art whilst also revealing the practical processes of making and placing sculpture in a particular context'. This is interesting on two levels: firstly, that the artist is explicitly exploring the relational nature of place and artwork, and the contingent nature of the choices regarding the making and display of such public work; and secondly, that this theme for the exhibition and the material it contains only arose once Des Hughes engaged with a particular place, the archive, and then the place and people of Castleford and the Wakefield region. This approach challenges traditional exhibition practice which perpetuates 'constructed values' regarding the meaning and value of art in society, namely that of the 'artist as genius-producer'; instead, it 'foreground[s] the idea of participatory practice and of the artist as negotiator [...] that is, someone who does not predetermine the form of the art before negotiating with context, people and/or place' (McGonagle 2007: 430).

Lastly, the exhibition, or rather the materials within it, disrupt the dominant narrative of The Hepworth; they disrupt the 'principles of British Modernism', they disrupt the dominant code of modernist aesthetic, they disrupt the narrative so carefully constructed by Hepworth and Moore regarding the notion of 'truth to materials' (The Hepworth Wakefield 2015c). These are conscious moves by Hughes. He is explicitly using, manipulating and juxtaposing materials to create this disruptive effect within the space of the Gallery. Indeed, this provocation is also acknowledged by the curators, who then relate it to the visitors through the text of the introductory exhibition panel:

In this display of archival items and his own work, Hughes engages with the historical role of public sculpture and unravels some of the principles of British Modernism through his use of often contradictory materials and wry visual humour. Hughes' sculptures and small "maquettes" attempt to disrupt conventional ideas of historic value, permanence and artistic authority. Bronze in Hughes' work is made to appear as if it were a flint found on a beach and what appears to be age rusted metal is in fact fresh plaster and resin. Hughes has also designed the display cabinets that mimic a style found in modernist homes of the 1930s, referring to and gently mocking the modernist notion of "truth to materials" that Moore and Hepworth championed during this period (The Hepworth Wakefield 2015c).

Consequently, we can see that the fold here is intentional and explicit, recognized and celebrated by both artist and curator, and shared with the audience so they too are 'in' on this calculated disruption.

## Conclusion

By layering methods for analyzing the space(s) of the gallery – the Euclidean, the discursive and the folded – we can better recognize the complexity of The Hepworth Wakefield as a heterogeneous assemblage of the social, material, political, spatial and geographical. This approach allows us to discover that there exist complex and multiple realities regarding 'local'

and 'community', as well 'international' and 'art world', that in the practice of the organization are often taken as essential and at odds, as we saw at the very beginning of this paper. These binaries were disrupted in *Des Hughes* exhibition, where a space was created in the organization for Exhibitions (curatorial) and Learning to work together productively, not as a distinct either/or creator/explainer, but as a folded set of practices; and, for the representations of community and high art to not only be in dialogue, or in the same space, but to also be the same things, folded in to each other. Therefore, we could acknowledge that The Hepworth Wakefield – through the discourses of its exhibitions and the objects contained within them – is local and international, and community, and artistic excellence, and ..., and ..., and ....., and I do assert that the Gallery is many things, but that is not to say that it is all of these things equally. It is important to attend to the possible limits and inequalities of meanings and values of *The Hepworth Wakefield*, that power may not be evenly distributed between the concepts of 'community' and 'high art'. The 'ands' may exist in tension, and one may dominate over the other. This has been eloquently argued by Griswold et al.: 'We argue both objects and people can potentially shape interpretation and action, while still leaving room for inequalities in how power operates with different configurations of actants, rendering some actants more or less powerful in shaping meaning and action' (2013: 347). Thus, within complex relations and connections between the local and (inter)national responsibilities and accountabilities, power is not necessarily evenly distributed, and within the shifting configurations that construct *The Hepworth Wakefield*, some actants are rendered more or less powerful than others, and some concepts and/or approaches to practice gain more or less traction (Griswold et al 2013: 347). This is the work of stabilizing and destabilizing components of an assemblage, where we saw points of challenge within a system – such as the work of the Curator, Learning Team member, Des Hughes, artist practitioners and school children working together on the *Des Hughes* exhibition – yet overall *The Hepworth* remained stable, territorialized as an international modern and contemporary art gallery (with a focus on 'high art', aesthetics and so on) (Macdonald 2009: 125). What we are seeing are moments of oscillation, where the inclusion of school children's sculptures in the 'proper' exhibition space destabilizes the overall system of *The Hepworth* (Macdonald 2009: 126); but, these destabilizing effects are perhaps settled by the discrete, but nevertheless present, designation as 'other' through the information panel with its different exhibition title, that named the project based nature of these works and marked them as separate from the rest of *Des Hughes* exhibition. The conflicting ideas of 'community' and 'high art' were, for that moment, held in productive tension – the elevation of 'amateur' community art in the space of the Gallery, yet without the full endorsement from the Gallery as 'official' works of art (where there would be no need for a special and separate title to explain/excuse their presence in the gallery space). There is, however, productive potential here for galleries, such as *The Hepworth*, to acknowledge and hold on to conflicting organizational goals within the spaces of their exhibitions (as well as programming, operations, and so on). To work towards positive integration of multiple approaches, allowing for becomings and embracing complexity without striving to settle it.

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### Notes

- 1 This work was undertaken as part of my PhD research, supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.
- 2 I of course acknowledge the existence of art worlds and communities, which are multiple and coexisting, rather than a singular, monolithic 'art world' or 'community' per say. This does get drawn out later in the paper, but in this context the use of 'art world' and 'community'

- are drawn through the particular experience and articulations of staff at The Hepworth Wakefield, as discussed.
- 3 Visitor Services survey response, The Hepworth Wakefield, 2015.
  - 4 Member of the Learning Team, group interview by author, digital recording, 23 October 2014, The Hepworth Wakefield.
  - 5 Law, J. (2015) 'STS as Method', Heterogeneities Dot Net: John Law's STS webpage <http://heterogeneities.net/papers.html>, accessed 2 June 2017.
  - 6 Hetherington provides an excellent overview of the use of Foucault in museum studies (2015).
  - 7 Wakefield Together: Wakefield District Partnership (2015) 'Wakefield: State of the District, Summer 2015', <http://www.wakefieldtogether.org.uk/information-and-documents>, accessed 18 September 2016.
  - 8 Sooke, A. (2016) 'Martin Parr: "If I knew how to take a great photo, I'd stop"', The Telegraph. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/photography/what-to-see/martin-parr-if-i-knew-how-to-take-a-great-photo-id-stop/.html>, accessed 24 June 2017.
  - 9 Natalie Walton, Head of Learning at The Hepworth Wakefield, interview by author, digital recording, 15 June 2012, The Hepworth Wakefield.
  - 10 Gemma Millward, Curator at The Hepworth Wakefield, interview by author, digital recording, 25 November 2011, The Hepworth Wakefield.
  - 11 Natalie Walton, interview, 15 June 2012.
  - 12 Curator at The Hepworth Wakefield, personal communication, 10 March 2016.
  - 13 'Line of Flight' is a key term developed from Deleuze, where 'flight' is the translation from French fuite, and should not be confused as bearing any relation to flying. It is rather about the act of fleeing, or eluding, or perhaps flowing, leaking, or disappearing (Massumi (2000) 2004: xvi; Deleuze and Guattri (1988) 2004). In Hetherington's use, or certainly in the way I am employing the concept, we should think of the creation or production of a rupture, a leak - a line of fuite/flight which we may then follow.
  - 14 Gemma Millward, interview, 25 November 2011.
  - 15 Natalie Walton, interview, 15 June 2012.
  - 16 Without Barbara Hepworth and her relationship to the place of Wakefield it makes no sense for the Gallery to be in *this* place as opposed to any other, such as Leeds, or Manchester, or Sheffield. Indeed, this place, the city of Wakefield, is its main strength and also one of its biggest weaknesses. This place is why The Hepworth exists, but also why it struggles.
  - 17 The Wakefield Cultural Strategy was produced by Wakefield Council and Wakefield District Partnership, 'Wakefield District Cultural Strategy, 2007-2012', Wakefield Council website, <http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/CultureAndLeisure/CulturalStrategy/default.html>, accessed 24 May 2012.
  - 18 Member of Wakefield District Council, interview by author, digital recording, 23 October 2015, Wakefield One.
  - 19 Anonymous participant feedback for the 'Castleford Inspires' Project, 2015, The Hepworth Wakefield.

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