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Practices of curating contemporary art programmes within three historic house settings in Scotland: a mixed methods inquiry

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Information Studies

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Abstract

Building on UK-based scholarship from 2020 by Nick Cass, Rebecca Farley, Niki Black, and others, which established the area of study referred to as contemporary art in heritage, this thesis offers insight into the nuances of curating arts programmes in historic house settings. Despite the rapid expansion of the practice of contemporary art commissioning and programming in designated heritage contexts (including historic houses) since the 1990s, few studies in the academic fields of heritage, art history, or museology critically evaluate the role and impact of this practice. This thesis addresses this gap, foregrounding the perspectives of contemporary curators and artists, and reassessing the relevance of heritage engagement in creative practices enacted at historic house sites.

The methodology used combines case study, ethnographic, and curatorial practice-based research approaches to examine three cases of contemporary art programmes based within rural historic estates in Scotland – Hospitalfield in Arbroath, Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute, and Jupiter Artland west of Edinburgh. First, the thesis maps the missions of all three organisations to understand how each defines and publicly represents its heritage context. Second, it contrasts organisational perspectives with the claims of recent arts graduates, commissioned artists, programme directors, and exhibition coordinators who have engaged with these programmes to assess how/if heritage plays a role in creative practices, as well as the perceived benefits and challenges of practicing within historic house contexts. Finally, it demonstrates the breadth of alternative vocabulary used by curators and artists to redefine established commissioning models; the unique curatorial approaches each organisation employs in their efforts to host contemporary artists, adapt to practical challenges, and relate to wider arts networks; and the benefits and challenges of carrying out commissions and/or participating in residency programmes at each of these sites.

The thesis has relevance to debates about site specificity, artists' interventions, place-based art practices, and creative ecologies. It also offers a toolbox of practical recommendations for more artist-centred approaches to creative programming in heritage settings.

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Author's Declaration

I certify that this PhD thesis is solely my own work, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others. It does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree. I declare that this thesis has been produced in accordance with the University of Glasgow's Code of Good Practice in Research.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it is permitted without full acknowledgement.

Oona Dooley

Abbreviations

C1-6	Curator (informants numbered 1-6 in order of appearance in thesis)
A1-8	Artist (informants numbered 1-8 in order of appearance in thesis)
RQ	Research Question
UoG	University of Glasgow
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
MCAHE	Mapping Contemporary Art in the Heritage Experience
OSCR	The Scottish Charity Regulator
PaR	Practice as Research
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Project background

Every Friday in early 2019, I would wake up before dawn, speedwalk over Glasgow's River Clyde, and catch the first train to Arbroath, a sprawling seaside town in Angus. These sleepy journeys along the east coast of Scotland are now calcified in my memory as a series of images: the sun rising somewhere near Kirkcaldy, unexpected flurries of snow, or later in spring, neon swathes of rapeseed crowding the train windows. I would routinely jolt to consciousness somewhere between Arbroath's train station and the lawn of Hospitalfield House, stomping at a pace to arrive by 9am. Then, I would wait outside for admittance, feeling small underneath crenelated parapets of red sandstone (Figure 1).

One story of Hospitalfield House starts in 1843 with the marriage of heiress Elizabeth Fraser and artist Patrick Allan, who together remodelled the property in the Scots Baronial style, heavily inspired by Arts and Crafts design. The house has since been the site of a residential art school, a postgraduate college of art, and most recently, the base for a contemporary art organisation. This was also the destination of my weekly commute, where I carried out a semester-long work placement managing Hospitalfield's historic object collection and letters archive, completed in partial fulfilment of a Museum Studies MSc at the University of Glasgow (UoG). I collaborated with a team of knowledgeable volunteers, learning Doric phrases and where to buy local smoked haddock (Arbroath smokies) while cataloguing collection items. We often huddled together for warmth in the drawing room, surrounded by and occasionally using the staged displays of period furniture. I even resided on site for a week, rising early to transcribe letters from the 19th century artists who also once stayed at Hospitalfield, the long hours punctuated by bike rides to the cliffs of Auchmithie or dinner in the warm homes of volunteers. During this time, I assisted one of the resident artists, Rachel Adams, with installing a sculpture commission outside Hospitalfield's garden walls, facing the North Sea (Figure 2). Constructed using a cool blue mesh material patterned like a supersized circuit board, Adams' installation *Hothouse* vibrated in stark, alien contrast to its earthen surroundings—grass, trees, sea, and the red sandstone house.

This everyday tactile engagement with the objects in the house was the beginning of years of research into Hospitalfield. This included not only its rich history, dating to the 13th century,

but also its contemporary uses as a space for artists' residencies, with accommodation, studios, and communal meals provided. The historic collection reflects these layers of history, predominantly comprising of paintings spanning from the 19th-20th centuries, but also containing some 21st century acquisitions. Although I was immediately fascinated with this exciting juxtaposition of new and old material culture during my work placement, my sustained interest was in the perceived *continuity* of historic and contemporary art practices, and how this is framed in Hospitalfield's current programme. By 2020, I formally began this doctoral research, entering a new field of study which specifically considers contemporary art practices in UK heritage settings.

This research started with a curiosity about the contemporary art programme and artists' engagement with the historic house setting at Hospitalfield. It soon expanded to include two other examples of contemporary art programmes based within Scottish historic house settings: Mount Stuart, on the Isle of Bute, and Jupiter Artland, west of Edinburgh. In placing these three examples in conversation with one another, framed by persistent critical engagement with recent publications on the intersection of contemporary art and heritage, a series of research aims and questions emerged.

The rest of Chapter 1 first introduces the recent field of research on contemporary art and heritage practices (1.2), and then presents the research aims, questions, and methods of this thesis (1.3), as well as its subsequent structure (1.4), novel contribution (1.5), and scope (1.6).



Figure 1. Exterior view of Hospitalfield, Arbroath. Dooley, O. 2019.



Figure 2. Image of Rachel Adams' installation 'Hothouse' at Hospitalfield, Arbroath. April 2019-September 2019. Dooley, O. 2019.

1.2 Entering a new field of research: contemporary art in heritage

Since the 1990s, heritage organisations in the UK have increasingly been undertaking contemporary art commissioning, with claims of reinterpreting heritage and reaching new audiences (Cass *et al*., 2020; Farley and Pollock, 2022). This PhD research engages with an emerging field of study which critically examines this intersection of contemporary art and heritage in the UK (Cass *et al*., 2014-17; Cass, 2015; 2019; Burton *et al*., 2017-2019). Scholars have demonstrated the impact of contemporary art practice on heritage representations and audience experiences in England, drawing upon a wide range of academic disciplines, as well as the practical experiences of cultural planners, heritage practitioners, and museum curators (Cass *et al*., 2020; Farley and Pollock, 2022).

Often referred to as contemporary art and heritage (Cass *et al*., 2020), this transdisciplinary research area is difficult to describe in a way that reflects its intersectional and practice-centred dimensions. Following Black and Farley's naming convention in *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* (2020), I most often refer to it as contemporary art in heritage, which describes a specific type of arts commissioning in the UK (Black and Farley, 2020). Occasionally, I prefer the shorthand arts in heritage, also used by Black and Farley (2020), which better acknowledges the wide range of artistic practices taking place in heritage settings. The creative practices of musicians, illustrators, writers, or performers are represented within this critical framework, especially those sidelined by the narrower designation of contemporary art. As this research mainly concerns contemporary art programmes, and is informed by curatorial studies of contemporary art, it embraces the designation with the intention to remain inclusive to a range of creative practices.

Theoretical approaches to heritage have undergone significant critical shifts since the 1990s, expanding definitions of heritage to encompass not only material, but also intangible and social dimensions (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2012; Waterton and Watson, 2013). In tandem, theoretical developments in museology have moved away from authoritative, object-centred museum models and proposed more polyvocal, human-centred frameworks (Vergo, 1989; Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1997, Shelton, 2013). These shifts provide an essential starting point for mapping heritage as a complex process beyond what is visible and tangible and investigating what heritage means to individual practitioners. Nevertheless, in discussions

of contemporary art in heritage, the critical disciplines of heritage studies and museology are divorced from curatorial studies and practice. Links between user-focused approaches to heritage and display practices and the "approachable, empathetic" strategies of critical curators seeking to make space for communities (Sivanesan *et al*., 2018, 106) could benefit scholars and practitioners in their shared efforts to assess or design arts in heritage projects.

Thus far, arts in heritage research in the UK has left many stones unturned. Concentrated on audience evaluations (Cass, 2015, 2019; Cass *et al*., 2020), artist perspectives on heritage engagement are especially overlooked. Moreover, there is a tendency to prioritise site-specific commissioning practices and temporary exhibitions in critical assessments (Cass, 2019; Cass *et al*., 2020), usually aligned with contemporary art interventions initially enacted in museum contexts (Robins, 2013; Black and Farley, 2020; Ashton, 2020; Williams, 2020). The privileging of data collected around major commissions (Cass *et al.*, 2014-17; Burton *et al*., 2017-2019) further obscures other potential formats for artistic engagement with heritage settings. This thesis intends to clarify aspects of this murky terrain with a selection of open-ended questions, addressed in the following subsection.

1.3 Research aims, questions, and methods

Bringing together critical heritage studies, critical museology, and curatorial studies, this PhD research intends to shift the emphasis away from audience experiences and towards creative practitioner experiences—namely, those of artists and curators—and opts for three new Scotland-based examples of contemporary art programmes based within historic house settings.

The research aims to 1) gain insight into the nuances of developing contemporary art programmes and artworks in historic house settings; 2) reassess the relevance of heritage engagement in creative practices enacted at sites deemed historically important; and 3) indicate new directions for thinking about and programming contemporary art within heritage settings, based on practitioner testimonies. Scaffolded by these exploratory aims, this project sets out to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1. How do contemporary art programmes based within historic house settings represent and define heritage? In what ways do contemporary art practices intersect with this perceived heritage?

RQ 2. Based on the perceptions and experiences of contemporary art practitioners working within historic house settings, in what capacity does heritage play a role (if any) in the curatorial/artistic process?

RQ 3. How do common curatorial strategies (such as site-specificity or intervention) factor into curatorial and artistic practices within historic house contexts? How can contemporary art programmes in heritage contexts exceed or challenge these common frameworks? What are the perceived practitioner benefits/challenges of these programmes?

RQ 1 and RQ 2 respond to common theoretical approaches present within the arts in heritage debate, which often concern how heritage can be reimagined or reinterpreted through the lens of contemporary art with primarily audiences in mind (Cass, 2019; Cass *et al.* 2020). These questions problematise how contemporary art programmes and practitioner experiences are shaped by heritage, flipping the dominant discourse on its head. Cass *et al.* (2020) briefly address "whether it is useful to position contemporary art as temporally distinct and separate from heritage", concluding that although this juxtaposition is less straightforward than an intersection of two distinct areas, each with its own theoretical complexities, framing it as such can "generate productive outcomes" worth exploring (4). While this research is similarly "founded upon the conviction that to exhibit contemporary art within heritage spaces forms an 'intersection' of practices which is significantly complex" (Cass *et al.,* 2020, 3), it also grapples with the inadequacy of examining these practices from mostly the heritage side of the intersection, bringing the arts side under more scrutiny. RQ 3 addresses how curators can rethink common programming strategies, foregrounding the needs of contemporary artists engaged with arts in heritage practice.

The methodology, which combines case study research (Tsang, 2014; Sørensen, *et al.*, 2018), ethnographic research (Davies, 1999; Schensul and LeCompte, 2012; Pickard, 2013), and practice-based curatorial approaches (Nelson, 2013; Candy and Edmonds, 2018; Muller and Langill, 2021;Triscott, 2023), is designed to synthesise theoretical and practical forms of knowledge-construction to answer the research questions, embracing the firsthand observations of the researcher as a rigorous interpretive tool. This inquiry, fortified by critical theory and curatorial practice, strives to instigate a productive dialogue between organisational perspectives and practitioner perspectives. In doing so, it uncovers distinct experiences of

contemporary art in heritage and investigates the challenges and benefits of contemporary art in heritage programmes, relating back to the wider research aims.

The research findings contribute to wider academic efforts to develop a critical language for assessing the intersection of contemporary art and heritage spaces (Farley and Pollock, 2022), clarifying some of the nuances of practitioner experiences in these contexts. Further, the research endeavours to strengthen links between disparate fields of research, merging curatorial studies with museology and heritage studies to reassess contemporary art in heritage strategies. Finally, the findings inform curatorial practice in heritage contexts, feeding back not only to the project's case studies, but also external heritage organisations engaged in similar commissioning activities or open to developing contemporary art programmes in the UK or further afield.

1.4 Thesis structure

Following the introduction to this PhD research, Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature, first providing an overview of critical theory in arts and humanities scholarship, then narrowing in focus to examine the emerging field of contemporary arts in heritage practice, and finally, discussing common curatorial approaches in heritage contexts. It establishes a critical theoretical framework for approaching the research questions and argues that the gap between heritage and art curation in both critical theory and practice requires bridging. It also informs the curatorial practice-based component of the methodology, based on evidence that artist and curator perspectives in the literature are wanting.

Chapter 3 presents and justifies the methodology for this research, beginning with a reflexive discussion about the positionality of the researcher. Then, it discusses the immersive research approaches which were chosen to operate in synthesis, blending curatorial practice-based and ethnographic research methods, contained within a case study research framework. With reference to methodological literature and curatorial theory, it explains how this research strives to centre the experiences of artists and curators working at the intersection of art and heritage, valuing participant subjectivity in knowledge construction. Next, it addresses the qualitative data-collection techniques, including participant observation, field notes, and semi-structured interviews, as well as approaches used for sampling and handling transcriptions. Lastly, it discusses techniques used for analysing this qualitative data, such as close text readings, thematic coding, and descriptive narrative.

Chapters 4-6 present the research findings, each corresponding to one of the three research question sets. Chapter 4 examines organisational documentation to understand how Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland define heritage. It uses primarily qualitative analysis, such as close text readings of organisational statements, but also employs light quantitative analysis of financial records. Further, it investigates how each contemporary art programme is framed within or alongside these representations of heritage. Chapter 5 contrasts these organisational perspectives with the testimonies of contemporary artists and curators working within each of these settings to determine how (or if) heritage plays a role in creative practices, as well as the perceived benefits and challenges of practicing within historic house contexts. Exclusively referring to interview findings, it relies on qualitative techniques such as thematic coding, close text readings, and comparative analysis. Chapter 6 demonstrates a) the breadth of alternative vocabulary used by curators and artists to redefine established curatorial models, b) the unique curatorial approaches each organisation employs in their efforts to host contemporary artists, adapt to practical challenges, and relate to wider cultural ecologies; and c) the benefits and challenges of carrying out commissions and/or participating in residency programmes at each of these sites. Along with qualitative coding and close text readings of interview findings, it also incorporates thematic analysis of both ethnographic and curatorial fieldnotes, adding a dimension of descriptive narrative rich with sensory information.

Chapter 7 synthesises key findings in a final discussion, indicating areas for further research.

1.5 Novel contribution

The emerging field of arts in heritage scholarship grapples with analysing over 30 years of art commissioning practices in UK heritage sites, with a focus on evaluating the impact of site-specific artworks on heritage interpretation and audience experiences (Cass *et al*., 2014-17; Cass, 2015; 2019; Burton *et al.*, 2017-2019; Cass *et al.*, 2020). While scholars provide a starting point for historicising, classifying, and interpreting arts in heritage practice as it continues to evolve, critical discussions are recent and limited to a few studies, using primarily examples based in England. Moreover, the literature neglects to include or fully assess the perspectives of creative practitioners. Although framed as an “intersection” between heritage and art (Cass *et al.*, 2020, 3), scholars have yet to adequately scrutinise how artists define heritage or relate such commissions to their wider practices. The challenges faced by artists, as well as the benefits of such commissions, also require closer examination.

This research shifts attention away from audience experiences and towards those of creative practitioners working in heritage contexts, amplifying curator and artist perspectives. Its mixed methodology promotes critical reflection on the subjective role of the researcher in knowledge production (Davies, 1999), while gaining insight from curatorial thinking (Muller and Langill, 2021), participatory fieldwork, and interviews with informants, making visible the nuanced and experimental practices of artists and curators working at the intersection of art and heritage. The qualitative findings offer novel perspectives regarding how commissioned artists conceptualise heritage, interact with heritage sites, and communicate about their creative processes, pointing towards more dynamic and multimodal ways of understanding arts and heritage practices. Crucially, the findings have practical implications for heritage organisations, contemporary art curators, and a range of creative practitioners invested in developing cultural networks and enriching creative careers, providing concrete examples of benefits and challenges experienced. Further, it uncovers types of arts in heritage programming not adequately examined in dominant arts in heritage discourse. The findings spotlight the prevalence of artists' residencies in Scotland-based historic houses, as well as practices beyond site-specific sculpture and installation art, including the work of illustrators, applied artists, creative writers, performers, and musicians in heritage contexts.

Finally, this research argues for more integration between contemporary art curation and heritage curation, bringing the methods of curatorial studies in closer conversation with critical heritage and museological theory. It demonstrates a potential for nurturing healthier cultural ecologies in arts and heritage practices (Holden, 2015), not only by fostering more knowledge exchange between independent heritage organisations, but also by bringing more contemporary art communities into heritage networks to fully support artists in their individual projects and careers.

1.6 Scope

This research includes three examples of arts in heritage programmes in Scotland to produce in-depth qualitative analyses of how heritage is engaged with and perceived by artists and curators. Afforded the scope to collaborate closely with Hospitalfield, I chose two other programmes also based within rural historic estates located in Scotland to establish a basis for comparison using ethnographic methods (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012). At Hospitalfield, I was able to co-develop a site-specific workshop to apply curatorial thinking (Muller and

Langill, 2021) and gather a body of practice-based findings. Most of the qualitative data collection took place at Hospitalfield, and given my previous research on the history of the site, there is a general tendency towards findings from this case. A substantial amount of data was also collected at Mount Stuart; however, this was limited by its more remote island location and relatively narrow breadth of commissioning practices. Conversely, the least amount of data was collected from Jupiter Artland where the historic house is a private residence and therefore less relevant to its programme, setting this case apart from the others. For this reason, only three interviews were conducted regarding Jupiter Artland, compared to five regarding Mount Stuart, and six regarding Hospitalfield. Overall, this body of data was sufficient for untangling complex and unique perspectives of participants to more critically interpret how contemporary art practices and heritage intersect.

A limited scope for this thesis, feasible within a 4-year PhD timeline and characteristic of ethnographic approaches using convenience sampling and comparable case selection techniques (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012, 284; 293), offered the capacity for approximately two years of immersive fieldwork. Given the methodology harnesses subjective perspectives as a form of knowledge production, including my own curator-researcher role in the project, it was crucial to sink deeply into the research practice. Longer and more frequent site visits enabled me to immerse myself in each respective research site and cultivate a "bloom space", a term coined by writer Kathleen Stewart (2010, 436) to refer to "literal contact, exposure to the rhythms, interruptions, bodies, and relations of a territory"[1], core ingredients in ethnographic data collection (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012).

The small sample size enabled opportunities for more frequent participant observation and more intensive data analysis during this limited time. Fewer informants enabled a capacity for 1-2.5 hour-long interviews, which offered chances to explore open-ended questions, capture the nuances of artistic processes, clarify or reiterate information, and establish the narrative voice of each informant. The analysis encompasses deep readings of extensive interview material, identifying a vast gradation of language used by art practitioners to describe their experiences and modes of working. Moreover, remaining within the same cultural context as my research institution has proven a sturdy basis for evaluating practitioner experiences and

[1] See Breen, 2020, for a separate discussion on the importance of the bloom space in collaborative art practices. It was Breen's use of the term that alerted me to the relevance of Stewart's theories on affect and the bloom space in relation to my own research methodology.

the language used, which would have been difficult to achieve beyond the UK. Choosing relatively peripheral locations within 2-3 hours of UoG, instead of urban-based examples, also served to foster new connections between UoG and arts organisations outside of the city, opening doors for future research and learning opportunities for students.

It is important to note that this research is not a reception-orientated study and does not consult audiences to determine how they interact with or respond to contemporary artworks in historic house settings. It is also not an art history or Scottish history thesis, although through documenting contemporary art projects in Scotland, the interview findings could make contributions to both fields. This research does not employ visual or formal analyses of artworks produced in historic house settings, nor consult primary sources to accurately describe historical contexts, although some primary sources (organisational reports, for example) are examined to establish institutional contexts. Rather, it employs comparative and thematic analysis methods to find patterns across organisational and practitioner claims. Further, this research does not consider the activities of office-based public art agencies which commission artworks for historic sites, although several are well-documented in the UK—such as Trust New Art (established by the National Trust and supported by partnerships with Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales), Arts&Heritage (funded by English Heritage), Artangel in London, or Locus+ in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The choice to limit the research to Scotland-based sites shifts the emphasis in UK arts in heritage discourse away from England-based examples for the first time. By including examples beyond office-based public art agencies, it has uncovered a wider variety of programming beyond the site-specific artworks currently dominating the literature, including residencies, festivals, one-off events, and permanent contemporary art collections. The transferability of these findings applies to local, national, and international contexts, offering detailed feedback on art and heritage projects in Scotland and encouraging more collaboration within Scottish cultural networks, as well as examples of strategies comparable to those practiced in the UK or abroad.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 establishes a critical theoretical framework for approaching the research questions and argues that contemporary art in heritage research requires further integration of curatorial methodologies and creative practitioner perspectives. Structured like a funnel with three major sections, this literature review begins with a general overview of relevant scholarship, then presents a detailed analysis of the emerging field of contemporary art in heritage (Black and Farley, 2020), and lastly, critiques texts concerning cultural programming in historic houses.

Section 2.2 focuses on the development of critical theory in arts and humanities, contextualising the emergence of contemporary art in heritage discourse (Black and Farley, 2020). It investigates the critical turn within heritage studies, museology, and curatorial studies since the 1990s, which moves away from traditional and authoritative models and instead centres on human experience. This reveals a need for greater integration between these academic disciplines, linking recent curatorial discourses with more established literature from heritage studies and museology.

Section 2.3 reviews scholarship on the emerging research field examining contemporary art in heritage practice, which represents a bridging of academic and professional perspectives, drawing upon history, heritage studies, archaeology, sociology, gender studies, and postcolonial studies, and the practical experiences of cultural planners, heritage practitioners, and museum curators. This area of research is concerned with critically assessing over 30 years of contemporary art commissioning activities at UK heritage sites, with an emphasis on evaluating the impact of this practice on heritage interpretation and audience experiences. It argues that, although framed as an "intersection" between heritage and art (Cass *et al.*, 2020, 3), scholars have yet to adequately scrutinise how artists conceptualise heritage or relate such commissions to their wider practices.

Section 2.4 discusses approaches to programming in historic houses from the most conventional strategy—the museumification of historic houses—to other strategies borrowed from museums and public art, including artists' interventions and/or site-specific practices. It demonstrates that the range of programming examined in the literature is limited and alternative formats for curating arts in heritage, such as artists' residencies, have yet to be

critically studied. Furthermore, this recent literature neglects to fully incorporate the critical language of curatorial studies or the creative methodologies of contemporary art curators.

Finally, Section 2.5 summarises the scope of relevant literature and underlying theories framing the research methodology (Chapter 3), which incorporates a practice-based curatorial approach and values the subjective experiences of creative practitioners in knowledge construction.

2.2 A critical turn in arts and humanities: heritage studies, museology, and curatorial studies

This section offers a general overview of the critical turn in the disciplines of heritage studies, museology, and curatorial studies, providing a frame of reference for the emerging arts in heritage debate. Each subject area is discussed individually to reflect discursive differences, especially since the field of curatorial studies is new and rapidly developing. However, rather than further siloing these strands of scholarship, overlap between critical frameworks is acknowledged and encouraged. The following subsections highlight the influences of each theoretical development on both museum and curatorial practices in western European and North American contexts by reviewing critical and post-critical positions. Underpinned by this layered paradigm shift, which moves away from conceptualisations of heritage as material (rooted in the disciplines of archaeology, art history, and anthropology), this research chooses to centre on human experientiality and the respective social roles of heritage, institutions, and curators according to individual perspectives. It also argues for more integration between the critical fields discussed, bringing the findings of curatorial studies in closer conversation with critical heritage and museology.

2.2.1 Critical heritage studies

In a 2013 article entitled “Framing theory: towards a critical imagination in heritage studies”, Waterton and Watson call for a “critical imagination” in developing their model of heritage as a personal, ever-shifting process (547). Rejecting established theories which prioritise materiality, expert perspectives, and authorised narratives of the past, Waterton and Watson’s appeal for a more contemporary, human-focused, and porous definition of heritage reflects a wider change towards understanding heritage as an inherently social experience (Waterton and

Watson, 2013). This critical approach to heritage did not arise in isolation, but concurrently with other post-structuralist studies across the arts and humanities, including subjects such as museology, sociology, literary theory, and psychoanalysis (Rampley, 2000, 138).

As explained by Laurajane Smith in *Uses of Heritage* (2006) and supported by Waterton and Watson (2013), heritage can be reimagined as a social or cultural process, enlivened by the subjective experiences and living voices of present-day users. This more recent notion of heritage as primarily social differs from previous definitions, including heritage as material, the post-1980s model of heritage as an industry drawing on specific sites, buildings, or artefacts to attract tourists and build economies (Waterton and Watson, 2013), and built heritage as a tool for fabricating and preserving place identities (Ashworth and Larkham, 1994). Moving away from these materiality-focused conceptualisations, a critical wave of heritage scholarship argues that heritage is driven by the participation of individuals or communities in cultural knowledge production, rather than by the preservation and display of material objects or sites as self-evident heritage (Smith, 2006; Dewdney *et al.,* 2013).

Black and Farley (2020) indicate that the factors determining this reconceptualisation of heritage can be distilled into three interrelated societal shifts beginning in the 1980s: 1) the boom in heritage as an industry, 2) the emergence of new approaches to audience engagement in museums and heritage, and 3) interventionist strategies in art and curation. While Black and Farley (2020) do not present these factors in terms of distinct cause and effect, they do identify a correlation between the heritage boom and societal impetus for more democratic notions of audiences and commissioning practices. Black and Farley (2020) show that treating heritage as a passive, marketable commodity has led to a widespread demand from audiences, artists, and curators for more personal, active, and inclusive participation. In turn, such a widespread need for more meaningful engagement in heritage could only be met by rewriting the definition of heritage as an open-ended and porous process with active participants rather than a one-size-fits-all packageable product (Black and Farley, 2020; Smith, 2006).

Evolving from the critical theories posited by Smith (2006) and Waterton and Watson (2013), the growing field of critical heritage continues to examine heritage as a social and interpersonal process which continuously occurs on both tangible and intangible levels between place, materials, and the experiences of individuals or a public. The Association of

Critical Heritage Studies founded by Smith in the early 2010s and now led by heritage architect Tokie Laotan-Brown upholds these beliefs and commitments on its website:

> At ACHS, we believe heritage is more than preserving the past—it is about critically engaging with how history is represented, whose stories are told, and how these narratives shape our world today. Our association is committed to fostering inclusive, interdisciplinary dialogue that addresses urgent issues such as decolonization, sustainability, social justice, and the role of heritage in shaping identity and community (Laotan-Brown, 2024).

Following Smith (2006), this pluralistic and processual model of heritage accommodates for the active deconstruction and re-presentation of heritage, foregrounding its social function. This can be understood as a reaction against the traditional model of heritage, which exclusively values the preservation of material heritage and perpetuates authorised narratives of the past in a passive institutional voice (Smith, 2006).

In *Heritage: Critical Approaches*, Harrison (2012) takes this critique of the traditional model of heritage further by positing that, in the context of globalisation, the social functions of heritage are inextricable from the material past (228). Harrison's "material semiotic" approach is directly influenced by actor-network theory, a sociological framework developed in the 1980s for understanding the way people, materials, and concepts (actors) generate shifting relationships (networks) and together produce social phenomena (Latour, 2005, cited in Harrison, 2012, 31). Following Latour's theories on social processes, Harrison (2012) writes that "heritage is not inert or passive but has the potential to engage directly with questions of contemporary global concern", such as prevalent social, political, economic, and environmental issues in late modern society (228-229). Neither social nor material factors take precedence in Harrison's conceptual model of heritage. Rather, heritage is seen as "a broad social (and simultaneously material) phenomenon" encompassing assemblages of landscapes, objects, food, practices, songs, events, and languages (Harrison, 2012, xii).

A critical disentangling of social (intangible) and material (tangible) heritage, which was initially studied by Smith (2006) and scrutinised further by Harrison (2012), recurs throughout this thesis as it maps perceptions of heritage at three historic houses. For this reason, a brief discussion about intangible versus tangible heritage is pertinent. The now widely accepted

definition of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) refers to cultural traditions, practices, knowledge, and values recognised as heritage "by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it" (UNESCO, 2021). This UNESCO definition of ICH, first drafted in 2003, states that cultural heritage requires contemporary recognition and maintenance via personal or collective channels. It is the ongoing heritage process, as experienced between and within users in the present day, which Smith centres her work on—distinct yet informed by the UNESCO definition (Smith, 2006; Smith and Akagawa, 2009).

Tangible heritage refers to the physical sites and materials often implicated in experiences of heritage. Cultural institutions such as museums, as well as those managing historic sites or houses, traditionally aim to preserve and display the material past, utilising collections, architecture, or other tangible landmarks to construct narratives. Problematically, such institutions are historically inclined to uphold hegemonic narratives of heritage, pointing to such materiality as evidence (Smith, 2006; Jones, 2018). Contemporary institutions have inherited the sociocultural authority to imbue tangible objects or sites with specific meaning and perpetuate "a single discourse about identity, nationhood, and creation of social cohesion in the face of potentially conflictual readings of the past" (Smith, 2006, cited in Waterton and Watson, 2013, 550). This institutional tendency, in which cultural memory and meaning-making is delivered in a top-down system with limited opportunities for contestation by heritage users, is termed by Smith as Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith, 2006).

Smith (2006) compellingly articulates that heritage is not a self-evident site or object, but rather a set of human values, associations, or memories, which can be affirmed or renewed by the tangibility of places and materials. Smith (2006) accordingly understands heritage as "an act of communication and meaning-making—indeed as an experience" (2). The social acts of visiting historic sites and engaging with historic objects are integral components of heritage practice, in that these are palpable ways to openly engage with or express approval of representations of the past (Crane, 1997; Smith, 2006; Jones, 2018; Black and Farley, 2020). Smith and Akagawa (2009) emphasise that these more tangible interactions with heritage play into larger intangible processes which permeate cultural value systems of contemporary societies. It is often within these tangible heritage settings that processes of cultural consumption/production of heritage unfold to inform intangible realities, such as present-day cultural values and identities (Smith, 2006).

It is important to point out that, unlike Harrison (2012), Smith (2006) positions her work in opposition to the dominant materiality-driven ideology, instead prioritising the intangible practices, traditions, values, and ways of knowing that are passed down and acknowledged by communities or individuals. While Harrison (2012) fairly concedes that the turn away from materiality has "been important in drawing attention to the knowledge/power effects of heritage and its processes of identification", he makes a strong case for the affective properties of materials on the contemporary world (9). Overall, Harrison's theory, which views both social and material "actors" as agents in dialogue and heritage as an emergent product of this relationship (Harrison, 2012, 9), is a more balanced approach. However, Smith's book *Uses of Heritage* (2006) is also an invaluable theoretical starting point for mapping heritage as a complex process beyond what is visible and tangible and investigating what heritage means to individual practitioners.

Indeed, sociologists have also made compelling arguments for a more personal heritage—an intangible process that continuously happens within a person, moving between individual and collective levels of meaning (Bagnall, 2003; Savage *et al.*, 2004). This concept of heritage as an experience might involve but expands beyond the physical realm, primarily building upon personal experiences. In this sense, heritage is processed both personally, in one's own thoughts and memories, and socially, weighed up against the thoughts and memories of others (Bagnall, 2003). Drawing upon anthropological discourse on emotion, several scholars consider how spheres of the personal and everyday interact within spaces of heritage, physically, discursively, or affectively (Macdonald, 1996; Crane, 1997; Bagnall, 2003; Macdonald, 2008; Byrne, 2012; Crouch, 2015; Panksepp and Biven, 2018; Ireland *et al.*, 2024). For example, Crane (1997) unravels the contention between the subjective experiences of heritage users and the authorised discourse perpetuated by memory institutions, and how this contention is expressed socially and emotionally by such users. Similarly, Bagnall (2003) examines issues of performativity and performance at heritage sites and argues that the relationship between person and site is just as rooted in imagination, reminiscence, and emotion as it is in cognition.

The critical shift in imagining heritage as an active, polyvocal, and dialectical process cultivates a more democratic approach to cultural participation, production, and evaluation, breaking down the operational divide between experts and laypersons in institutions and

engaging with contemporary issues on a global scale (Harrison, 2012, 9). These contributions, which challenge long-held definitions of heritage as material-based, are crucial for interrogating definitions of heritage described by artists and curators engaged in arts in heritage practice. The development of critical museology, discussed in the following section, is in direct conversation with this rethinking of heritage, echoing the emphasis on social processes, platforming user experiences, and rejecting traditional museum values.

2.2.2 Critical museology

Preceding the emergence of critical heritage was a major epistemological repositioning towards self-reflexivity and criticality in the field of museology (Shelton, 2013), notably heralded by books such as *The Museum Time Machine* (Lumley, 1988) and *The New Museology* (Vergo, 1989). Developments in critical social theory resulted in the rise of new disciplines, which in turn informed both heritage studies and museology, including gender studies, class studies, and postcolonial studies. In his 2013 article "Critical Museology: A Manifesto", anthropologist Anthony Shelton unpicks this critical shift in museum studies and usefully distinguishes between operational and critical museologies. Shelton (2013) explains that, while operational museology concerns the organisational, regulatory, and procedural elements of running a museum for primarily public audiences, critical museology interrogates the assumptions and power dynamics present in the broader realm of artistic and cultural production. Although critical museology might concentrate on operational museology as a subject, this branch is primarily theoretical in perspective and creates more questions than practical solutions (Shelton, 2013).

Examined from an operational standpoint, Vergo's book *The New Museology* challenges elitism in public museums by developing new interpretive strategies for exhibited objects, emphasising the pedagogical role of institutional spaces and development of culturally diverse audiences (Vergo, 1989). Shelton (2013) fairly criticises Vergo's "new museology" for being nebulous in definition. Nevertheless, Vergo's approach aligns with critical discourse in its interrogations of power latently exercised by cultural institutions and attempts to pivot the function of the museum in relation to its audiences (Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1997; Dewdney *et al.,* 2013).

Institutional critique, a contemporary art practice emerging in the late 1960s and developing throughout following decades, notably by artists such as Fred Wilson, Andrea Fraser, Marcel Broodthaers, and Hans Haacke, comprises a third branch of museology defined by Shelton as praxiological in nature (Putnam, 2009; Shelton, 2013). According to Shelton (2013), praxiological museology uses visual and performative media to challenge the "imaginaries, narratives, discourses, agencies, visual and optical regimes" upheld by public and private museums, heritage sites, gardens, art galleries, and other cultural institutions. For example, a praxiological approach might also aim to critique the western art historical canon or related vehicles of power such as colonialism, racism, the patriarchy, or classism (Robins, 2013). Robins (2013), Shelton (2013), and Marstine (2017) represent some of the only sources to consider institutional critique from a critical museological angle, while other art historical texts focus on documentation (Putnam, 2009).

Increasingly prevalent, the critical reframing of museums, exhibitions, and heritage uncovers the potential for institutions and heritage spaces to become "key sites" of cultural action (Butler and Lehrer, 2016). Indeed, Witcomb (2003) demonstrates in her foundational text *Re-imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* that although museums have historically been perceived as passive or neutral sites full of reticent objects, they are often active sites for meaningful engagement between governments, policy makers, and public audiences. Alongside these developments in rethinking institutional spaces, heritage spaces such as historic houses are being increasingly recognised as key sites for cultural and socio-political engagement between museum practitioners, governments, audiences, and other stakeholders such as contemporary artists and curators (Cass, 2019; Sivanesan *et al*., 2018; Vagnone *et al.*, 2016).

Pushing for further criticality, the 2013 book *Post-Critical Museology* (edited by Dewdney *et al*.) places the subjectivity and agency of audiences at the heart of museological practices to "open up new avenues of meaning and purpose" for museum professionals, researchers, and other users (16). This approach directly responds to the noted "crisis of representation", or evident lack of "minority" audiences, at Tate Britain and tackles problems of audience engagement with UK art museums (Dewdney *et al*., 2013, 5). The authors find a major discrepancy between the art museum's fixed notion of its audiences and the transcultural identities present in contemporary user groups. This post-critical position emphasises the

social role of the museum, grounded in distributed models of visual culture (i.e., networks, migration, and new media), to constructively meet the needs of future stakeholders amidst rapidly changing sociocultural contexts (Dewdney *et al*., 2013).

As in critical heritage studies, the pervasiveness of critical or post-critical museologies indicates a shift away from traditional, authoritative, object-centred museum models and towards a more human-centred framework that aims to foster social responsivity and inclusivity (Anderson, 2012; Kletchka, 2018). Though Shelton (2013) argues that critical museology is predominantly speculative, the theoretical renegotiation of museums as social spaces has resulted in constructive outputs linking theory and practice, including the implementation of new curatorial strategies. For example, the method of "Curatorial Dreaming", introduced by cultural anthropologist Shelley Ruth Butler in 2001, sets out to build "a conceptual meeting ground [which] revealed the ingrained nature of arm's length, rational critique amongst scholars" (Butler and Lehrer, 2016, 3). Curatorial Dreaming, which tasks scholars with devising blueprints for exhibitions in a concrete rather than purely theoretical manner, has since informed ongoing creative workshops hosted by Butler for museum professionals and researchers, including critical heritage scholars (Butler and Lehrer, 2016; Butler, 2018). According to testimonials, these workshops have helped academics, students, and museum tour guides strategically adapt complex research to meet the ethical and practical demands of curating public exhibitions (Butler, 2024). These critical developments occurred in parallel with contemporary art in heritage practices, seeded by artists experimenting with institutional critique as agents of praxiological museology (Shelton, 2013).

Museum scholars continue to exercise a range of critical positions (e.g., postcolonialism, anti-capitalism, feminism, or anti-racism) to further problematise the legacy of collecting and display practices and reimagine a new user-focused direction for the future of cultural institutions. Entangled with critical debates in heritage studies, critical museology forms the theoretical groundwork for a new critical field examining contemporary art in heritage approaches, discussed in Section 2.3. The emergence of curatorial studies, aligned with critical theory from the outset yet disconnected from contemporary art in heritage frameworks, is discussed in the next subsection.

2.2.4 Critical approaches in curating

Though the role of the art curator reached an unprecedented "celebrity" peak with the international biennials of the 1990s, the academic discourse on curating did not emerge until the 2000s (Brenson, 1998; Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018). This new millennium moment was characterised by Paul O'Neill as part of a "curatorial turn", which references the shift away from practice and towards a reflexive and critical discourse (O'Neill, 2007; Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018). Emerging alongside the critical and post-critical turns in both heritage studies and museology, the field of curatorial studies interrogates the "dominant colonial knowledge" traditionally upheld by art history and museology (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018), re-examining the function and reach of exhibitions (Richter and Drabble, 2007).

Scholars and other writers have since attempted to identify unifying themes occurring across disparate, competitive, and subjective spheres of curatorial practice, specifically in contemporary art. Cook (2003) usefully employs the terms "producer" and "catalyst" alongside "curator" to indicate the ways in which art curators "are increasingly becoming content providers as much as context providers", reflecting the expansion of the field (174). A recent and proliferating body of literature prominently concerns contemporary art curation on an international scale (Thomas, 2002; Thea and Micchelli, 2009; Smith, 2012; 2015; Schorch and McCarthy, eds., 2019), with others covering curatorial approaches within localities (Pejman Foundation, 2021), specific institutions (Putnam, 2009), artist-led organisations (Sivanesan *et al*., 2018; Möntmann, 2021), new media technologies (Graham and Cook, 2010), and digital systems (Cameron, 2021).

Beyond scholarly publications, there are several curatorial groups, internationally dispersed and online, that explore new curatorial methodologies. Curatorial Resource for Upstart Media Bliss, or C.R.U.M.B. (a crowd-sourced Listserv founded by Cook and Graham in 2000), OnCurating Journal (edited by Richter and Kolb and founded in 2008), the Scotland-based workshop series Curatorial Studio (established by Framework in 2016), and ArtPool (formerly Art Curator Grid, an online resource founded in 2019) are just a few examples of the curatorial resources that demonstrate alternative and diverse modes of knowledge exchange. These collaborative resources respond to current research, theories, and practices, examining the debates, directions, environments, and players in visual arts curation.

The new uptick in curatorial writing, presentations, panels, and communities coincides with an expansion of curatorial programmes of higher education since the 1990s and the concept of the curatorial field as an extended practice (O'Neill, 2012). Sheikh traces the very first educational initiatives to museums rather than universities, such as the pioneering curatorial programmes at the Whitney in New York starting in 1987 (Singerman, 2004) or the De Appel in Amsterdam founded in 1997 (Sheikh, 2019, 97). Once curatorial programmes were integrated into universities, such as at Goldsmith's in London, they either retained a focus on practice or relocated to art history departments in the form of courses in histories of curating and exhibitions (Sheikh, 2019, 97). Sheikh (2019) also names several arts institutions that operate as research-based nexuses, including Grizedale and Showroom in the UK, but expresses wariness over the rapid expansion of curatorial modes and subject areas. Most notably, he highlights a divergence between professional and academic definitions of both curating and research, despite their direct overlap throughout the evolution of curatorial study (Sheikh, 2019, 97-98). With no uniform understanding of what constitutes curatorial research, practitioners and scholars are pitted against one another (Sheikh, 2019).

In North America, the Banff International Curatorial Institute (BICI) was among the first organisations to publish theoretical texts on curatorship with contributions from leading Canadian and international practitioners as early as the mid-1990s (Banff Centre for the Arts, 1996; Thomas, ed., 2002; Townsend, ed., 2003). The symposia, fellowships, and residencies hosted by BICI continue to serve as a benchmark for curators-in-training based in Canada and abroad. More recently, curatorial texts have been distributed by independent publishers (e.g., Sternberg Press, Valiz, MIT Press, and JRP|Editions), including Glasgow-based examples such as the Good Press, a small press established in 2011, and the Common Guild, a visual arts organisation established in 2006. These examples of critical modes of curatorial writing are expanding in academic and independent circles alike (von Bismarck, 2010).

Following examples of critical theory in heritage studies and museology, which challenge traditional discourses perpetuated by Western institutions (Smith, 2006), proponents of curating as a critical practice reject the notion of the curator as expert (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018). According to Richter and Drabble (2007), the degree of curatorial criticality varies depending on the fluctuating historical context of the observer (7). They identify themes of "feminism, urbanism, post-colonialism, anti-capitalism and social exclusion" as possible political lenses

for curating, although they qualify this by stating that these structures require constant rethinking to remain critical as opposed to acquiescent, in an increasingly image-saturated and migratory culture (Richter and Drabble, 2007, 7).

Curators Marie Fraser and Alice Ming Wai Jim suggest a longer history of "critical curating" as a practice, tracing the term back to "the emergence of the independent exhibition-maker" during the 1960s (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018, 5). In recent years, the practice has shifted to prioritise the objectives of decolonisation in the field of cultural production, assigning the curator with a new role: a producer of cultural change (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018, 5). In the words of Ryan Rice, "critical curating should be framed as a creative intervention", in which the curator acts as "an architect who has the foresight to build an approachable, empathetic space that can broaden perspectives within the cultural landscape" (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018, 106). This socially, politically, and ethically conscious curator might act independently or as part of a collective to rewrite the orders of knowledge underlining exhibitions and foreground the needs of marginalised or socially excluded communities (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018).

Crucially, critical curating extends frameworks of care to practitioners. For example, Nicole Burisch looks to artist-run models of curating to inform wider exhibition practices, urging other types of institutions to advocate "openly and freely" for fair wages and working conditions for artists, as well as support collaborations, risk, and non-hierarchal governing structures (Sivanesan *et al*., 2018, 110). Contributing to the same publication as Burisch, Pamela Edmonds considers how marginalised curators and artists can retain agency when "working within a system" with intact "colonial institutional structures" (Sivanesan *et al*., 108). While these inquiries are unresolved, the persistent, critical negotiation of dynamics of power, working conditions, and limiting ideologies is imperative for social change within the sector (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018, 6).

As Fraser and Jim propose in a rare instance linking critical museology with critical curating, such critical practice might even take the form of "radical curating", drawing on art historian Claire Bishop's "radical museology" (Bishop and Perjovschi, 2014), in which institutions dissect their own histories in response to social justice movements (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018). According to Black feminist art historian Joana Joachim, "what makes the act of curating 'critical' is a recognition of one's position within society, as well as an awareness of privileges

that are not universal" (Sivanesan *et al.*, 34). This approach embraces subjectivity in curatorial practice and rejects the objectivity presumed by colonial European institutions, following the developments of post-1980s critical social theory.

Most recently, academic publications in Europe and North America cover several critical topics blended to inculcate unique curatorial practices. This includes but is not limited to specialist curatorial writing engaged with an intersection of political lenses, such as anti-racist practices (Bayer, Kazeem-Kaminski, Sternfeld, eds., 2017), queer theory (Parra, 2020; Largo, 2022), feminism (Skrubbe, 2016; Joachim, 2018), and anti-ableism (Cachia, 2013; Chandler, 2017). Other compelling topics include curation as radical care, especially after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kunstlicht, 2021; Call for Curators Channel, 2021), curating for the future in an ecological crisis (Demos, 2016; Newell, Robin and Wehner, 2017; Fenner, 2022), and curating "liveliness" and non-human perspectives (Muller and Langill, eds., 2022). This last topic builds on ideas of agency or vibrancy as presented by new materialist Jane Bennett (2009), ecofeminist Donna Haraway (1991), and Coole and Frost (2010), but is long preceded by Indigenous knowledge (UCLA CSW, 2013; Demos, 2016). Scholars have also continued to elaborate on other subjects such as new media and digital curation (Graham and Cook, 2010; Cameron, 2021), curating community (Douglas, 2017), socially engaged and participatory practices (Forde, 2021; Arney Johnston, 2021), and interactivity/interaction (Candy and Edmonds, 2011; Bianchini *et al.*, 2016).

Critical approaches to curating call for challenging work. Critical curators aim to both interrogate traditional ideologies of institutions and cultivate compassionate spaces for communities (Sivanesan *et al*., 2018). As a field, curatorial studies is built on and fortified by critical developments in other disciplines, including heritage studies and museology. However, the writing of contemporary art curators remains largely separate to the critical heritage and museological fields explored above. Socially-engaged and informed by both arts and science research, curatorial approaches have significant potential to forge deeper connections between academic research and institutional practice (Triscott, 2017), and as Bishop writes about the radical museum model, "offer a more politicized engagement with our historical moment" (Bishop and Perjovschi, 2014).

2.2.5 Summary

Critical and post-critical theory in heritage studies, museology, and curatorial practices serves as a theoretical lens for this thesis, which centres the contemporary human experiences in constructing knowledge. Theorists across these three fields acknowledge the problematic roles institutions can play in hegemonic narrative construction and instead emphasise the significance of the intangible processes incited by materials and places: people's personal and collective experiences (Smith, 2006). This focus on human experientiality and social connectivity moves away from authoritative interpretations of the past based on the institutional preservation of physical objects or sites. It maintains that heritage can be felt in more-than-material terms, pivoting towards a more democratic and experiential mode of analysing cultural participation and production (Dewdney *et al*., 2013). The findings of these critical disciplines provide a strong basis for evaluating how heritage is experienced and expressed by art practitioners engaging with historic house settings. While critical heritage studies and critical museology overlap in their shared rejection of traditional values and application of post-1980s critical social theory, in-depth collaboration with curatorial studies is currently lacking.

The new scholarly field of arts in heritage, reviewed in Section 2.3, primarily foregrounds critical heritage discourse, overlooking opportunities to more fully engage with curatorial findings. While Section 2.2 considers wider theoretical trends in scholarship, the next concentrates on a recent body of literature narrowly concerned with the intersection between contemporary art and heritage.

2.3 Arts in heritage: an emerging field

According to Cass *et al.* (2020), academic research and publishing on the intersection between contemporary art and heritage sites in the UK is sparse, although the practice has been developing in popularity and scope for over 30 years. In a 2019 article, Cass asserts that "the rapid rise of 'interventions' in heritage sites has yet to be matched by equivalent critical analysis" (299). Black and Farley (2020) expand on this assertion, claiming that "there is little collective academic and professional understanding of the broader character and evolution of the contemporary arts in heritage field in terms of its antecedents and specific practices of production and presentation" (15). At the forefront of an emerging field of research, these

authors justifiably demand a "greater critical framework" for defining the scope and impact of arts in heritage practice (Black and Farley, 2020, 15).

This section overviews this emerging field, discussing recent literature primarily focused on heritage interpretation, and indicating key issues and gaps in the research thus far. *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces*, edited by Cass, Park, and Powell (2020), is a leading example of interdisciplinary and critical applications of heritage and museological theory, conceptualising both art and heritage using processual models and analysing a plurality of subjective experiences. Although some of the authors assess artist experiences of art in heritage practices, demonstrating the value of these perspectives in critical analyses, the emphasis remains on audience evaluation. As argued throughout this literature review, shifting focus towards practitioner experiences can more rigorously inform contemporary art in heritage critiques and practices. A stronger application of curatorial frameworks, particularly critical approaches in curating which value artistic community-building (Sivanesan *et al.*, 2018), could potentially serve to bridge these gaps in future arts in heritage scholarship.

2.3.1 Arts in heritage scholarship

Prior to the publication of *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* (Cass *et al*., 2020), few studies in the fields of heritage, art history, or museology directly concern the role and impact of contemporary art commissioning in the context of UK heritage sites, including historic houses. There are a few exceptions, including "Intersecting Practices" (Cass *et al*., 2014-2017), an event series funded by the Creative and Cultural Industries Exchange at the University of Leeds, and "Mapping Contemporary Art in the Heritage Experience: Creation, Consumption and Exchange" (Burton *et al*., 2017-2019), an interdisciplinary project hosted by Newcastle University, both of which directly contributed to the data sets and perspectives comprised in the book (Cass *et al.*, 2020).

"Intersecting Practices" (2014-2017) focused on "the growing phenomena of commissioning artists to respond to historic sites, houses, and landscapes, with the resulting work to be experienced as a juxtaposition with that site or landscape" (Cass *et al*., 2020, 1). Mapping Contemporary Art in the Heritage Experience (MCAHE) also concerned exhibitions and commissions, mostly developed by the National Trust and English Heritage, further problematising the intersection of contemporary art and heritage (Cass *et al*., 2020, 2). The

MCAHE study generally considered the perspectives of artists, directors of commissioning bodies, and audiences, using "practice-led" methods with a research team of primarily professional artists and curators (Burton, 2020, 117). This project represents the most concerted effort to better explore artist experiences from a practical rather than academic standpoint, offering specific examples of artworks and sites in North East England—an area with a recognised history of public art commissioning.

Alongside this research concentrated in England, an article by Swedish art historian Hedvig Mårdh (2015) is an early example of critical engagement with artistic or scenographic interventions in house museums, productively placing two London-based examples (staged at Dennis Severs' House and Kensington Palace) in conversation with a Stockholm-based example (at the Carl Eldhs Ateljémuseum). Mårdh (2015) argues that interventionist strategies not only answer demands for new experiences and the democratisation of historic spaces but also raise questions about the "real history" communicated by traditional house museum displays and the degree to which permanent displays should be maintained (36). Mårdh (2015) urges other art historians to address these developments in museological practice to expand both disciplines, as well as demonstrate the "relevance of art history to the field of critical heritage studies", making clear that these two strands of scholarship require closer integration—particularly regarding debates of authenticity in both art and heritage (25). Section 2.4.1 revisits Mårdh's argument in more detail.

More rigorous than prior studies, *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* takes a transdisciplinary approach in its critical assessment of the field, reflecting both academic and practitioner perspectives to investigate four key themes: 1) the reimagining of heritage via art interventions; 2) alternative histories and calls for institutional change; 3) interdisciplinarity as a research method; and 4) liminal spaces (Cass *et al*., 2020). As mentioned above, this ambitious publication is foregrounded by extensive research at the University of Leeds and Newcastle University, closely responding to themes previously explored in "Intersecting Practices", such as heritage interpretation and research, marginalised histories, audience responses, tourism, and legacies of exhibitions (Cass *et al.,* 2020, 1). This is the first major text to critically evaluate the arts in heritage experience and reflect upon the curatorial device of juxtaposition in this context. Powell most convincingly challenges the notion of art and heritage "intersections", arguing that, rather than interpreting art and heritage as distinct

elements affecting one another, it is more productive to think of art and heritage as cohesive, "despite the frictions their concurrence might seem to create" (230). The text frames such experiences as a contemporaneous unfolding, informed by understandings of both heritage and art as processual rather than simply material (Cass *et al*., 2020, 4). To explain this, Cass *et al*. reference Sallie Anna Steiner's theory of "heritage-art", which asks, "when does a cultural phenomenon or practice go from being a normal, everyday part of life to something a group of people re-appropriate to symbolise themselves, to encapsulate their identity?" (Steiner, 2016, cited in Cass *et al*., 2020, 4). This question raises the issue that designations of heritage are heavily subjective and context-dependent, bringing into scrutiny the expectations made when juxtaposing "new" art with "old" sites (Cass *et al*., 2020, 4). The authors explicitly acknowledge this problem, opting to embrace the assumed "productive outcomes" generated by these intersections of art and heritage to better "explore" and "evaluate" them (4). In doing so, they choose to deliberately leave the definitions of terms such as heritage and contemporary practice open-ended, claiming that the text instead embraces a diversity of disciplinary perspectives. While it remains challenging to reconcile the nuanced application of these terms throughout, the editors maintain a coherent narrative comprised of several parallel conceptualisations of heritage and contemporary art.

The projects included in *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* begin to work out the role contemporary art commissioning has within heritage practice and research, mapping changes in public engagement with heritage, although they are mostly limited in scope to the UK (Cass *et al*., 2020, 5). Crucially, the editors highlight that the nature of the intersection between art and heritage is a complex web, dependent on power relations and varied experiences (Cass *et al*., 2020). The book reflexively interrogates the meaning of intersectionality when framing contemporary art and heritage as an overlap of two distinct areas, productively rethinking this intersection as a meeting place for undoing hegemonic structures in heritage settings.

Since 2020, few other publications have been added to the conversation. For example, Brooks *et al.* (2022) are the first to evaluate the curatorial and interpretive potential of "music as sound, material, and practice" in historic house museums. Their interdisciplinary study, which contains the perspectives of both heritage scholars and professionals, explores the museumification of houses historically belonging to famous composers/musicians, the restoration and conservation of musical object collections, music or sound as a narrative

device, and the negotiation of authenticity when using live music or recordings in exhibitions. Most significantly, Farley and Pollock (2022) elaborate upon the findings of MCAHE (Burton *et al*., 2017-2019) and Black and Farley (2020) in a further mapping of the territory of artistic engagement with heritage sites using the database created by Arts&Heritage (A&H), a partner of MCAHE. This data set, developed as part of a 2013 audit, mostly contains examples of projects from England, with some examples from Scotland and Wales. Notably, Farley and Pollock's article (2022) shifts scholarly focus away from audiences and towards practitioner experiences of contemporary art in the UK heritage sector. This article is further discussed in the conclusion of this thesis (Section 7.5), where it provides a broader basis for evaluating the scope, methods, and findings of this doctoral research with similar aims to centre practitioner experiences.

Overall, recent scholarship provides a starting point for historicising or classifying arts in heritage practice, but it neglects to fully negotiate the role of arts and heritage programming within creative practices or wider cultural networks. Further, it remains vague how commissioned artists interact with heritage sites, define heritage, or relate such commissions to their wider careers. As Mårdh (2015) argues, the relevance of art history to critical heritage studies is overlooked (25). Even more pertinently, critical curatorial frameworks that empathise with artist experiences within professional art contexts (Sivanesan *et al*., 2018) have yet to be adequately integrated into art in heritage discourse.

2.3.2 Arts in heritage practice

This section addresses the disparity between the proliferation of arts in heritage activities in the UK for the last 30 years and its relatively narrow representation in recent scholarship. Despite acknowledging a diversity of contemporary art in heritage activities occurring across the UK, the emerging scholarship focuses on the commissioning activities of a few public funding bodies in England (Black and Farley, 2020, 15). Further, there is a tendency to spotlight major commissions of sculpture and installation art, inaccurately representing the diverse types of art practitioners active in the field. This narrow scope thus contributes to the marginalisation of other types of arts in heritage practices in the literature, such as illustration, performance, or music.

Tracing the history of the field back to the 1990s, Black and Farley (2020) chronicle a distinctive turn away from artists' interventionist practice in mainstream art museums and towards artistic responses to house museums and other heritage sites, such as industrial museums or historic waterways (15). They acknowledge that the designations of "heritage site" and "museum" frequently overlap, especially since many heritage buildings maintain collections of historic objects and/or living plants (16) and identify the "country house museum" as a "core site" for the field since its inception (17). Black and Farley (2020) explain that artists are increasingly choosing to respond to historic landscapes or "emptied-out architecture" (referring to historic houses without collections or period furnishings) rather than mining historic collections for subject matter (17). Black and Farley (2020) contend that this shift in artistic context reflects deeper engagement with the "intangible heritage of these sites, the hidden narratives and suppressed biographies", potentially broadening interpretations of a place by inviting new perspectives (17-18).

Black and Farley (2020) acknowledge the presence of "a much wider and more disparate field of activity" in the UK, including Compton Verney in Warwickshire, which has been commissioning "Art in the Park" since 1993 (20). Black and Farley are among few scholars studying artworks developed in response to industrial and social heritage sites, such as "The Ring", which was "a series of temporary artworks celebrating the 21 miles of historic waterways linking the Worcester, Birmingham, and Droitwich canals to the River Severn", or other commissions at the Darlington Railway Museum or Lion Salt Works in Cheshire (Black and Farley, 2020, 22). Additionally, Powell (2020) explores the use of a deconsecrated church (St. Mary's in York) as a contemporary art venue, and the multiple interpretive functions of non-site-specific artworks displayed in this previously religious context (216).

The UK-based examples considered in depth by Cass *et al*. (2020) are in England, despite the editors' claims that some examples are less centralised. This might be owed to the conviction that North East England played "an important role as an early incubator and testbed for this field of practice" (Black and Farley, 2020, 18). Black and Farley (2020) name the Year of the Visual Arts initiative as "ground-breaking" in this regard, explaining that it launched three major commissions in 1996, including "Living at Belsay" (1996), which was the first English Heritage exhibition at Belsay Hall, Castle, and Gardens in Northumberland (18). The programme at Belsay continued for fourteen years until funding streams were redirected to

invest in “priority” English Heritage sites such as Stonehenge (Black and Farley, 2020, 18). According to Black and Farley, it reflected the work “of a wide community of practitioners working across the visual arts, craft, design, and architecture”, and intended to “animate” the empty halls and associated grounds (18-19). Notably, two of the curatorial panel members who developed “Living at Belsay”, Judith King and Timandra Nichols, co-founded Arts&Heritage in 2017, a leading commissioning scheme funded by Arts Council England (Black and Farley, 2020, 18).

The examples included within the study by Cass *et al.* (2020) are publicly funded and primarily based in England (Black and Farley, 20). They mention that the National Trust and English Heritage, along with the Canal and River Trust, have invested “significant resources in contemporary art commissions” (Cass *et al.*, 2020, 1). Cass *et al.* (2020) also identify Arts Council England as the “principal driver of publicly funded contemporary arts activity in the UK” (2). The Trust New Art programme (TNA), launched in 2009 and funded via Arts Council England, is the National Trust’s commissioning scheme which has worked with more than 300 artists to date (National Trust, 2024). Black and Farley (2020) also acknowledge the early commissioning activity of Meadow Arts (27), also funded by Arts Council England, which has been siting artwork in primarily rural settings across Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Worcestershire since 2001 (Meadow Arts, 2024).

Black and Farley (2020) describe the commissioning activity of National Trust and English Heritage as “generating” temporary exhibitions, which suggests the emphasis is on the frequency of new projects (Black and Farley, 2020, 15). They contend that commissioning bodies often choose to work with established award-winning artists for these projects, such as Turner Prize winners Mark Wallinger and Lubaina Himid (20). MCAHE and English Heritage also commissioned Turner Prize winner Susan Philipsz to create *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a sound installation for Belsay Hall in Northumberland in 2018, which is given prominence in the MCAHE’s Industry Stakeholders Report (Black *et al.*, 2020). Selected artists also often have a history of working in heritage contexts previously. For example, Lewis *et al.* (2020), Burton (2020), and Bertola (Bertola and Rich, 2020) all indicate experience making art sited within heritage sites and historic houses prior to taking on the projects included in *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* (Cass *et al.*, 2020). It is unclear whether these artists were selected to develop work for a particular place based on their previous experience in

similar settings, or because their work to date seemed appropriate for a temporary exhibition—either in form or subject matter. Examples of sculpture or installation art (containing sculptural objects but focused more on the staging) are most frequently cited, suggesting sculptors or installation artists are given precedence in the selection process, especially if they have been commissioned by heritage organisations before (Lewis *et al.*, 2020; Burton, 2020; Huber, 2020; Mårdh, 2015).

Referring to his personal experiences developing arts in heritage commissions, Burton (2020) differentiates between "making art ... informed by the heritage of a given historic site—its particular narrative and history—and making art ... more loosely 'inspired' by a site" (121). He writes:

> The former suggests a series of triangulated artistic iterations between artist, artwork, and site where the specific heritage of a site is a constant reference point to be probed and explored. The latter suggests a different kind of artistic journey, where the work might be prompted by a single, but evocative, encounter with a place (Burton, 2020, 121).

According to Burton (2020), the former approach results in artwork that draws attention to an aspect of the heritage, whether by referring to a narrative associated with a place or revealing the material substance of that heritage (121-122). For example, the author recalls making sculptures from remnants of clay vessels during an artist residency in Stoke-on-Trent, referring to the area's historic pottery industry (122). He maintains that this approach is appropriate if "the resulting [art]work should, in some way, inform its public visitors about its heritage", as was the case for his commission at Gibside (Burton, 2020, 122). Most of the commissions referenced in *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* adopt this "informed by heritage" approach (Burton, 2020, 121), assuming that contemporary artwork can reveal hidden aspects of heritage for public audiences. Unsurprisingly then, there is an emphasis on site-specific sculptures and installations in the literature, particularly ones that draw out "hidden" or sometimes controversial narratives, including histories centred on individual personalities (Park, 2020, 68). However, scholars have also investigated so-called artist interventions in grand palaces, such as Chatsworth and Houghton Hall, Nottingham, either in the form of new commissions that loosely respond to historical themes, or as freshly staged

retrospectives by “blue chip” artists, intending to attract urban audiences to rural locations with unexpected juxtapositions between old and new, traditional and modern (Black and Farley, 2020).

Black and Farley (2020) briefly address the dangers of serialisation in the field, and the lack of criticality that comes with commissioning schemes, particularly across multiple sites like TNA. They cite former programme manager of TNA, Tom Freshwater, who claims that “contemporary art activity is not a ‘magic bullet’ that can be uniformly adopted across the NT portfolio”, as some properties might be too “delicate” for an art intervention (Freshwater, 2011, cited in Black and Farley, 2020, 20). According to Black and Farley, TNA sidesteps this by upholding an ethos of being guided by the “spirit of place”, either framing a commission as a continuation of existing arts patronage or bringing attention to stories of former occupants of domestic spaces (20).

In the context of regenerative cultural programming in towns and cities facing the consequences of industrial decline, Breen (2020) similarly refers to a phenomenon termed “interventionist fatigue”, described as when “‘hard to reach’ communities tire of outsiders parachuting in to deliver short term projects and then leaving” (32). Breen (2020) maintains that artists can move beyond “the role of provocateur within a community to one of solidarity” via forging ongoing and sensitive relationships with locals, rather than trying to stage a “revelatory rupture” (33). Breen adequately exemplifies this with Emily Hesse’s ongoing art in heritage practice, which started with collecting clay on the banks of the River Tees in 2011 and led to *New Linthorpe,* a project developed with curator James Beighton and the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA). The project drew on the local history of Linthorpe Art Pottery, a short-lived endeavour established during an economic depression in 1879, with the aim to challenge narratives of economic decline by reopening a pottery workshop (Breen, 2020, 33). Throughout the run of the project, Hesse helped over a thousand participants experiment with local clay, which attendees could sell, keep, or display alongside historical Linthorpe pots sourced from the nearby Dorman Museum (Breen, 2020, 33). According to Breen, the sessions “provided opportunities to involve local people in discussion about their future, with the hope of re-establishing a pottery in Middlesbrough”, strengthening people’s sense of local identity through a relationship with the same clay “that had housed the ancestors of many contemporary residents” (36).

Described as a key research finding, Burton (2020) observes an acute tension between "meeting the artist's vision" and heritage conservation requirements (Burton, 2020, 123). The authors making up the collaborative practice Brass Art (Chara Lewis, Kristin Mojsiewicz, and Anneké Pettican) similarly draw attention to "the tension for curators between the need to bring energy and life to heritage sites, and their responsibility as custodians to protect the collection and 'spirit of place'" (Lewis *et al*., 2020, 50). The authors not only comment on the challenge of intervening in such a "resonant space" protected by the organisation, but also the weight of expectation that the resulting artwork would "raise the cultural profile of the museum and draw in a new audience" (Lewis *et al*., 2020, 50). In these artist testimonies, it becomes apparent that the pressures of the heritage organisation to follow conservation requirements and development aims are keenly felt, directing the artist's vision from the outset.

In *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces*, both artists and curator perspectives are highlighted, using first person descriptive language to reflect on individual or collaborative contributions to specific projects, elaborating on their creative processes and artist briefs (Cass *et al.*, 2020). Several artists reflect on their own experiences carrying out projects within UK heritage settings, while other artist-researchers present their analyses of artworks carried out by others, though implicitly informed by an interdisciplinary background. The chapters written by commissioned artists especially illuminated the practical challenges faced, whether in channelling an appropriate tone for the artwork, anticipating audience responses, or choosing a physical site for an artwork (Burton, 2020).

It is notable that many of the artists represented in the literature are *also* academics, specialising in art practice, theory, and criticism. Creative practitioners operating outside of academia but nevertheless invited to engage with these sites (for example, Isabel Greenberg, a graphic novelist and illustrator who developed new drawings for the exhibition *Gondal Arise!* at the Brontë Parsonage Museum in 2021) are therefore sidelined from the arts in heritage discourse. This suggests a marginalisation of certain professional artists, particularly illustrators but also musicians, live performers, and sound artists active in the arts in heritage

field.[2] The range of commissioning activities in historic houses and other heritage buildings is therefore less clear than purported in mainstream academic sources, which tend to centre commissions by either academic or award-winning artists. Meanwhile, existing grey literature—made up of artists' curricula vitae and organisational websites—reflects a plethora of otherwise undocumented projects taking place in heritage contexts (Greenberg, 2021; Leach Pottery, 2024; Renton, 2023; Halsway Manor, 2025). This alternative documentation draws into question who and what material is excluded from the contemporary art in heritage umbrella.

In academic literature, residencies or exhibitions of existing works are given less attention. There are some exceptions to this, for example, Crawshaw and Gkartzios' (2020) consideration of Belgian artist Sander Van Raemdonck's placement in Berwick-upon-Tweed, co-hosted by Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy (CRE) and Berwick Visual Arts (BVA). They maintain that "although rural residencies are prevalent, placements with academic organisations are still relatively rare", making this collaboration between CRE and BVA "unique" (Crawshaw and Gkartzios, 2020, 203). Crawshaw and Gkartzios (2020) document the selection process for this placement, as well as the funding sources and previous artists hosted. Collecting practices, including the TNA's permanent art commissions are also overlooked in the literature. Finally, these sources exclude examples of residencies without a commission attached, whether for lack of funding for this type of programming or because it is a less prevalent model in the geographical area. Overall, this emerging field of scholarship is narrow in scope, mostly limited to England-based examples of publicly funded commissioning schemes, which appear to favour primarily sculptors or installation artists with established careers. This consequently sidelines other examples of art in heritage projects by a diversity of artists. However, this new body of literature crucially begins to debate the art in heritage experience from multiple critical perspectives, discussed in the following subsection covering the key arguments within the arts in heritage debate.

[2] For one brief example of types of professional artists less documented in the literature, see Susie Green and Rory Pilgrim's exploration of the acoustics of Durham Castle's Norman Chapel in a live performance titled *Floating we find each other, we find each other floating.* More can be found about this event from 2018 on the Durham University website at https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/visual-arts-cultures/events/contemporary-art-in-focus/the-brilliant-state---susie-green-and-rory-pilgrim-february-2018-/, accessed 01 March 2025.

2.3.3 Key arguments within the arts in heritage debate

Within the growing field of contemporary art in heritage, some consensus exists between scholars regarding, for example, a perceived cultural movement towards interventionist art practices, the importance of affective responses to art and heritage, and some of the challenges faced by artists practicing in this context. While each of these topics receives considerable attention in *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* (Cass *et al.*, 2020), they have yet to be extrapolated in wider temporal and spatial contexts. Crucially, some artist perspectives are explored in this text, considering creative processes in multisensory, affective language and introducing some challenges faced while working in heritage settings (Cass *et al*., 2020).

The research of Black and Farley (2020) stands out, particularly their succinct mapping of the emergence and evolution of the "contemporary art in heritage practice" in the UK, as well as their interpretation of this practice as potentially disruptive of the Authorised Heritage Discourse. The authors explicitly frame the phenomenon within the aforementioned "paradigm shift in heritage understanding and museology", while also factoring in the impact of socio-cultural changes on the development of a heritage industry at the end of the 20th century (Black and Farley, 2020, 16). Linking the growth in heritage tourism and the commodification of the heritage experience to changes in curatorial approaches and contemporary art audiencing, they establish a basis for contextualising the history of and motivations for this field (Black and Farley, 2020, 22). According to Black and Farley, the strategic agendas of arts councils and heritage organisations combine to reflect the "social and economic impetuses of both the arts and heritage sectors", setting the stage for how contemporary art programming in heritage settings is marketed and carried out (Black and Farley, 2020, 22-23). They begin to problematise the selling of visitor experiences as part of an institutionally supported commissioning industry, identifying this "increasingly competitive environment" as a challenge for preserving the criticality underpinning interventionist practices (Black and Farley, 2020, 27). However, they highlight how "shifts in social and cultural means of engagement have led to the increasing recognition of both heritage and contemporary art as processes" (23), rendering both visitors and artists as "active" rather than "passive" participants, engaged in a relational or two-way rather than top-down pedagogical activity (24). Following Robins' *Curious Lessons in the Museum* (2013), which questions the efficacy of artist interventions in heritage sites given their sanctioned nature, Black and Farley

(2020) maintain that artists work outside of "the constraints of the institution" by inviting visitor responses to societal issues, despite the authorised display setting (24-25).

Importantly, Black and Farley (2020), along with other contributors to *Contemporary Art in Heritage*, begin to elucidate the affective or emotional nature of responses to art in heritage commissions, offering a plurality of audience perspectives (Cass *et al.,* 2020). The expectation or claim that contemporary artworks can activate varied emotional or spiritual experiences in relation to not only heritage sites, but also society in general, frequently appears in the literature. For example, in exhibiting artwork that lays bare histories of conflict or slavery, heritage organisations may be faced with polarised reactions by audiences. Black and Farley (2020) explain that visitor reactions might range from surprised to resentful, drawing attention to the importance of affective responses within heritage sites in breaking down authorised narratives of heritage (26).

Elsewhere, Bagnall and Randall (a sociologist and artist collaboration) evaluate "how to achieve meaningful engagement with heritage and to understand the intangible dimension—the personal and potentially collective transformative experience that visitors have when encountering exhibits or art in a museum or gallery", particularly within mining museums in Cornwall (Bagnall and Randall, 2020, 179). The team employed a range of traditional ethnographic techniques (in-situ interviews, museum walking interviews, visitor book analyses), as well as more experimental methods (for example, developing focus groups as part of creative engagement workshops). Bagnall and Randall (2020) set out to identify the factors affecting visitor responses to the artwork, such as biography, sociocultural and spatial contexts, and physical and cultural barriers. Their research findings reflect positive and emotional responses to the artwork, transcending some perceived cultural barriers, including social class (Bagnall and Randall, 2020). However, their conclusion is vague, loosely assigning the "real value of the art-heritage intersection" to "the social and spatial context in which the art was experienced" (Bagnall and Randall, 2020, 180).

Cass (2020) offers more concrete examples of audiences searching for meaningful emotional or spiritual experiences in heritage house settings, examining visitor comments at the Brontë Parsonage Museum over the duration of *Remnants* (2010), a multimedia installation by Su

Blackwell. He concludes that the contemporary art installation played a crucial role in fostering profound experiences of the space:

> Through contact with this unique configuration of house, collection, and artwork, visitors experienced shifts in their sense of time, and made creative and imaginative connections with the past experiences of the Brontës in a way that related powerfully to their own sense of identity ... Contemporary art was, in this particular installation, able to play a prominent role in this process, demonstrating a very productive intersection of heritage and contemporary art (Cass, 2020, 198).

Powell (2020) similarly identifies concrete responses of resonance and wonder in viewers of contemporary art (referencing Stephen Greenblatt's 1991 essay "Resonance and Wonder"), specifically when exhibited in architectural spaces infused with historical or religious significance (216-217). All these writers mentioned—Black and Farley, Breen, Bagnall and Randall, Cass, and Powell—acknowledge the meaningfulness of these emotional or spiritual experiences. Crucially, Bagnall and Randall (2020) suggest that collaboration and experimental research methods represent better approaches to evaluating meaningfulness from multiple perspectives. However, it proves difficult to assess these responses in terms of long-term impact, individually or collectively, without further research. Moreover, a deeper understanding of artists' experiences, affective or otherwise, is needed.

Although *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* sets out to determine "the way in which sites, artists, and audiences are affected" (Cass *et al.*, 2020, 3), the attention paid to creative processes or artistic research is finite. While artists contributed to the book (e.g., Lewis *et al*., Burton, Bertola and Rich, Bagnall and Randall, Crawshaw and Gkartzios), these authors choose to primarily focus on the "heritage debate" (Lumley, 2005 in Cass *et al*., 2020, 5) or "how the use of contemporary visual art might engage audiences and generate new knowledge about, and understanding of" heritage sites (Bagnall and Randall, 2020, 166). Nevertheless, it effectively uses first-person prose to foreground artists experiences and features collaborative essays that put artists in dialogue with scholars from other fields such as history to "reconsider" disciplinary boundaries (Bertola and Rich, 150).

For example, artist Bertola and historian Rich exemplify the contrast between their respective disciplinary methods, reflecting upon their research collaboration undertaken during Bertola's

2017 artist's residency in the School of Cultural Studies at Leeds Beckett University. While Rich systematically approaches the interpretation of historic source material, thinking "beyond the words on the page in a different way", Bertola chooses to use a mix of sources for creative impetus, drawing on her "emotional, physical, and sensory responses" to convey a "sense" of both women's experiences of domestic labour in Victorian England and the ephemeral nature of history (Bertola and Rich, 2020, 151-153). The authors reflect upon how their own interdisciplinary collaboration contributed to a more robust understanding of how contemporary art strives for authenticity without a firm commitment to written source materials: "For Rich, one of the first challenges of working with Bertola was to learn to accept that a work of art can depict an authentic representation of the past without offering either a discussion of research methods, or footnotes to sources" (Bertola and Rich, 2020, 153). This is a rare example of research arguing for the authenticity or validity of creative research methods centred on sensory and emotional forms of knowledge production.

The art collective Brass Art also describe their navigation of the collections at Chetham's Library in Manchester[3] in affective language, explaining that they explored the space via repeated site visits, using their "sensing bodies", led by their personal research interests, and then entangled these references as part of their complex collaborative language (Lewis *et al*., 2020, 52). Communicating their own embodiment of this heritage-focused experience to viewers was paramount. They explain that the resulting sculptures were displayed "to fit within small apertures of the building, to feel, caress, or intimately touch" objects in the collection or mimic images seen in the archive, recalling their own tactile experiences grasping the materials and alluding to the "illusory touch of the viewer" (Lewis *et al.*, 2020, 57). They write: "Our use of vital materials—air, light, and shadow—to conjure and sculpt, creates ambiguous tensions between the living and the petrified and makes our process pertinent to reimagining collections" (Lewis *et al.*, 2020, 54). By casting their own hands in white resin and Herculite 2 Plaster using 3D scanning and printing technology, Brass Art aimed to mimic hand gestures observed in the historical images they researched in Chetham's Library, as well as quite literally gesture towards "the spectral silence of the missing female

[3] This research was for the development of *Gestured*, a 2017 exhibition by Brass Art at Chetham's Library in Manchester.

voices in the canon" as female-identifying artists engaging with a patriarchal corpus (Lewis *et al.*, 2020, 56).

A few of the artist perspectives included in *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* meditated on the practical challenges of their art commissions. Bertola and Rich (2020) write that the expectations that come with such commissions in the context of the heritage industry "can limit artistic freedom" as artists are required to "negotiate the parameters of tightly written briefs, narrow production times, and financial confines" (158). Burton (2020) more explicitly discusses the nature of artist briefs, which might be experienced as a constraint, challenge, or opportunity, or a combination of these (117). He addresses his own difficulties in responding to a narrative imbued "with misery and conflict", and details how he resolved siting his sculptures without violating conservation requirements or deliberately inciting public disapproval (Burton, 2020, 122).

Burton (2020) markedly notes challenges of conservation in his account of developing *The Orangery Urns* (2018) at Gibside. He explains that "balancing a new set of urns on the Orangery's balustrade was out of the question as the building is fragile and historic" (Burton, 2020, 123). Further, he felt he could not place his sculptures in the centre of the Grand Walk, for concern of "inciting public disapprobation" as well as "damaging the mature trees through pressure on their roots" or interrupting the numerous streams that run downhill (Burton, 2020, 123). Ultimately, it was decided that the urns would be sited in the walled garden, as "it was the least historically sensitive place on the estate", although the presence of an archaeologist was required (Burton, 2020, 123). It is less apparent how developing this artwork at Gibside relates to Burton's practice as a sculptor, nor does the artist explain his motivations for accepting such commissions (Burton, 2020).

While the contributions of artist perspectives by Lewis *et al.* (2020), Bertola and Rich (2020), and Burton (2020) begin to explore the methods, research interests, and trials of developing artworks in response to heritage sites, they raise more questions about how heritage is perceived, engaged with, or embodied in one's artistic practice. Fuller explorations are required to clarify how creative practitioners conceptualise heritage or relate such commissions to their wider practices, shaping the research questions for this thesis. More creative approaches to this critical inquiry, such as the collaborative methods of Bertola and

Rich (2020) or creative focus groups, such as those of Bagnall and Randall (2020), could help address this gap.

2.3.4 Summary

Critical heritage theory and museology have crucially shaped recent approaches to understanding art in heritage, namely in viewing the intersection of art and heritage as a complex process and valuing qualitative research methods that platform subjective experiences. However, audience experiences are disproportionately weighted in these discussions, despite demonstrating the value of artist perspectives in qualifying artistic processes and practical challenges faced. Moreover, despite a variety of arts programming taking place within UK heritage settings, the literature focuses primarily on major commissions within a narrow geographical scope, leaving examples beyond England underexplored. As argued in the previous section, the integration of critical discourses—especially curatorial methodologies—would fortify assessments of contemporary art in heritage activities, with more focus on practitioner experiences. The next section examines the dominant curatorial models in historic house museums, historic landscapes, or other cultural settings, referring to historic house guidebooks, exhibition histories, and other art historical literature as a starting point for building new curatorial methodologies.

2.4 Conventional programming in historic houses

As the previous section indicates, only one curatorial model for arts in heritage—the site-specific commission—is given adequate attention in the extant academic literature. These commissions, usually sculptures or installation art responding to a particular site's history, are most often exhibited temporarily. This section further analyses relevant literature on programming strategies used in historic houses, referring to art historical scholarship, a field that precedes curatorial studies in discussions of these artistic genres.

The museumification of historic houses has been thoroughly studied, covering several key topics relevant to art in heritage practice, such as strategies for addressing the alienation of audiences by cultivating more multisensory experiences or more varied narratives, or grappling with issues of authenticity in heritage displays. However, the potential for artistic practice based within these settings, whether as an interpretive tool or as an experimental approach, has been mostly disregarded. Additionally, some art historical literature considers

the evolution and role of art interventions or site-specific artworks situated in museums or landscapes but does not adequately scrutinise the relevance of these approaches in historic house settings. The sources that address the practice of art interventions or site-specific approaches do so indirectly and briefly, raising questions about why this language, originally emerging in art criticism on 1960s conceptual art, is still prevalent, and why site-specific commissions are so common. This section reviews key topics relevant to programming contemporary art in historic house settings, urging for further integration of art history and more recent curatorial lenses in critiques of house museum conventions.

2.4.1 The museumification of historic houses

For the last 20 years, much of the literature on programming in historic houses consists of guidebooks for professional use, with boards and directors of house museums in mind, particularly historic houses open to the public and based around the guided tour (Harris, 2007; Vagnone *et al.,* 2016; Turino and van Balgooy, eds., 2019; Eliasof, 2022). For example, *Rebranding: A Guide for Historic Houses, Museums, Sites, and Organisations* (Eliasof, 2022) advises leadership teams of historic house museums to rename or develop a "new look" for younger or more diverse users, mainly focusing on the process of planning, funding, and launching the rebrand of a history organisation from a business perspective. Other than a one-off reference to artists assisting curators in the selection of artifacts for an exhibition "launching the reimagined museum and rebrand" for the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, further collaboration with contemporary artists is overlooked as a strategy for building new audiences (Eliasof, 2022).

Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions (Turino and van Balgooy, 2019), which is an authoritative business guide for museum boards and directors working principally in the USA, recommends instating guided house tours and encourages developing a mix of general and special tours depending on the audience (15). While the authors nod to one example of a 2014 "art exhibition that used light and sound to transform the house into the backdrop for a post-sunset visual and auditory experience" at the modernist Farnsworth House in Illinois, they do not elaborate further on the commissioning of contemporary art in house museums as an interpretive strategy (Turino and van Balgooy, 2019, 119). Elsewhere, the authors briefly praise the National Trust's contemporary art commissioning scheme in a discussion on defining "Spirit of Place" (Turino and van Balgooy,

2019, 232-233). However, the interpretive potential of collaborations between house museums and contemporary artists is largely overlooked, and the house tour takes precedence as a recommendation for drawing out alternative narratives and engaging new audiences. For inspiration, Turino (2019) references the theatrical approach of Dennis Severs' House in London, which engages all the senses to tell a "fictitious" story about an imaginary family of silk weavers over three centuries, as well as other tours with costumed interpreters, self-guided tours, audio-guides (such as those led by Sir Walter Scott's pets at Abbotsford), or multimedia experiences with films and projections (281-282).

One of the critiques that Vagnone *et al.*, (2016) put forward regarding historic house museums in the USA is that they are "narrowly curated", and visitors navigate them "like dollhouses ... voyeuristically peering into the stage-set of a furnishings plan" (102). Their "anarchist" manifesto for house museums is built around several criteria, including *environment*, which promotes "radical changes to historic house interiors to better reflect habitation" and *experience*, which emphasises "the loosening of boundaries that separate visitors from the house and in turn, increases sensory engagement" (Vagnone *et al*., 2016, 102). They add that, balanced with preservation needs, house museums must "be honest about the illusion of authenticity" and "embrace the fabric and energy" of the built heritage setting instead of presenting "an imagined, pastoral past" (Vagnone *et al.*, 2016, 102). They reflect briefly on the museumification of historic houses open to public audiences, commenting on their lack of domestic function and consequent lifelessness. Regarding house museums in an American context, they ask: "Why do so many previously inhabited house museums not feel anything remotely like homes? Why do they seem fossilized, rather than living, breathing entities?" (Vagnone *et al.,* 2016, 100). The authors argue that the conversion of a space from a private home into a formal or public institution, although meeting the basic objectives for preservation, ultimately alienates visitors by creating a "disconnect" between our own houses and previously inhabited historic houses (Vagnone *et al.,* 2016, 100). This position is informed by the philosophical writing of Randy Roberts who maintains that museums should be spaces for "being" and creating immersive, fulfilling experiences (Roberts in Vagnone *et al.*, 2016, 101).

Evaluating a range of Historic House Trust properties in New York City, Vagnone *et al.* (2016) refer to several "site-specific art happenings", which they describe as "pilot projects"

for "bridging this gap and valuing more emotive experiences" (100). For example, they applaud the Morris-Jumel Mansion for programming contemporary art exhibitions by "local artists" (Vagnone *et al.,* 2016, 104), including *Touch History*, a 2014 exhibition by artist Kathleen Granados which consisted of crocheted collection objects and workshops allowing tactile access for disabled visitors, such as autistic or blind visitors (Granados, 2024). The authors conclude that, along with facilitating "immersive theatre experiences" and yoga in the period rooms, these special events at the Morris-Jumel Mansion begin to engage more of the senses than a typical guided tour (Vagnone *et al.,* 2016, 110). If a property has not tested contemporary art commissions or collaborations with local artists, the authors believe this is a missed opportunity "for visitors to engage the physical environment of the space or fingerprint their visit with a singular experience" (Vagnone *et al.,* 2016, 110). This is one of the only examples within the house museum guidebook genre to consider contemporary art as not only a potential but integral approach to programming.

The scholarship of historian and curator Linda Young (2017; 2021) is significant for establishing a historical background and typology for the museumification of historic houses, which she traces back to the mid-to-late 19th century. Her 2017 book *Historic House Museums in the United States and the United Kingdom: A History* charts the emergence of the carefully preserved house museum in the USA and contrasts this with the stately homes and other National Trust properties in the UK. Young (2017) focuses on the founding and "museumization" of historic houses, which she defines as the "objectification of a house and all it contains and refers to, relative to the visitor" (1). Young's book meticulously maps the various motivations behind the establishment of over 500 house museums, a robust contribution to museological knowledge. The categories of house museums identified by Young include "heroes' houses" once inhabited by socially important people (such as Washington's Mount Vernon), "artwork houses" deemed architecturally significant (e.g., Fallingwater designed by Frank Lloyd Wright), "collectors' houses" which emphasise cultural taste (e.g., Sir John Soane's Musuem), "English country houses" (stately palaces saved from redundancy and implicated in national identity construction) and "Everyman/woman's social history houses" (such as Glasgow's Tenement Museum) (Young, 2017).

Overall, the existing literature indicates a set of house museum conventions, including the establishment of house tours, period rooms, interpretive labels, and a "don't touch" mentality

(Young, 2017, 241). Regarding the conventional role of the period room in establishing the authenticity of a historical narrative or environment, Mårdh (2015) most strongly articulates that "the period room is a place where an art historian can feel at home; it is a stage, which is managed to portray a pure state, connecting stylistic and historical considerations" (26). She argues that the field of art history, which traditionally understood historic houses "through plans, drawings, inventories, and individual objects, and ... greatly contributed to the concept of period rooms", pivoted by the 1980s to scrutinise "the authenticity and capacity of period rooms" at a time when "the public interest in living history increased, and demands for democratisation and inclusion became part of the agenda" (Mårdh, 2015, 25-26).

On the topic of subverting the conventional period room, both Mårdh and Young give the oft-cited example of Dennis Severs' House. While Mårdh (2015) infers that the intentionally anachronistic stage set at Dennis Severs' House is symptomatic of a general change in curatorial motivations, Young (2017) simply names the museum a "true pastiche, a riff on the period room" (113) and categorises it as "an artwork in itself rather than a house museum" (112). Mårdh (2015) pays closer attention to the theatrical and scenographic functions of period rooms and how these elements play a crucial role in "reinvent[ing]" historic house museums by subverting expectations of authenticity (25). For Mårdh (2015), Dennis Severs' House is more akin to an artist intervention in its deliberate disruption of the curatorial norm.

Cass *et al*. (2020) also offer examples of practices responding to or acting against these conventions in historic houses and other heritage settings. Brass Art mention aspiring to "turn the guided tour on its head" by showcasing their 2017 sculptural work at Chetham Library in a one-off event, during which actors led visitors through the exhibition in the dark (Lewis *et al.*, 2020, 59). This performance defamiliarised the space and amplifyied the sensory and sonic experience of the rooms, which are usually only accessible via the authorised tours (Lewis *et al.*, 2020, 59). Cass (2020) indicates the Brontë Parsonage Museum as an example of "a heritage site juxtaposing contemporary artists' responses with the period interior, as a strategy to enable visitors to have 'more creative' responses, but at the same time recognise the constructed nature of the interiors" (197). Cass (2020) argues that in the case of Su Blackwell's 2010 commission *Remnants*, which the museum website describes as "a series of site-specific installations" of book-cut sculptures, the "stage set" of the historic house setting was not challenged, but rather reinforced as authentic (197).

This grappling with expectations around authentic displays is at the heart of siting any contemporary art practice within historic house settings, which often hinges on a tangible juxtaposition between past and present to either reinforce or draw into question aspects of heritage or identity. However, to better interpret the motivations behind building these juxtapositions, a discussion on art historical precedents is needed. Contemporary art in heritage practice, which regularly employs approaches such as artistic intervention and site-specificity, can be contextualised by previous scholarship on these wider topics.

These conventions are explicitly acknowledged in Young's discussion on "historic house museum malaise" (Young, 2017, 241), referring to the title of a 2002 summit between the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the National Trust at Kykuit, the Rockerfeller mansion in Hudson Valley, New York. The conference aimed to acknowledge the decline in staffing, funding, and preservation standards in the face of a rapid expansion in American house museum numbers since the 1960s, as well as the perceived redundancy of the house museum model (George, 2002, cited in Young, 2017). Reconvening in 2007, the summit represented a concerted effort to openly debate the shortcomings of historic house museums and recommend sustainable solutions to managing these sites, moving away from the long-accepted tourism business model and towards responding to the needs of the local community (Young, 2017, 242). Young makes an important distinction between house museums in the United States and those in the UK, where most heritage management takes the form of either independent or government-owned charities eligible for funding, which she deems a more sustainable model despite an increase in closures since the 1990s (Young, 2017, 242). According to Young (2017), the Heritage Lottery Fund, which also offers grants to match endowment funds, has enabled an unprecedented degree of conservation and programme development in the sector, with a focus on "multiculturalism" and "inclusion" (247).

While the curation of contemporary art is largely overlooked by Young (2017), her conclusion exemplifies some recent tactics of house museums "to claim relevance", such as the centring of "other" historical figures and exploring themes of marginalised identity, war, and immigration (257). The LGBT+ History tours at The Georgian House in Edinburgh fall under this approach, representing the first National Trust for Scotland property to explore queer perspectives as part of its programme (Dunphy-Smith, 2025). Young (2017) also points to

historic houses that operate as community centres, such as Sutton House, one of London's last remaining Tudor houses, which offers film screenings, club nights, and activities for families and schoolchildren. While she criticises this use of the historic property as straying too far from the museum tradition, she concedes that this might be a realistic solution for preserving these spaces (258). Young (2017) concludes by arguing that the primary function of a house museum is to conserve and interpret the house itself, over collecting or community services.

This literature on historic house museums sits quite separately from contemporaneous publications in art history and, more recently, art in heritage scholarship, which considers some alternative creative strategies for house museums striving to reclaim relevance and connect with new audiences, addressed in this section. Importantly, recent examples of artist and curator perspectives (Park, 2020; Ashton, 2020; Williams, 2020) forge connections between these separate areas of research, connecting art historical terminology with arts in heritage discourse, but these links require further exposition.

2.4.2 Artists' interventions and site specificity

In her 2013 book *Curious Lessons in the Museum: The Pedagogic Potential of Artists' Interventions,* Robins writes that "site-specific works, installation art, institutional critique, conceptual art and curating are all descriptors that could be applied to individual projects in which artists have engaged with museums and their discourse" (2). These descriptors could also be applied to arts in heritage practice, with references to artistic intervention and site specificity appearing prominently in academic literature in the field (Mårdh, 2015; Cass, 2015; 2019; 2020; Park, 2020; Ashton, 2020; Williams, 2020; Black and Farley, 2020; Breen, 2020; Powell, 2020) and grey literature, such as artist websites, heritage organisation websites, and exhibition booklets. Notably, artists' interventions and site-specific projects are often conflated (i.e., some artists' interventions are described as site-specific, and vice versa), as well as mentioned alongside other categories of art including installation art and institutional critique or, most generally, public art. Both genres of art are extensively studied across a range of disciplines; artists' interventions are discussed in books and journals on museology (Foster, 1996; Pearce, 1999; Robins, 2013), geo-politics and geography (Ingram, 2011), peace studies (Hawes, 2007), education (Desai, 2010), historical preservation (Mendoza *et al*., 2018), and life sciences (Barnett, 2023). Comparably, site specificity is analysed in the fields of art history and criticism (Kwon, 1997; 2000; 2002; Hogue, 2004; Kim, 2016; Scholte, 2022),

cultural studies (Magnatta, 2022), and geo-science (Morris and Cant, 2006). It is worth briefly discussing the dominant and most recent literature, which attempts to contend with understanding these two interrelated labels, as well as how these definitions translate to art in heritage studies.

A significant portion of the early literature aims to document artists' interventions and the related subgenre of site-specific art practice. This includes McShine's *The Museum as Muse* (1999) and Putnam's *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (originally published in 2001), both of which provide comprehensive overviews of interventionist and site-specific practices in museums and galleries (Putnam, 2009). Pye and Sandino (2013) are also among the earliest authors to acknowledge the role of artists and designers in the museum profession as directors, curators, or educators, drawing on the history of artists' interventions in the Victoria and Albert Museum (cited in Cass, 2018). As Robins comments, broad exhibition histories such as *Art and Artifact* overlook the intentions of the museums and artists and how the artworks might challenge museum practices, and neglect to clarify how art relates to place (Robins, 2010, 27).

Other sources provide deeper critical analyses or offer historical perspectives and lasting definitions of these artistic genres. Firstly, Kwon's seminal art historical text *One Place after Another* (2002) critically analyses the conceptual evolution of site-specificity, clarifying the expansion of the practice over time. A term frequently employed in discussions of contemporary art, "site specific has eluded a clear definition since its origins over fifty years ago" (Demos *et al.,* 2003, 98). According to Kwon in an earlier article (1997), site-specific artworks first emerged as a conceptual and formal displacement of modernist sculpture during the late-1960s. Kwon (1997) defines site-specific art in its earliest form as an art object or event, which surrenders "itself up to its environmental context, being formally determined or directed by it" (85). Kwon (1997) argues that, unlike modernist sculpture which aims to transcend its site and achieve autonomy from a spatial location, site-specific works are firmly anchored in real, ordinary, or natural places, departing from an idealistic or neutral treatment of space (85). In his 2003 review of Kwon's book, Demos describes the motives behind early site-specific work as "critically reactive" to the commodification of sculptural objects, explaining that artists like Richard Serra retaliated against this trend in the art market by anchoring it "irrevocably in the geography of its site", both distinguishing it from other

artworks and providing a single material context for viewing it (Demos *et al*., 2003, 98). The experimental artists of the 1970s (those making "land/earth art, process art, installation art, Conceptual art, performance/body art, and various forms of institutional critique") soon began to consider not only geographical locations, but also the institutional frameworks determining artworks, as well as the "social matrix of class, race, gender, and sexuality of the viewing subject" (Kwon, 1997, 87-88). These developments made way for "discursive" definitions of site-specificity (Kwon, 1997, 93), in which "the site of the action or intervention" can be primarily located in a cultural or intellectual debate around issues such as sexism, the ecological crisis, or homelessness, distanced from the material realm (Demos *et al*., 2003, 98).

While Kwon's book is a go-to reference point for scholars defining site-specificity in the field of contemporary art in heritage, Demos points out that Kwon overlooks significant examples, such as Smithson's theory of the "nonsite", which "might have productively complicated her history or fleshed it out" (Demos *et al.*, 2003, 98). Kwon's definition is also not without contradiction, as the author herself acknowledges. Kwon cites Hapgood, who wrote that "the once-popular term 'site-specific' has come to mean 'moveable under the right circumstances'" (Hapgood, 1990, 120), a statement which negates "the dictum 'to remove the work is to destroy the work'" (Kwon, 1997, 38). Ultimately, Kwon concludes that to preserve the subversive spirit originally intended by Serra's site-specific artwork, it must be in the "wrong place" (both in and out of place at once), disrupting the serialization of "one place after another" (Kwon, 2002, cited in Demos *et al*., 2003).

Robins' book *Curious Lessons in the Museum: The Pedagogic Potential of Artists' Interventions (*2013) also stands out in its rigorous attention to the pedagogic capacity of artists' interventions, including site-specific artworks, in museum and gallery settings. Robins (2013) necessarily attends to the contradictions associated with art interventions—namely, that they are reputed to both exclude audiences with "the language of theoretical discourse" (189) and positively shape ideas of museum learning (1). Robins (2013) concludes that interventionist strategies, whether rooted in disruption or parody, can be understood as a turn towards restoring the discursive function of public museums (2). In terms of defining artists' interventions, Robins (2013) refers to the 1999 World English Dictionary, which describes the noun as "an action undertaken in order to change what is happening ... especially in order to prevent something undesirable" (Robins, 2013, 2). Robins emphasises this idea of intervention

as an "interlocutor", which interferes with dominant discourse, as well as its "alignment with the potential for inciting change in the museum" (2). Warning against the tendency to make "crude categories" of art, Robins (2013) crucially differentiates between change-driven artistic engagements in museums and works placed in collections "with the intention of 'brightening things up" (2). This raises the issue of how to measure the degree to which an artist or artwork intervenes in a permanent collection or established institutional setting. Robins (2013) highlights more radical examples of interventions, including uninvited/unofficial interventions and institutional critique. Another notable book, Marstine's *Critical Practices* (2017), argues that interventions led by socially and politically engaged artists cultivates "a discursive space" in which power imbalances between museums and publics can be reconciled, drawing on ethics to analyse case studies in Western cultural contexts (Marstine, 2017, 163; Cass, 2018).

In contemporary art in heritage literature, authors often refer to these accepted definitions of each term, or else bypass any clear designations. Park (2020) utilises Kwon's definition of site-specificity in the context of a project seeking to draw out less documented histories and highlight "the matrix of class, race, and gender relations that are often obscured in these heritage sites" (67). Powell (2020) exceptionally mentions Robert Barry's early 1969 definition of site-specific[4], meaning an artwork which is "made to suit the place in which it was installed" (216). Ubiquitously, however, the artworks discussed are understood as interventionist, and many are additionally termed site-specific in nature (Park, 2020, 67).

Black and Farley (2020) trace the origins of "contemporary art in heritage practice" to artists' interventions in museums, noting Putnam's *Art and Artifact* (2009) as a fundamental source for evaluating artistic inquiry into museum collections (17). Black and Farley highlight Putnam's observations that artist interventions in the UK take on a more "aesthetic" or "poetic" quality, as opposed to the disruptive or critique-driven interventions in the USA (Putnam, 2009, cited in Black and Farley, 2020, 17). Black and Farley (2020) also champion Robins (2013) for challenging the critical impact of artistic interventions that "privilege notions of creative continuity between past and present forms of cultural production" (17).

[4] See Miwon Kwon's 2002 book *One Place after Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), page 12.

In a discussion on contemporary art commissions that strive to build alternative narratives of a site, art curator Gill Park (2020) describes a case in which "contemporary art has been used as a mode of intervention into, and contestation of, heritage landscapes" (67-68). Here, Park (2020) frames contemporary art as a "tool" which can draw out "hidden" and sometimes controversial narratives, which she terms "productive", as well as "drawing attention to the landscape as construction and, as itself, a work of art" (67-68). As the director of Pavilion, a Leeds-based visual arts organisation that commissions contemporary art in disused buildings, post-industrial sites, and heritage landscapes, she also understands such projects as learning opportunities to "engage young people with heritage sites ... in the process of *doing* heritage research, aiming to involve participants in discovering and producing narratives that are hidden from view" (Park, 2020, 68). This curatorial model for arts in heritage demonstrates a shift towards understanding audiences as "active co-producers" instead of passive consumers of heritage experiences (Park, 2020, 68).

Park (2020) is not the only contributor to the arts in heritage discourse to characterise the contemporary art component as interventionist in nature, with the potential to disrupt existing narratives or stimulate new approaches to engaging with heritage. Jenna Ashton (2020), an artist and curator, also points to "feminist arts and curatorial interventions" at sites managed by the National Trust, evaluating examples of these practices and linking them to organisational and societal change more broadly (83). Ashton constructively offers another term related to artist interventions, "curatorial disruption", which refers to when curators take up the opportunity as insiders to challenge institutional structures and the lack of representation in programmes, especially in collaboration with external practitioners (88). Museum and heritage scholar Joanne Williams (2020) takes a different approach in her case study of programming at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) North, illustrating that contemporary "art interventions" can obscure and reinforce power relations, without dismissing the potential that interventions can enhance a "critical historical consciousness" in museum visitors. Black and Farley (2020) and Breen (2020) also employ the term when discussing commissioning schemes in UK heritage spaces more generally.

Ashton (2020) is the only contributor to *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* to expand upon the established meaning of an "artist intervention", which she indicates is "a frequent method utilised already by the National Trust, but here [in the context of feminist curating] it is

reimagined where artists are brought in to purposefully disrupt and challenge existing curatorial and interpretation practices" in a "specific and defined act" (88). This assertion implies that other interventions staged by the National Trust are less deliberate or fall short of problematising mainstream practices and/or authorised narratives in use. Ashton (2020) comments that many temporary disruptions "may be easily forgotten or removed post-programming" but maintains that the National Trust's Challenging Histories programme "played an important role in stepping beyond the institutional voice" and infusing internal practice with feminist theory (89). For example, Ashton (2020) argues that aspects of this programme, particularly the Women and Power project, enabled artists to participate in "feminist complaint" work against issues of equality and diversity within the National Trust, in some cases inciting backlash from the media, volunteers, and visitors (93). Referencing the writing of Sara Ahmed (2017), Ashton argues that the Women in Power project "became the location of a problem" not only by highlighting the paucity of women's narratives in the Trust's overall programme, but also by taking a firm stance against misogyny and other forms of prejudice (Ashton, 2020, 93).

Park (2020), Ashton (2020), and Williams (2020) all uphold the potential of contemporary art staged in historic settings to challenge social oppression, using critical theory to underpin their analyses. Ashton (2020) most explicitly argues for the "activist" role that interventions take towards enacting "change through art, museology, and heritage discourses" (85). However, Williams (2020) openly criticises institutions for not taking adequate accountability for political commentary made within a commissioned artwork, as well as the curatorial presumption that artists are inherently suited to speak the truth on behalf of marginalised communities (105-111). Further, Williams (2020) addresses the commodification of political critique as a curatorial practice, citing artist Andrea Fraser's position that there is no longer an outsider vantagepoint from which to articulate a critique (110).[5] Williams (2020) maintains that this narrowing of the role of artist to spokesperson for the under-represented compromises opportunities for more "transformative critiques of processes and mechanisms of meaning-making and narrative construction" (111). This is a leading example of how critical

[5] See Andrea Fraser's 2005 article 'From the critique of institutions to an institution of critique' in *Artforum International* **44**(1), pages 100–106. Available from: https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A318020220/AONE?u=glasuni&sid=summon&xid=33cb1e27, accessed 08 March 2025.

approaches to curating can deepen our engagement with heritage settings, moving beyond instances of "interventionist fatigue" (Breen, 2020, 32) or the "magic bullet"-style commissioning strategies (Freshwater, 2011; Black and Farley, 2020) in favour of projects with more transformative impact on audiences and artists alike.

Currently, few scholars point to alternative programming in historic house settings specifically, but some investigate related approaches which could be incorporated into art in heritage discourse. Especially in the last ten years, there has been an increase in academic interest in the cultural impact of artists' residencies from a range of disciplines, including architecture, interior design, psychology, archaeology, cultural management, and business. This body of scholarship covers a vast range of topics, offering findings on the benefits of artists' residencies from the perspectives of artist communities and policy makers in the UK and Europe (European Commission, 2016; Lehman, 2017; Wu, H. & Keeney, K. 2025); the collaborative potential of artists' residencies in the sciences (Lee, et al., 2018; King and Martinez, 2022); how artists' residencies in archaeological contexts might empower communities to take custodianship of heritage sites (Pinto, et al., 2020); and the effects of physical environment on artists' creativity (Motalebi and Parvaneh, 2021). Much of this research builds upon earlier reports documenting artist residency schemes and site-based placements in the UK (Honey *et al*., 1997; Stephens 2001).

Elving *et al.* (2019) uniquely consider the prevalence of artists' residencies as a model for artistic experimentation, cultural exchange, collaboration, and research, examining the current and future function of residencies in artistic practices and "ecologies" of art (21). This curatorial text not only offers a critical foundation for investigating the artist residency model in historic house settings but also establishes the value of residencies within wider cultural ecosystems (Elving *et al*., 2019). Elsewhere, commissioning bodies such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) are also beginning to consider the roles that "audiences, participants, and the public" play in shaping cultural ecologies beyond economical readings of culture (Holden, 2015). Importantly, a 2015 AHRC report advocates for the use of ecological metaphors in discussions about artistic networks, such as mutual dependence, feedback loops, symbiosis, and regeneration (Holden, 2015), language which has enormous potential to invigorate critical discussions within arts in heritage discourse.

2.4.3 Summary

While the museumification of historic houses is extensively studied, covering key topics relevant to arts in heritage practice, the integration of artistic methods within historic house spaces is still largely overlooked in the literature. Other art historical literature considers site-specific art practices and often overlapping interventionist practices, but these analyses remain orientated towards the context of earlier Conceptual art staged in museums or landscapes. As moderately demonstrated in *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces* (Cass *et al.*, 2020), curatorial perspectives have the potential to tie together disparate strands of scholarship, folding in the critical language needed for furthering arts in heritage analysis and practice.

2.5 Conclusion

Critical developments in the fields of heritage studies, museology, and curatorial studies are instrumental to investigating how heritage is experienced and expressed by curators and artists. Following the contributions of the critical scholarship discussed above, the recent field of contemporary art in heritage interrogates the hegemonic narratives constructed and perpetuated by institutions, adheres to conceptualisations of heritage as a social process, and values a multiplicity of experiences in qualifying the intersection of art and heritage. While this new scholarship strongly correlates with approaches in critical heritage and critical museology, its critical engagement with curatorial studies is wanting. Indeed, curatorial research methodologies sit quite separately from this debate and could help answer demands for a "greater critical framework" (Black and Farley, 2020, 15). The few examples of curatorial and artist perspectives in recent texts begin to address experimental and collaborative processes of developing artworks in response to heritage sites, but fuller explorations are required to clarify how artists define heritage or relate such commissions to their wider practices.

The literature on art in heritage activities in the UK is narrow in scope, mostly limited to England-based examples of major commissions carried out by sculptors or installation artists with established careers. This consequently sidelines other examples of art in heritage projects by a diversity of artists, particularly illustrators but also musicians, live performers, and sound artists, as well as those at different career stages. Moreover, despite extensive consideration of historic house museums in art historical literature, historic house settings as sites for artistic

practice are not adequately assessed in the scholarship and appear limited by traditional curatorial approaches. Reflecting upon Mårdh's emphasis on the "relevance of art history to the field of critical heritage studies" in the context of reimagining house museums (Mårdh, 2015), scholars should also heed the relevance of curatorial research to arts and heritage discourse. To fully encapsulate the intersectionality of this practice, it is essential to integrate the critical language developed by art historians after the discursive shift in the 1980s (Mårdh, 2015; Kwon, 1997) and the more recent critical modes of curatorial studies, into the arts in heritage debate. While art historical literature extensively discusses interventions and/or site-specific art practices, curatorial texts indicate less conventional approaches such as artists' residencies and the cultivation of cultural ecologies from multiple critical angles. Both areas of research require closer linking with current arts in heritage discourse, which this thesis sets out to accomplish.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

"Curatorial thinking is embodied in doing and in writing."

(Muller and Langill, 2021, 3)

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 delineates the overall methodology for this study and explains the combination of research methods implemented within each of the sites and organisations examined. It also discusses methodological literature supporting the research design, evaluating the advantages and challenges of case study research, curatorial practice-based approaches, and reflexive ethnography to establish their combined suitability for this study. Section 3.2 explains the positionality of the researcher, and how this influenced the research design, questions, data collection process, and findings. Section 3.3 introduces the key elements of the methodology from a theoretical perspective, beginning with the case study framework (Pickard, 2013; Tsang, 2014; Sørensen, Marlin, and Niewöhner, 2018), within which sit a number of distinct methods. It then reviews these methods, which are drawn from curatorial practice-based research (Nelson, 2013; Candy and Edmonds, 2018) and ethnographic approaches (Davies, 1999; Schensul and LeCompte, 2012; Pickard, 2013). By incorporating "curatorial thinking" (a term borrowed from the 2021 text *Curating Lively Objects*, edited by Muller and Langill) alongside ethnographic fieldwork, this project's methodology reflects the greater interests of the arts in heritage sector to employ creative practices as a mode of criticality (Black and Farley, 2020). Following this theoretical discussion of research methods, Section 3.4 addresses data collection techniques for conducting empirical research, including participant observation, fieldnotes, and semi-structured interviews (Davies, 1999; Pickard, 2013; Nelson, 2013), as well as convenience sampling and comparable case selection (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012). Next, it discusses the handling of transcriptions and documentation, imperative for upholding the trustworthiness of this study (Nowell *et al*., 2017). Lastly, it covers the techniques chosen for qualitative analysis, such as close text readings, thematic coding, and descriptive narrative, lending insight into this crucial stage of the research process. Finally, Section 3.5 elucidates the limitations of this research project due to time, funds, travel options, and the de-identification of interview participants. Overall, this methodology chapter serves to justify the integration of curatorial modes of inquiry, demonstrating the advantages

of employing creative and experimental approaches in qualitative research. By enabling hands-on knowledge of curatorial processes in heritage settings, the practice-based component lends immediate insight into the research context and acts in synergy with the other ethnographic methods chosen.

3.2 Positionality statement

As explained in Chapter 1, the direction and design of this research emerged from my existing professional relationship with Hospitalfield in Arbroath, the first case study chosen for this doctoral research. I maintained this relationship independent from the university from 2019-2020, working casually as a research consultant for Hospitalfield's Arbroath 2020+2 Festival programme. My prior knowledge of Hospitalfield and its programme led to questions about how artists and curators engage with and understand the site's layered heritage, from its medieval connection to Arbroath Abbey to its history as an artists' retreat and gathering place since the Victorian era. The other two case studies, Mount Stuart and Jupiter Artland, were selected on a basis of similarity: all three settings are registered charities based in historic country house settings. Given my academic and professional involvement in the Scottish cultural sector, I was already familiar with these other sites.

Several of the methodological choices for this research were influenced by my mixed life experiences, first as a museum studies researcher and second as an arts professional working closely with contemporary art curators and artists. For example, the choice to incorporate reflexive ethnographic methods grew from my prior experience testing this approach within a case study framework during my 2019 masters' research. While I have no formal academic training as a curator, I began this doctoral research with strong theoretical background in art history and practical experiences working as both a performance artist and front of house assistant in art gallery contexts, including in Scotland. Given my commitment to embodied and experience-based ways of knowing as an art performer, I understood that the act of curating, and the first-hand knowledge gleaned from that experience, would be integral to this methodology. Referring to literature on the pairing of art practice and ethnography, as well as to the writing by research-led curatorial practitioners, I was able to envision a curatorial practice-based method in synergy with reflexive ethnographic research.

In parallel with the design and data collection phases of this research, I developed a curatorial practice closely entangled with my role as researcher. In a university context, I assisted Dr Sarah Cook with teaching "Curating Lively Practices", a Museum Studies MSc course at UoG, from 2021-2023, which served as a rich learning environment for understanding processual models of curating as an ongoing and changing research activity. I also produced *The Cost of Dying* (2023), a photographic exhibition showcasing sociological research for public audiences at the Advanced Research Centre (UoG), the Mitchell Library, and Scottish Parliament[6]. Independent from academia, but still nurturing a research-driven practice, I led on multiple creative projects with Myceliart, an Edinburgh-based art collective of artists and makers engaged in social activism inspired by fungi. This entailed co-curating a community programme *Fungi and Folklore* (2023) at Granton:hub[7] and *Field Studies in Radical Mycography* (2023-2024), a workshop series for Art Walk Porty[8]. My practice with Myceliart, along with my prior research on medieval bookmaking in Arbroath, proved inextricable from the development of the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop (2022), which is detailed in Appendix A and forms part of this doctoral research. This project reflects an early stage of collaboration with one of the Myceliart founders, with whom I have since co-curated other workshops about plant folklore and medieval imagination. Further, my programming work for Collective in Edinburgh has built upon these curatorial interests in tradition and folklore, working closely with Scotland-based practitioners; including a site-responsive, song-based walking tour of Calton Hill's landscape[9]. Finally, this emerging curatorial practice was strengthened by my experiences as an art performer, including my engagement with situationist theory; this directly informed the use of walking methods as a supplementary form of data collection.

Throughout the process of conducting this doctoral research, I moved through a range of identities, dependent on the type of data collection and my relationship to potential informants.

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[6] I reflect on my experiences producing *The Cost of Dying* exhibition in this University of Glasgow student newsletter: https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/students/newsletter/archive/2023/headline_939565_en.html, accessed 20 August 2025.

[7] A full description of this programme can be found on the Granton:hub blog: https://madelviccommunity.wordpress.com/2023/10/13/myceliart-collective-fungi-folklore-28th-and-29th-october-2023/, accessed 20 August 2025.

[8] More information on this series is available on the Art Walk Porty website: https://www.artwalkporty.co.uk/project/field-studies-in-radical-mycography/, accessed 20 August 2025.

[9] This creative project was a collaboration with a Glasgow-based singer and artist, Josie Vallely. More detail about the event is available on Collective's website: https://www.collective-edinburgh.art/programme/quinie-on-calton-hill, accessed 20 August 2025.

I found that I could relate to curators as an arts professional experienced with programming and as a writer, shaping the direction of conversations and interviews, and my analysis. Similarly, my empathy with artists as an art performer led to more opportunities for observation, for example shadowing artists in their studios at Hospitalfield, and encouraged more points of connection in interviews, which in turn resonated during the analysis phase. Simultaneously, this switching or travelling between creative roles remained in tension with my position as an outsider. Informants perceived me as an academic tied to an institution, and it was my ethical obligation to maintain that boundary by disseminating participant information resources and implementing critical distance in data analysis. This mutability of identity as a practice-based researcher is further unpicked and regulated in the ethnographic and curatorial fieldnotes, as described in Section 3.4.1.

3.3 Key elements of research design

This research focuses on three discrete contemporary art programmes based within historic houses, assuming a case study framework (Pickard, 2013; Tsang, 2014; Sørensen, Marlin, and Niewöhner, 2018). The research aims and questions established in Chapter 1 call for access to practitioner perspectives on the historic house settings that comprise the project's case studies, and in-depth engagement with curatorial and artistic processes. Each contemporary art programme sits in unique relationship to its heritage context, with different objectives, operational structures, stakeholders, and funding sources, and immersive study is required to draw out these nuances. Curatorial intentions and considerations are not easily documented and entail an extended period of social engagement with a programme's curators, directors, and assistants to grasp. Moreover, disengagement from the research context is also required to make informed inferences based on empirical data (Schreier, 2018). Responding to these considerations, the research was designed to build a rich body of qualitative findings that are in dialogue with the growing discourse on arts in heritage practice. As a result, the methodology that was employed combines several distinct yet complementary methods, with scope for a curatorial practice-based approach within one of the research sites.

3.3.1 A case study framework

From the outset, the focus of this multi-sited research closely resembles case study research in its intention to translate specific qualitative results into general theoretical knowledge (Tsang, 2014). Following Yin (2009), case study research can be defined as an empirical investigation

of “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Tsang, 2014, 371). Primarily qualitative in nature, case studies concentrate on one or more cases in their everyday contexts to determine “the actual meanings and interpretations that actors ascribe to the phenomenon under study”, emphasising participant perspectives (Tsang, 2014, 371). Such investigations also rely on the personal experiences, interpretations, and comparative analysis of the researcher to collect data firsthand (Sørensen, Marlin, and Niewöhner, 2018). This case study format, which enables immersive and in-depth scrutiny of specific sites over time, supports the research aims to uncover transferrable theoretical criteria and inform both academic and professional fields.

The degree to which the comparability or generalisation of results is possible within qualitative research is commonly debated in methodological literature. Case study research has often been criticised for its lack of generalisability compared to the results of quantitative methods and is consequently regarded as less scientific than studies with larger, more diverse samples (Tsang, 2014, 370). Tsang (2014) compellingly maintains that there is an unfair emphasis on this issue. Thoroughly reviewing examples of case studies such as those conducted in scientific contexts by de Rond and Bouchikhi (2004) and Kochan and Rubinstein (2000), Tsang shows that this concern with generalisability is shared by many researchers (2014, 370). Carefully differentiating between definitions of theoretical generalisation, falsification, and empirical generalisation, Tsang puts forward a convincing argument that case study research has a unique “advantage in terms of theoretical generalisation” and for recognising disconfirming cases (2014, 379). Tsang (2014) concludes that case study results are not inherently less generalisable than quantitative methods and urges researchers to reconsider the benefits of this methodology when conducted with appropriate caution.

Pickard (2013) offers additional guidance on how to responsibly conduct case studies, warning against inadequate exposure to the research context. Long-term and repetitive contact with informants and the research site is paramount to minimise fractional representations and garner a holistic understanding of the sociocultural or additional factors involved (Pickard, 2013, 108). This study follows the school of thought established by Tsang (2014) that scrutinising a series of specific, real-life cases can prove useful for establishing general knowledge, as well as for identifying disconfirming cases and limitations. However, this

research design acknowledges the issues associated with generalising results and indicates areas in need of further research. Though case study research serves as a foundation, other methods are instilled to add rigour.

The case study framework selected for this research can be visualised as a container or basket for other methods, borrowed from practice-based and ethnographic research. The research began with a case study format and then applied additional approaches (practice-based, ethnographic, and desk research methods) to tackle the specific challenges posed by each site under scrutiny. Its success hinged on the comparability of cases selected and the sustainability of additional approaches in relation to each context. Sustainability was a chief concern in the design of this research. What is feasible for a doctoral study, limited to around three years of data collection (Edwards and Holland, 2013, 66)? Can the methodological choices be justified within the disciplinary context of Information Studies? Such concerns ultimately led to the concoction of different methodological recipes on a case-by-case basis. While case study research can be understood as the sturdy basket in which other methods are contained, it was also necessary to evaluate the appropriateness and feasibility of approaches for each case considered. The practical limitations of each case considered were assessed, including constraints on physical access to each site, transportation, funding, and time to collect and process data.

With sustainability at the heart of the methodological design, Figure 3 is a visual representation of the methods and techniques chosen to render the research purposeful and coherent. Importantly, there was a continuity of data collection methods conducted across each site: desk research and ethnographic methods including site visits, participant observation, fieldnotes, and interviews were applied in every instance for comparable results. All data was analysed using a rigorous combination of coding, thematic analysis, and descriptive narrative to establish consistent results. The research at Hospitalfield uniquely employed a curatorial practice-based approach, dependent on logistical support and hospitality from the staff team. Accordingly, fieldwork conducted at Hospitalfield was the most immersive and provided the bulk of the data. Mount Stuart and Jupiter Artland proved less accessible, the first due to its island location and the latter because the historic house is a private residence. For these pragmatic reasons, fieldwork conducted at Mount Stuart and Jupiter Artland was more limited.

The next subsection introduces practice-based research, building up to a definition of curatorial practice-based research.

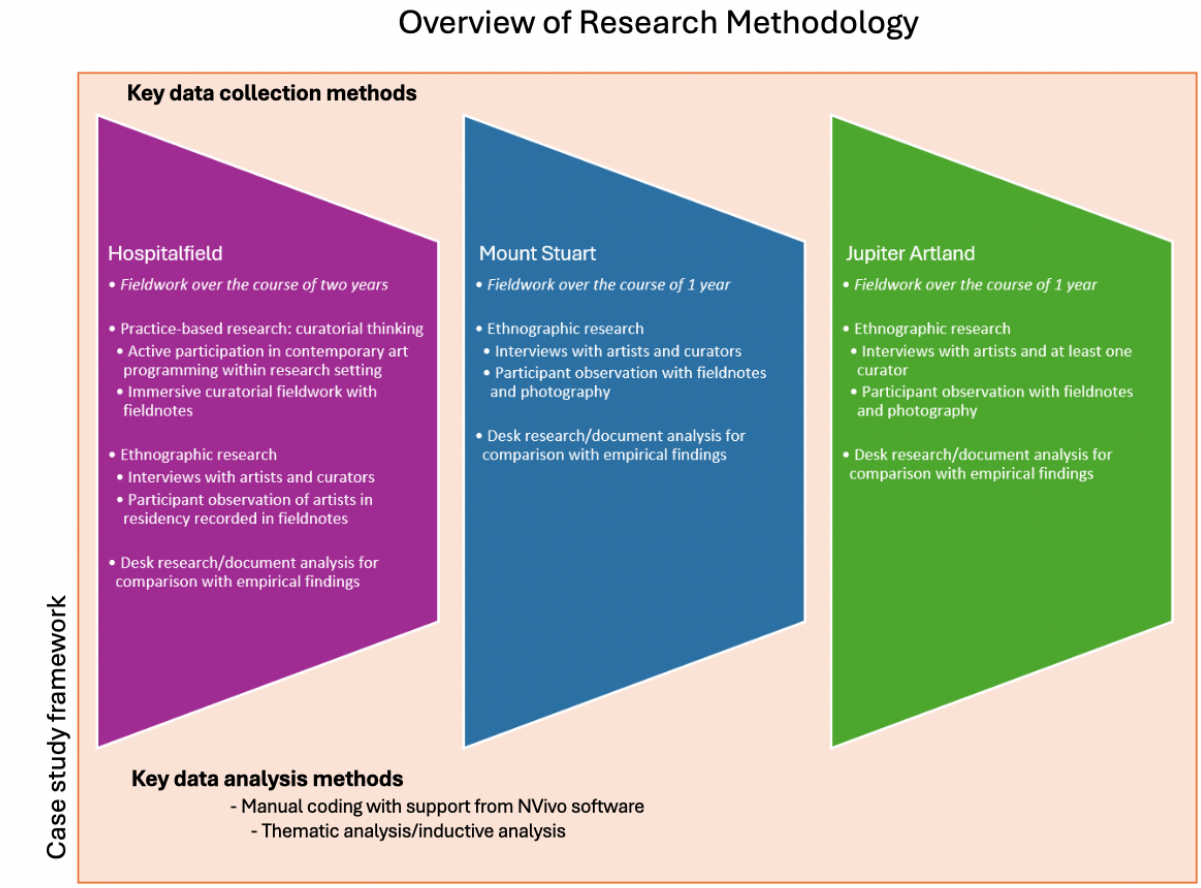


Figure 3. An outline of data collection and analysis methods applied to each site, encompassed within a case study framework.

The container model affords scope for alternative ways of answering these research questions or constructing narratives about contemporary art in heritage in further studies. Inspired in part by Ursula K. Le Guin's essay "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" which characterises stories as compartments for storing ideas, instructions, and remedies, this methodology represents just one iteration of a host of possible case studies and techniques (LeGuin, 1989). While this project is not fictional in the same sense as Le Guin's stories, it is unavoidably subjective, reflecting the motivations, assumptions, and perspectives of participants and the researcher. As LeGuin embraces storytelling as a tool "to describe what is in fact going on, what people actually do and feel" (170), this research design embraces subjectivity as a tool for knowledge production (Davies, 1999).

3.3.2 Practice-based research approaches

At the heart of understanding practice-based research is grappling with the epistemological relationship between practice and research. The concept of practice does not always sit well within the sphere of academia, given it is commonly understood in terms of polarity: practice as opposed to theory (Nelson, 2013; Candy and Edmonds, 2018). Nelson (2013) confronts the division of practice and theory in research, instead valuing the cultivation of a research "praxis"—the integration of practice and theory, both ways of knowing. This exact vocabulary also appears in professional guidebooks for curators, suggesting a deliberate incorporation of theorising and action into curatorial practice (Kuoni and Independent Curators International, 2001). Barrett and Bolt (2007) trace the origin of the term "praxical knowledge" to German philosopher Martin Heidegger, whose writing posits that human knowledge emerges from our interactions with materials, implying that theory follows practice (6). Notably, Barrett and Bolt (2007) assert that "praxical knowledge involves a reflexive knowing that imbricates and follows on from handling", most effectively in the form of exegesis (34). They compellingly maintain that critical reflection is integral for translating new praxical knowledge into other fields (Barrett and Bolt, 2007).

Candy and Edmonds (2018) also distinguish between activities of practice and research, so that these terms are complementary rather than interchangeable. For them, practice is characterised by action, involving the realisation of ideas via the production of a new art piece or artefact (Candy and Edmonds, 2018). Importantly, this definition of practice values both the product and the process. Candy and Edmonds (2018) then define research as a "systematic investigation to establish facts, test theories and reach new knowledge or new understandings" (64). Research is characterised by its dissemination, originality, and contextualisation, and can be understood as both a process (seeking knowledge) and a product (the knowledge itself) (Candy and Edmonds, 2018). In combination with everyday practice, personal research can substantially inform one's creative practice, and indeed, most creative practitioners consider themselves researchers (Kaila and Slager, 2012; Candy and Edmonds, 2018; Pringle, 2020). However, Candy and Edmonds (2018) maintain that personal research differs from theoretically more robust research conducted in the public interest. This latter category more deliberately aims to contribute to existing knowledge, and thus lays bare its methods and outcomes to be scrutinised or challenged by others (Candy and Edmonds, 2018).

Pringle (2020) usefully differentiates between "'Big-R' and 'little-r' research" based on practitioners' perceptions of the types of research taking place within art museums (17). The former is aligned with an academic discourse, which is facilitated by the traditional role of the curator as expert and relies on systematic methods of the university, such as the historicisation and theorising of culture in the form of written narrative or display (Pringle, 2020, 17). The latter encompasses curatorial practice-based modes of research with what Pringle (2020) considers "seemingly unrecognised" but equally valid degrees of inquiry (17).

Building on these definitions of practice and research, academic practice-based research usually relies on both the production of an original artefact and a written argument validating its novel contribution to scholarship (Candy, 2006; John, 2019). In *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Resistances* (2013), Nelson extricates practice-based research from other types of practice as research (PaR), reserving the term practice-based for "research which draws from, or is about, practice but is articulated in traditional word-based forms", such as books, written theses, or articles (10). Distinct from action research, which aims to transform or improve a social practice via participatory action (Kemmis *et al.*, 2014), practice-based research harnesses action as a vehicle for knowledge production (Nelson, 2013). For Nelson, PaR follows an adaptive or "rhizomatic" model for practical knowledge building, enabling it to be combined with other academic methodologies (17). In his adjustable model, Nelson (2013) outlines three salient components of a creative PaR submission to an academic audience, paraphrased here: 1) the product (e.g., an artwork, musical composition, performance, or exhibition); 2) documentation of one's creative process (e.g., notebooks, photographs, audio-visual materials, or other ephemera); and 3) the written analysis, presenting the conceptual framework for the research and contextualising one's practice within "a lineage of influences" (26). In the case of curating as a creative practice, the product component might, for example, take the form of an artwork, exhibition, publication, public event, or blog. The documentation might consist of correspondence between collaborators, personal notebooks, photographs, social media posts, or other materials created throughout the curatorial process. Finally, the written accompaniment might shed light upon the concepts at work within the product and a critical overview of related literature, as well as reflect on the nature of any collaborations. Nelson's model supports a range of creative practice-based methods, offering a useful starting point for building a curatorial practice-based model (Nelson, 2013). In thoroughly explaining the synergetic relationship between creative

practices and research as equal components in a line of inquiry, Nelson's *Practice as Research in the Arts* has proven an invaluable resource for building the research methodology employed in the study that is the focus of this thesis.

3.3.3 Curatorial thinking and doing

This subsection combines these general definitions of practice-based research with more specific methods for curating as academic research, striving for a rigorous approach. Just as Candy and Edmonds (2018) grapple with the viability of creative practice as a method of research, curating sits precariously alongside other forms of critical academic inquiry. It has been argued that the processes of art and curating are both types of research (Kaila and Slager, 2012), and exhibitions have also been considered as a mode of (not just the dissemination of) research (Bjerregaard, 2019). However, acceptance within the humanities and the traditional academic complex has been more recent and contentious (Sheikh, 2019).

Sheikh (2019) maps the "uneasy alliance" between curatorial practice and academic interests to the last decade, arguing that this new academic iteration of "the curatorial" is both an "expansion and an abstraction of the practices of curating", further contributing to the enigmatic definition of the term (97-98). While Sheikh's work (2019) emphasises the fraught relationship between curating as an academic method of theorising and curating as a practical method of exhibition-making, he also recognises the curatorial endeavour as a valid system of knowledge production (97). The parameters of what constitutes research in each context are up for debate, since research occurs on either end of this "false dichotomy" laid out by Sheikh (2019, 98). What Sheikh notices is that a unified conception of the curatorial is lacking across opposing discourses. From the outset, this divergence in definition of curatorial research complicates the task of justifying it as a viable method for academic pursuit. Despite this conflict, curating has been pitched as valuable for pursuing a research inquiry in critical and constructive ways (Butler and Lehrer, 2016). There is enough methodological literature to indicate that both creative practices and curating are acknowledged vehicles for academic research, whether to answer specific questions or experiment with the process, possibly resulting in an exhibition or new artwork (Sheikh, 2019).

Comparing curatorial work to the cross-disciplinary field of experimental ethnography, Butler and Lehrer (2016) argue that curators generate new possibilities rather than simply analyse existing structures and adhere to academic conventions. They write:

> The process of curating offers respite from the often closed system—however valuable– of relentless academic critique, and satisfies the desires of many of us to use all our sensory faculties and creative impulses, and take advantage of a variety of public venues, to communicate the fruits of our research and make a tangible difference in the world (Butler and Lehrer, 2016, 8-9).

Here, curating is recognised as a transdisciplinary medium of engagement with other ways of knowing and true experimentation (Butler and Lehrer, 2016). This echoes Nelson's position that creative practice as a research methodology affords a special kind of knowledge of *actually doing* (2013, 7). He insists on calling this *knowing* rather than *knowledge*, a term that better captures the fluidity and open-endedness of comprehending something and refers to the subject engaged in this process (Nelson, 2013, 20). Barrett and Bolt (2007) refer to this hands-on knowledge using Heidegger's term "handleability", which implies that knowing is derived from handling materials and using the senses. Practiced-based research crucially enables this process of "knowing-in-doing" in relation to the research questions (Nelson, 2013, 9); rather than merely theorising about curatorial strategies, this research immediately engages with contemporary art in heritage programming and from an active curatorial perspective.

The practice-based approach for this project weaves in between several modes of curating, most closely considering the inclusive, artist-centred approaches of the critical curator. This is by no means a novel concept and has been both informally and overtly employed across various modes of contemporary curating (Sivanesan *et al*., 2018). However, the intention here is to conscientiously reflect on the versatility and hybridity of the contemporary curator as the reseach unfolds. The multifarious roles curators occupy are in constant flux and, as Stella Rollig (the artistic director of the Museum Belvedere in Vienna) explains, contain a dimension of site-specificity:

> Curators today are continuously challenged to reflect critically on the art system, the ground we work on. Applied to the collaboration of curators and artists within the museum, it means developing a specific theory and practice of site-specificity and a museum's often hidden intentions and interests, as well as an understanding of the audience's needs and ability to decide which ones we are ready to serve and what other expectations we want to question or even oppose (Rollig, 2003, 106).

Rollig's comment directly pertains to this research design, which proposes a constant oscillation across the spectrum of theory and practice, using curatorial knowledge and criticality to not only gauge institutional perspectives but also to uncover the perceptions of artists and curators working within cultural organisations.

The beginning of this chapter quotes curatorial researchers Lizzie Muller and Caroline Seck Langill (2021), who state in their editorial introduction to *Curating Lively Objects* that "curatorial thinking is embodied in doing and in writing" (3). This comment initiates a conversation about the curatorial experience, particularly as a collaboration between curators and "lively objects" (Muller and Langill, 2021, 3). Many of the contributing authors to *Curating Lively Objects* draw upon new materialist theories to argue that objects are active participants in curatorial processes, using first person narratives to reconsider the "relationship between art, objects, and knowledge" (3). Such deliberations have significant implications for the "liveliness" of built heritage as an agent within curatorial experiences, which has yet to be adequately explored and merits further research (Muller and Langill, 2021, 1-2). Secondly, and more pertinent to this chapter, this definition of the curatorial experience contains active language (thinking, doing, and writing), thus demonstrating how intellectual and bodily dimensions can be integrated and emphasising the role of personal experiences in knowledge construction (Muller and Langill, 2021). As a research methodology, "curatorial thinking" encompasses both the hands-on testing of ideas in the field and critical reflection as "a source of new knowledge" (Muller and Langill, 2021, 2-3). This "embodied" experience of curating closely echoes Nelson's description of practice-based research as a balancing act of performative and written practices (Nelson, 2013, 7). This fusion of creative experimentation and writing lends itself well to the mixed method design for this research and serves as the basis for the data collection and analysis techniques detailed later in this chapter.

Elsewhere, curatorial researcher Nicola Triscott (2017) proposes "a curatorial methodology of transdisciplinary co-inquiry" to engage artists, scientific researchers, and audiences in conversations around "shared matters of concern", which was tested via Arts Catalyst's programme as part of a practice-centred PhD project (Triscott, 2023). Triscott founded and directed Arts Catalyst, a UK-based commissioning organisation established in 1994 and dedicated to integrating research into art practice via residencies, workshops, talks, experiments, conferences, and other projects (Triscott, 2025). Triscott's methodology of co-inquiry is a useful

exemplar for this doctoral research in its merging of disciplinary perspectives and recognition of non-academic sources of expertise, especially validating the professional role of curator in cultural inquiries (Triscott, 2017; 2023). While this research does not encompass disciplinary perspectives beyond the arts and humanities, it does learn from Triscott's approach in its trialling of collaborative strategies to critique institutional curatorial practice and feedback to the sector (Triscott, 2017; 2023).

Later, Triscott (2023) reflects on "cultural inquiry as curatorial strategy" in a blog post, and like Rollig, connects critical modes of curating with institutional practice:

> I now tend to see my curatorial practice as engaging in 'curating an institution' – a further act of care – which involves an interconnected series of structural decisions about how the organisation operates, how we curate and produce a programme, how we develop an 'artist-centred' organisation ... , how we care for our staff and workers, how we govern ourselves, and how we engage with our various audiences (Triscott, 2023).

Triscott's research-informed approach to curatorial practice resonates with the design of this PhD, which also aims to extend notions of curatorial care to nourish the organisations and programmes under investigation. Not only does this research strive to incorporate artist and curator perspectives in building new critical frameworks for examining contemporary art in heritage practice, but also to shape the way future arts in heritage programmes are designed and connected within wider cultural ecologies (Elving *et al.*, 2019).

The essays in *Curating Lively Objects* (ed. Muller and Langill, 2021) and the writings of curators such as Triscott (2017; 2023) and Rollig (2003) serve as precedents for understanding processual models of curating as an experimental, collaborative, and active form of research, which can work in synergy with other qualitative approaches. The following subsection introduces the ethnographic approaches applied within this research methodology, as enmeshed with this curatorial lens.

3.3.4 Ethnographic research methods

Ethnography can most simply be defined as an immersive and descriptive study of a particular culture, oscillating between observation and interpretation (Biggam, 2015). Immersion here refers to social engagement with research subjects in everyday contexts over a defined period

(Davies, 1999). In the case of this research, the subjects are contemporary art curators and artists practicing in historic house contexts. While this is project is not an ethnography, which would traditionally require at least a year in the field, it uses ethnographic methods to conduct shorter but in-depth investigations of each case study (Pickard, 2013, 135).

As described in Section 3.2.1, the fieldwork carried out at each case site between 2022-2023 varied in terms of intensity and frequency. At Hospitalfield, the fieldwork was the most embedded or immersive, with more frequent site visits between 2022-2023 which layered upon my existing knowledge of the site and the organisation. This involved shadowing around ten artists in residence, participating in public art events and curator/artist workshops both inside the house and on the grounds, engaging with collections work, volunteers, staff, artists, and members of the public, and conducting interviews with curators in situ. Uniquely, I collaborated with Hospitalfield as a curatorial practitioner to produce a site-responsive event in Arbroath, working with one artist from within their network and introducing another to their network. At Mount Stuart, my site visits were sparser, yet still intensive and engaging, incorporating tours of the house, grounds, and contemporary artworks, an event with a commissioned artist, and a pre-arranged/overnight field trip with a group of around fifteen artists. Again, interviews with curatorial staff took place in the research context. Finally, my fieldwork at Jupiter Artland entailed fewer site visits, instead targeting information-rich events. While less immersive, this still allowed for focused engagement with Jupiter Artland's programme, collection, and grounds. The fieldwork centred on one all-day visit as part of a group of arts professionals, comprising of a tour and talk led by Jupiter Artland staff, plus three visits for temporary exhibitions/art performances as a member of the public. In this last case, interviewing took place off-site.

Rather than aligning with traditional ethnography, this fieldwork more closely aligns with short-term ethnography (Pink and Morgan, 2013) or focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005; Kelly, 2022), both alternative ethnographic approaches that value time-intensive fieldwork in investigations of a specific phenomenon. With short site visits focused on important events, building upon my existing knowledge of the research contexts and commonality with research participants, it was possible to gather substantial information to answer my pre-defined research questions (Kelly, 2022). Moreover, my combination of written and photographic fieldnotes and audio-recorded interviews enabled extended re-immersion in the research contexts while

physically off-site; this parallels how video and other digital media enables re-engagement with primary data in short-term ethnographic studies (Pink and Morgan, 2013). Finally, I treated documents created by each organisation as a record of organisational stances, comparing these perspectives with findings derived from on-site fieldwork and thus influenced by my presence as a researcher (Kelly, 2022). This technique is also utilised by sociologist Leanne M Kelly in her focused ethnographic research.

The ethnographic component of this research is also heavily grounded in the writing of anthropologist Charlotte Davies (1999). Davies' work follows the critical realist perspective of Bhaskar (1989), which upholds that our individual perceptions of social or cultural realities, though unavoidably subjective, can yield valid theories (Davies, 1999, 9, 229). Traditional ethnography can be conducted in a variety of ways. For example, ethnographic research could assume a positivist perspective, which attempts to establish objectivity by implementing non-interactive techniques (Davies, 1999, 4). Since this research applies curatorial methods and seeks social interactions with informants, striving to gain an understanding through individual experiences, this is not an appropriate lens. Another approach assumes a naturalist position in which the ethnographer conceals their identity, but this is agreed upon by most academic researchers as an unethical and high-risk method of data collection (Davies, 1999, 4). Furthermore, it contravenes the University of Glasgow's PGR Code of Practice (2024) and the College of Arts and Humanities ethical guidelines (2023), which governs this research.

Both lenses attempt to artificially control the research results and deny an intrinsic part of the ethnographic process: the researcher's subjectivity (Davies, 1999). When the ethnographer's subjective observations and assumptions are acknowledged, they can be channelled as a tool to interpret the research context (Davies, 1999). The success of this method is rooted in its self-reflexivity—its consistent examination of the process of knowledge production (May and Perry, 2014). Demonstrated by Davies' model of reflexive ethnography (Davies, 1999), this critical lens is ideal for capturing the shifting nuances of curatorial and artistic practices occurring within each historic house context studied. Furthermore, it allows for the levels of interactivity and transparency needed to connect with a limited pool of informants (Davies, 1999; Schensul and LeCompte, 2012). Covert participation in these isolated social environments would prove both ineffective and unethical (Pickard, 2013, 167).

Reflexive ethnographic research strives to enable two layers of understanding. Firstly, of the research context: the unique cultural site, which the research process enters and interacts with. Secondly, of the research position: the ever-changing subjective perspective of the researcher, which in turn informs the process of understanding the research context. Indeed, this subjective position becomes the "primary instrument" in deciphering the layers of historical, social, cultural, political, economic, and natural realities unfolding in the field (Pickard, 2013, 161). Recognition of the unique position of the ethnographer is crucial to building empathy with the research participants, pushing aside or concealing one's own background, biases, or identity minimises potential opportunities for knowledge exchange or discussion (Davies, 1999).

There is, however, a risk of carrying this subjectivity too far, which creates an epistemological challenge—a "reflexive spiral" which is described as a lost cause in postmodern theory (Davies, 1999, 10). Davies (1999) warns against extreme self-reflection, "in which boundaries between subject and object disappear, one becomes the other, a process which effectively denies the possibility of social research" (5). One countermeasure to this risk is to ascribe to critical realism at all turns, which affirms that reflexive researchers can draw informed theories about a particular social or cultural context (Bhaskar, 1989, cited in Davies, 1999, 10). Postulated by Bhaskar in 1989 and supported by Davies, this theoretical lens supports ethnographic research as it sets out to makes sense of a particular object of study without losing sensitivity to or accountability of our personal implications and assumptions (Davies, 1999, 21). Even the boundaries of the research context are determined by the ethnographer's perspective, and these decisions should be made clear. In following this approach, the implications of the researcher's background, training, identity, and interests were consistently reflected upon in fieldnotes.

Importantly, part of carrying out reflexive work is acknowledging the ways in which the ethnographer's explicit presence alters the research context (Davies, 1999). The site, the informants, and everyday events shift when isolated under the ethnographer's scrutiny. In the case of this research, all participants were made aware of the research aims, as determined by ethical guidelines. Such interactions between researcher and subjects, punctuated by the exchange of participant information sheets and personal contact information, can be awkward to navigate (Edwards and Holland, 2013, 67). This research productively reframed this scenario between the observer and observed as a collaboration between researcher and participants, inviting the informants to feel valued as contributors to academic research.

3.3.5 Synergy in research design

Afforded the scope to collaborate with Hospitalfield, I had the unique opportunity to apply both curatorial practice-based and ethnographic research methods. This section briefly addresses how these two methods were combined and rendered compatible. The theoretical overlap between art practice-based research and ethnography has been given some consideration in both methodological literature and art writing. For example, Kris Rutten (2016) considers creative practices situated at the intersection of art and anthropology, attempting to identify other ways to communicate ethnographic perspectives beyond written interpretations. This section does not aspire to cover the breadth of theory on this topic but instead highlights how this research effected synergy between curatorial practice-based and ethnographic methods, exploring three different analogies between these approaches.

Firstly, both methods alternate between insider and outsider perspectives to sharpen the criticality of the data analysis. Reflexive ethnographic research relies on these insider and outsider perspectives embodied by a participant observer as they move in and out of the site under investigation. By alternating between immediate/distant perspectives, the ethnographer takes part "in worlds they also observe", in an attempt "to describe a world that is emerging and to account for the experience of that world from the points of view of those involved in it" (Ahmed, 2012, 11-12). In this process, the ethnographer moves freely between viewpoints to understand how they change the research context upon defining it, and how the research context in turn changes them. Similarly, Nelson (2013) understands practice research as a dynamic movement, whereby the researcher moves in and out of the process to introduce friction into a routine, reflect on observations and spark new ideas (20). In both curatorial practice-based and ethnographic approaches, the goal is to regain critical distance by taking mental breaks from the research context and re-examining social relationships. Curators often hold an ambiguous social position in the lives of the artists they work with. They might be friends of, admirers of, or collaborators with artists, as well as wield a disproportionate amount of power over their work (Kuoni and Independent Curators International, 2001). Ideally, curators maintain this fluidity between personal and professional relationships while networking, arranging shows, or producing publications. At first, this seems like a point of contention between ethnographic and curatorial practice-based methods of working, with the latter compromising the rigour and ethical parameters of the former. However, it can be reframed as an opportunity for heightened

reflexivity and learning. While the concept of neutrality is not compatible with the qualitative approaches chosen, this research attempted to achieve balance in forming relationships with informants. According to Davies (1999), ethnographers need to establish a firm social boundary (one that avoids full acceptance and integration) to maintain perspective. Similarly, curators might produce more comprehensive exhibitions if they are able to establish professional boundaries between themselves and artists. This first analogy between ethnographic and curatorial processes brought a heightened awareness of the effects of social integration and forming social boundaries when collecting data and examining its findings.

Secondly, the combination of these methods rests upon the argument that subjective evidence is both credible and valuable in qualitative research (Davies, 1999). In in his 1980 essay *Camera Lucida*, French critic Roland Barthes (1993) ascribes value to what he refers to as *Mathesis singularis,* or a singular rather than universal science driven by individual truths and impulses (8). Here he determines which photographs to consider as objects of study in his classic critique of the medium:

> So I resolved to start my inquiry with no more than a few photographs, the ones I was sure existed for me. Nothing to do with a corpus: only some bodies. In this (after all) conventional debate between science and subjectivity, I had arrived at this curious notion: why mightn't there be, somehow, a new science for each object? (Barthes, 1993, 8).

This selectivity practiced by Barthes echoes the process of a curator supporting a particular artist, based on a resonant encounter or personal commitment to an artist's career. This is a facet of curating that Swiss art curator Hans Ulrich Obrist identifies as a strength; to understand, respond to, and emotionally, intellectually, or financially invest in supporting an artist's work is an effective, indeed meaningful, way to curate (Obrist and Razä, 2014). In parallel with this position, Davies (1999) uses a critical realist framework to justify the value of subjective testimony in ethnographic research. This second analogy between curatorial and ethnographic approaches frames the subjectivity of human experience as instrumental in both reflexive ethnography and curatorial practice-based research. It is thus in the interests of this research to embrace the medium of subjective narrative with added layers of reflexive commentary and transparency that proffer credible results (Davies, 1999; Nowell *et al.*, 2017). While the

conditions of this research cannot be fully reproduced, these conditions can be clarified so that subjective interpretations are legible (Nowell *et al*., 2017).

Thirdly, an emphasis on process is adopted by both reflexive ethnography (Davies, 1999) and practice-based methodologies (Nelson, 2013). A processual model leaves room for experiments, ripening perspectives, and new directions over time (Rand and Kouris, 2007, 8). Ethnographic approaches usually demand flexibility in the process of inquiry, enabling a constant interchange between theory and findings. According to Davies (1999), theoretical explanations can only be developed by embracing a flow of influences and creativity between the researcher and the researched over time (229). As with ethnography, critical forms of curating take "gestation" time (Nelson, 2013, 28), often leading to more questions than answers. In both cases, transparently embracing areas of ambiguity, conflict, or failure enables new levels of understanding (Rand and Kouris, 2007, 8). This last analogy between ethnographic and practice-based methods supported the exploratory tone of this research, remaining continuously aware of the research aims yet open to challenges and adjustments along the way.

This fusion of practice-based and ethnographic approaches amplifies the strengths of both—striving for criticality, credible findings, and flexibility throughout the research process. Applied in synergy, curatorial practice-based methods also add an essential dimension to the ethnographic idea of participant-observation; in the context of this research, it activates a first-hand practical understanding of curating contemporary art in historic house settings.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

This section extensively reflects on the role of the researcher and the relationship between data and findings, concerning itself with the reliability of the research findings and the ethical handling of research documentation, such as transcripts and fieldnotes. It considers a mix of techniques selected to suit the exploratory and experience-centered interests of the research aims, conducting short yet intensive periods of data collection (Pink and Morgan, 2013; Kelly, 2022) and building in adequate "gestation" time to nurture creative research approaches (Nelson, 2013, 28). It also discusses the critical and reflexive analysis of the data, highlighting the multi-phased interview coding process.

This project was granted ethical approval from UoG's College of Arts and Humanities Research Ethics Committee in November 2021 (Application Number: 100210009). Subsequently, data collection took place between 2022 and early 2024, initially with a focus on site visits and participant observation, documented in fieldnotes. This initial phase was necessary to identify key informants and build up to designing interviews. The interviews then took place between February 2023 and January 2024, overlapping with ongoing participant observation in 2023. Parallel with desk research on organisational documentation (which informs Chapter 4), the interviews were transcribed within this timeframe, initiating the first stage of interview analysis, which continued more intensively over 2024. Meanwhile, the practice-based component of this research took place in 2022, centring on the facilitation of a public workshop entitled "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey", co-developed with Hospitalfield and two contemporary artists working in Scotland. This workshop was part of "Short Sharp Shorts", a series curated by Hospitalfield for The Arbroath Town Writers programme (2022), an off-site residency in collaboration with Historic Environment Scotland and Arbroath 2020.[10] The documentation of this process included email correspondence, fieldnotes, photographs, social media posts, creative prompts, and the pages of a plant folklore zine produced during the workshop. Most of the data analysis (informing Chapters 5 and 6) occurred in late 2023 and early 2024, closing a three-year investigation of three sites.

3.4.1 Data collection techniques and sampling

Several data collection methods were considered in the proposal stage of this project. For example, this research could have employed surveys, which would have offered a less in-depth but more comprehensive investigation of Scotland-based contemporary art in heritage practices. While this approach would quickly establish a general pool of findings on the variety of contemporary art produced and curated in these settings, it would lack the in-depth reflections on practitioner experiences over time. Other empirical techniques were better suited to this case study format centred on time-intensive, interactive, and exploratory fieldwork. The chosen techniques can be divided into three categories: Foundational, driving, and secondary data collection techniques. While the foundational and driving techniques combined directly resulted in data collection, the secondary techniques were only influential.

[10] Arbroath 2020 Group is a registered charity established to create cultural programming in response to a significant historical document, the Declaration of Arbroath (OSCR, 2025).

The foundational data collection technique for this study was participant observation through temporary integration into the daily social environment as an ethnographer. Participant observation took place at all three sites, including overnight stays near two of the sites. As Scottish mountaineer and poet Nan Shepherd wrote, "no one can know the mountain completely who has not slept upon it" (Shepherd *et al*., 2019). Continuously sleeping and waking on site is a technique used in both ethnographic and phenomenological studies for building a nuanced familiarity with the research context. Davies (1999) indicates an important distinction between observation and true participation, maintaining that observation (akin to an outsider role) should be valued over complete participation in or acceptance from the culture being studied (akin to an insider role). This is a reason for the ethnographer to continuously reflect on their outsider/insider or observer/participant status, which slides on a spectrum throughout the ethnographic process.

Participant observation initiated a necessary process of immersion and self-reflection, underpinning the driving data collection approaches: writing fieldnotes, conducting desk research, and audio-recording interviews (Davies, 1999; Pickard, 2013). The handwritten fieldnotes consisted of reflections of first-hand experiences, changes in my curatorial and research processes, or new thoughts catalysed by interactions, conversations, or interviews. Davies (1999) sets the standard for good reflexive fieldwork, stating that fieldnotes should be carefully labelled and attentive to one's own voice or framing (202). Consequently, my fieldnotes were handwritten in the first person and including indexical information (date, time, and place), as well as observations about the commute, setting, conversations, and events encountered. I opted for writing fieldnotes over audio-recording, to protect the privacy of participants when in public and remain respectful of bystanders. My fieldnotes also indicate when observation was not possible. Going beyond a list of observations, my fieldnotes examined the research context as other fieldwork unfolded. Written and photographic fieldnotes were both harnessed to immediately reflect upon my shifting roles as a student, researcher, and curator while engaging in participant observation. The notes encapsulate reflections on my identity, qualifications, assumptions, perspectives, and changing relationships to my informants. For example, as in my MSc thesis (Dooley, 2019), early moments of the process took on an "etic" perspective (matching the role of outsider or stranger to the context), while over time it assumed a more intimate or "emic" perspective once immersed (Davies, 1999; Sørensen, Marlin, and

Niewöhner, 2018). Intellectually untangling these changes in social relationships proved a key function of the ethnographic and curatorial fieldnotes.

Additional data collection included desk research to determine organisational perspectives, referring to board meeting reports, financial reports, webpages, public archives, social media, news, announcements, and exhibition catalogues. Finally, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with curators and artists, as well as group interviews with curatorial teams. These were audio-recorded with informed consent. A semi-structured interview style was utilised to frame the research situation, which not only preserved the thread of research inquiry, as prescribed by Nelson (2013), but also enabled organic digressions.

These interviews attempted to capture how selected curators and contemporary artists working in Scottish historic houses engage with heritage throughout their practices. The questions focused on the perceptions, intentions, needs, and preferences of practitioners in relation to each programme considered. I also investigated if and how site-specificity or interventionist approaches factor into the production and curation of contemporary art on these sites. Other questions investigated the benefits and challenges of working in these unique contexts, as opposed to gallery settings or other exhibition spaces. For a comprehensive list of sample interview questions, see Appendix B. While these sample questions formed a basis for navigating each interview, providing a mix of stage-setting and leading questions to work through (Brinkmann and Steiner, 2015; Brinkmann, 2022), I also used *ad hoc* probing techniques such as silence, follow-up questions, and repetition to encourage informants to reiterate, clarify, or reflect upon their points (Bernard, 2000, cited in Edwards and Holland, 2013, 73).

My approach to gathering data was informed by a few secondary techniques, including the phenomenological technique of walking as a research practice (Springgay and Truman, 2018). Walking practices are theoretically aligned with reflexive ethnography in that they value subjective experiences as a form of knowledge-building and remain sensitive to themes of place, embodiment, and sensory inquiry (Springgay and Truman, 2018). Although walking methods are commonly known for their role in developing creative practices (Solnit, 2001), Springgay and Truman (2018) point to a diverse history of walking methodologies used for qualitative research in humanities and social sciences, citing examples of walking techniques used in ethnographic approaches, such as the work of Kusenbach (2003) and Evans and Jones

(2013). Walking was only a secondary mode of data collection for this research, utilised to facilitate immersion in the research context; however, ideas of place and empirical ways of knowing influenced my physical and psychological experiences across all three case sites.

Nelson's advocacy for planning a cultivation period for one's creative practice was also adopted as a secondary technique; this involved enacting a mindful routine of eating, sleeping, and commuting in and out of the research site (Nelson, 2013, 28). According to Nelson, this fluctuation between on-site and off-site, conscious and unconscious actions, infuses the creative process with associations, assimilation, familiarisation, and defamiliarisation (Nelson, 2013, 28). Such an approach is compatible with ethnographic fieldwork and developing reflexivity, characterised by a similar fluctuation between insider/outsider perspectives. As part of this approach, Nelson (2013) prescribes engagement in a rich research environment, such as the university, and collaboration to reinvigorate and critically reflect on one's research questions. These instances of creative cultivation and engagement in research communities, including my involvement in PhD research showcases, were influential in the development of a curatorial output and shaped my perceptions of each site.

As anticipated, the three organisations considered were limited in their capacity to accommodate my research. This capacity largely depended on funding and staff numbers, as well as external factors such as the operational setbacks of the Covid-19 pandemic. Accessibility to informants was a salient factor, eased by the ability to reach out to informants via online routes. Not all informants could be found on-site, nor were some of these locations simple or affordable to travel to from Scotland's central belt. Further, my access to contacts relied on gatekeepers. The curators often needed to provide contact information to the artists, which inevitably restricted my sampling pool. My invitations required the backing of the university, my supervisory team, and primary contacts at each institution to guarantee responses. Given these limitations, this research used a convenience sampling technique to collect interview data (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012, 284), as opposed to random, systematic, or stratified sampling (Biggam, 2015). In this way, the research maintains its exploratory tone as is characteristic of case study, practice-based, and ethnographic research methods and does not seek to establish findings that are representative of a larger population (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012, 284). Appendix C details the criteria used for selecting interview participants. In brief, this process considered the role and career stage of potential participants. The resulting sample includes some artists who

identified as “emerging” rather than “mature” or “established” at the time of their residency or commission, as well as a mix of artist types (performers, musicians, sculptors, installation artists, illustrators, dancers, etc.). This sample also reflects a variety of project types, some of which were identified via desk research before interviews were undertaken; for example, residencies (single/group), one-off events as part of festivals, or temporary exhibitions/commissions (solo/collaborative). Once again, this approach supports the exploratory nature of the research questions (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012, 284).

3.4.2 Transcriptions and documentation

Full transcripts of qualitative data (audio-recorded interviews and fieldnotes), which served as the bulk of the data collected, were produced to aid in the analysis stage of the research. Upon request, some informants were de-identified, with others acknowledged by name. At all turns, ethical procedures were followed and prioritised. While interview transcripts cannot be made available to reasonably protect the terms of de-identification requested by some participants, sample interview questions, the consent form, and a dated interview list are available for reference in Appendices B, D, and E. According to Davies (1999), the process of transcription is deceptively selective, requiring reflexivity regarding my editorial choices (115). While some pauses or mannerisms were inevitably cut from the transcript, I chose to include whole conversations, including digressions.

The significant issue of documenting curatorial processes is one that has already been considered by both contemporary art curators and conservators in scholarly literature (Laurenson, 2006; Rubio, 2014, 626). For example, Pip Laurenson, in her role as Head of Collection Care Research at Tate Modern, keeps records of interviews with artists regarding Tate Modern’s installations of their artworks to provide a frame of reference for future installations, even in other spaces (Taylor-Wood, 2003, cited in Laurenson, 2006). The dearth, or sometimes even the excess, of curatorial documentation can create problems for curators and exhibition historians alike. This is most obvious in cases of live performances but also extends to temporary exhibitions (Giannachi and Westerman, 2018). For the purposes of documenting the development of the public workshop “Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey”, all notes and email correspondence were compiled, along with promotional material, creative prompts, and images from the workshop. This is summarised in Appendix A.

Analysis is an integral part of the entire research process and often begins to take place alongside data collection, a stage that entails critical reflection and shifts in thinking. Ethnographers choose to oscillate in and out of the research context throughout this process to continuously dissect the same problems with a healthy mix of intellectual proximity and distance (Davies, 1999, 193). Although this is important, there is also a final stage of analysis for this research, where all the findings, reflections, and outputs are assembled for further scrutiny and inductive conclusions. Practice-based research also demands a distinction between documenting one's creative process as it unfolds and presenting findings (Nelson, 2013; Allegue *et al.*, 2009). This research advocates for a distinct line between data collection and analysis stages, rejecting the more gradual methods of grounded theory research (Morgan and Hoffman, 2018). It is only during the final analysis stage that evidence is formalised, and an argument develops.

3.4.3 Analysis and writing up

The research primarily applied qualitative analysis techniques, relying on inductive reasoning to draw general conclusions from specific examples. The organisational documents presented in Chapter 4 were analysed with close text readings, supported by light-touch quantitative analysis of institutional records to contextualise the financial resources available to each programme investigated. By meticulously adhering to the language detected in the source material, it was possible to determine variations in organisational definitions on heritage and how heritage is framed in relation to contemporary art practices. Interview transcripts and fieldnotes were systematically coded in parallel to this desk research; first manually and then using NVivo data analysis software to cross-reference emergent themes. A final set of themes concerning the conceptualisation of heritage, contemporary art practices, and programming strategies were selected and are discussed in Chapters 5-6. Subject to close readings and thematic analysis in Chapters 5-6, the word choices and privileging of certain information by interview participants were also scrutinised to establish varying perspectives and reflect upon organisational/personal biases. Finally, Chapter 6 examines the ethnographic and curatorial fieldnotes using descriptive narrative to "build" theories (Pickard, 2013, 135).

Schensul and LeCompte (2012) advise qualitative researchers to establish "external reliability" by providing readers with descriptions of informants, information regarding when/where data was collected, and explanations for how prevalent themes were selected and defined (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012, 342-343). Descriptions of the informants and interview locations are

directly indicated alongside findings while adhering to requests for de-identification, with additional information (informant role/type of experience and interview dates) provided in Appendix E. Additional discussions on research context and considerations taken during analysis are presented in the introductory sections of each findings chapter, providing as much specificity as possible to enhance their external reliability (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012, 343).

It is crucial to address and mitigate issues of consistency and trustworthiness when processing qualitative data. In the data collection stage, this was addressed by asking informants for adequate context. For example: How do they define their creative practice? Do they usually pursue projects in heritage contexts? Etc. As this research design aims to practice reflexivity and leave temporal and physical space for inductive analysis to occur, a thematic analytical approach was chosen over alternative methods (Morgan and Hoffman, 2018). According to Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012), there are six stages to thematic analysis, which were used as guidance for coding this research:

> (1) immersion in the data through repeated reading of the transcripts; (2) systematic coding of the data; (3) development of preliminary themes; (4) revision of those themes; (5) selection of a final set of themes; (6) organization of the final written product around those themes (Morgan and Hoffman, 2018).

Interviews and fieldnotes were transcribed, closely read and annotated, and then coded, first manually, grouping recurring words and passages, and then using NVivo for creating key nodes. This dual approach ensured that nuances of meaning across the different interviews and fieldnotes were not lost, moving from inferences to flexible thematic groupings to a fuller picture of the data. While the preliminary stage of coding did not distinguish between site (Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, or Jupiter Artland) or perspective (curator, artist, or the researcher), the revision stage of coding divided the data into highly specific codes grouped by site (Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland) and perspective (curator, artist, and the researcher). These are discussed in Chapters 5-6 as different *datasets*, which sometimes overlap. For example, the Hospitalfield dataset encompasses curator and artist datasets from that site. Similarly, the artist dataset intersects with the datasets of all three sites. Finally, the data was reconsidered as a whole and generalised via a final set of themes, as represented in tables that are presented in Chapters 5 and 6, comparing findings across datasets.

The manual coding provided a subjective entry point into the data, and NVivo standardised the process of collating references and organising the findings according to theme. Although there is a risk of losing research context by utilising coding software (Davies, 1999, 211), it remains a useful tool for indexing "parent nodes" (e.g., immateriality) and "child nodes" (e.g. phantoms and shadows, ephemerality, and stories), leading to a more comprehensive and rigorous map of the processed data (NVivo10, 2014, 23.). This method also clearly delineates how the data can be grouped, lending a greater degree of reproducibility to the findings (Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

The ethnographic and curatorial fieldnotes explored in Chapter 6 are presented in a prose style modelled on descriptive narrative, blending curatorial writing and ethnographic research approaches (Davies, 1999). As an analytical technique, descriptive narrative intends to "build theory by describing situations as they are and presenting patterns within a context" (Pickard, 2013, 135). Rich description, indicating salient themes and theories with sensory information, serves as a transparent account of my experiences and interpretation of the data (Davies, 1999, 179). Anecdotal evidence is also a trope in curatorial texts, as exemplified in the varied accounts of curators contained in *Words of Wisdom: A Curator's Vade Mecum* (Kuoni and Independent Curators International, 2001), a collection of highly subjective experiences evidencing curatorial practice. This approach was chosen to make clear my subjective role in the study, while at the same time inviting alternative understandings and opportunities for further research.

3.5 Limitations

Given the present research aims to both explore practitioner perspectives and immerse in specific research contexts, the scope of this qualitative research was limited, first and foremost, by time. Two years were allotted to intensive fieldwork and one year to analysis of ethnographic data. Development of the practice-based component, which lent crucial insight into curatorial processes, demanded extra time for planning a public workshop, implementation, and rigorous documentation, but was compatible with my ethnographic fieldwork. Importantly, the methodology for this research applies the ecological concept of sustainability (Chapter 3) to ensure the feasibility and reflexivity of the data collection and analysis stages (Davies, 1999). This includes allowing adequate time on-site and off-site, factoring in critical distance from research contexts to appropriately balance emic and etic perspectives (Davies, 1999). Regarding the use of creative practice-based methods, ample

"gestation" time was also taken to cultivate curatorial practice (Nelson 2013) and support "curatorial thinking" (Muller and Langill, 2021).

Time limited not only the number of sites included in this research, but also the type of sites included. To relate back to the initial research context—Hospitalfield—comparable case selection (Schensul and LeCompte, 2012) was employed to identify other country houses in less central areas, with overlapping cultural context and networks. These outward similarities between the sites suited this study, which used comparative analysis to draw out empirical observations regarding each programme. Given more time, these case studies could be expanded upon to include other types of heritage contexts based in Scottish cultural networks, such as Pier Arts Centre.

Similarly, due to limited time, funds, and travel options, this research was limited by geographic area. Again, this methodology prioritised establishing an embedded understanding of the research context and frequent site visits, which was most feasible in proximity to UoG. Nevertheless, my Turing Scheme research trip to Uppsala, Sweden (June 2022) broadened my knowledge of contemporary arts in heritage strategies, two of which were distinctive in their community-centred approaches—Art Lab Gnesta and Ställbergs gruva. The brevity of this research trip (one month) was not conducive to this research methodology; however, it was noted that knowledge exchanges between Scottish and Swedish organisations could be productive in terms of expanding both theoretical and practical frameworks.

Another limitation of this research stemmed from the choice of interview participants to remain unnamed. The removal of names from the data analysis (Chapters 5-6) also meant eliminating explicit descriptions of relevant artworks. While in many cases, practitioners consented to sharing their names, it was decided that all data would be treated with a similar degree of de-identification in these chapters to level out the field of comparison. This proved to be a limiting factor when tasked with qualifying artistic engagement with heritage, and it could have enhanced findings to offer in-depth analyses of specific artworks. However, it was more supportive of some artists' interests to give the option of de-identification, which in turn encouraged candid responses. Practitioners who preferred credit for their contributions to this research are named in the interview list in Appendix E, lending a higher degree of accountability to their claims.

While this exploratory research begins to identify the variety of creative practices taking place in Scotland-based heritage sites, activities beyond major site-specific commissions demand more scholarly attention. These initial findings, based on convenience sampling, demonstrate that the voices of illustrators, and performance artists can vitally contribute to critical understandings of arts in heritage practices. To comprehensively address the inequality of artists represented in the literature, other sampling strategies are needed to more accurately reflect a population. For example, a random sample might be a more inclusive approach, covering a diversity of artistic practices and perspectives.

3.6 Conclusion

This methodology, situated within a case study framework and infused with theories of reflexivity and curatorial thinking, strives to establish academic rigour throughout every stage of the research process. The case study framework holds a combination of qualitative methods, sustainably selected on a case-by-case basis. Traditional desk research alone cannot uncover the types of practitioner experiences and curatorial strategies occurring within historic houses. The research questions posed at the outset of this thesis call for immersive and empirical methods of data collection from multiple sites in Scotland. The ethnographic and curatorial practice-based approaches selected for this research have been tailored to operate in synthesis, supported by desk research and quantitative analysis. Each method proffered critical reflection on the subjective role of the researcher in knowledge production, while gaining perspective from organisational reports, participatory fieldwork, and interviews with informants. The analysis stage, distinct from data collection, combined quantitative analysis, thematic coding, close text readings, and descriptive narrative techniques, pulling inferences from the raw data. It is in the following three chapters (Chapters 4-6) that the findings derived from this reflexive process are presented and contextualised.

Chapter 4: Exploring organisational perspectives of heritage

4.1 Introduction

In response to RQ 1, Chapter 4 investigates how Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland represent and define heritage, analysing organisational documents as evidence. Further, it explores how each contemporary art programme is framed within or alongside this heritage.

> RQ1: How do contemporary art programmes based within historic house settings represent and define heritage? In what ways do contemporary art practices intersect with this perceived heritage?

It is in the organisations' reports, webpages, public archives, social media, news, announcements, and other self-publications that the most comprehensive and formal documentation persists. These documents were analysed using close text analysis, scrutinising the language detected in the source material to determine variations in organisational definitions of heritage. Most of these records were authored by organisations—composite organisms made up of shifting staff teams and voices—to preserve what is deemed significant information (Yeo, 2010). As much as these documents retain practical details like dates, exhibition titles, locations, and materials, they also lend crucial insight into how the organisations intend to be perceived by the press and stakeholders, such as funding bodies, partner organisations, artists, researchers, and audiences. While these stakeholders in turn create prolific, though sometimes fragmented and cursory, bodies of documentation, this chapter underlines how each organisation publicly represents itself. Findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6, based on the perspectives of curators, artists, and the researcher, then push up against these. Secondary documents, like published reviews in magazines and journals, are only considered to verify details, with care to not eclipse organisational perspectives. In a few places, the ethnographic fieldnotes are referred to as a means of verifying obscured or missing information, such as whether a certain facet of the programme occurred.

Prioritisation of the organisational perspective has its limits. Firstly, it takes for granted that the organisation continuously approves of or maintains every aspect of these accounts over

time, or even intended for the public or researchers to access certain information. In some cases, programme documentation has been created retrospectively and contains errors or omits information altogether. In the case of financial balancing sheets, exact information on expenditure and income is consolidated into vague categories. In other cases, webpages have been temporarily or permanently removed. Moreover, it is possible that individuals within or once part of the organisation disagree with the documented evidence. While the latter problem will be mitigated in Chapters 5 and 6, which both draw upon interviews with curatorial staff, the former issues can only be addressed through engaging critically with the source material and striving to be transparent about my choices as a researcher. As I am the critical agent furthering the process of selection and omission, it follows that my researcher perspective equally weighs into these findings.

This chapter first gives an overview of each organisation's public mission and objectives, illustrating how each organisation differently represents and defines heritage. While all organisations describe heritage in terms of architectural features, object collections, historical narratives, natural landscapes, and cultural contexts, key differences arose in how each organisation frames this heritage within its public/arts programming. Next, it provides an overview of each organisation's staff structure and financial circumstances. For the purposes of mapping the financial boundaries these organisations are operating within, a quantitative assessment of the annual charitable income and expenditure of each organisation is presented. This elucidates the funding behind each art programme considered here, as well as their marked differences in resources. The purpose of comparison is to understand each in its immediate operational context. Then it reviews elements of each public programme (residencies, festivals, temporary commissions and exhibitions, permanent commissions, and learning programmes), continuously returning to the question of how arts programming overlaps with heritage. These umbrella categories are designated in my own words but are as close to the source language as possible. For example, each organisation describes an element of its public programme as *educational* or concerned with *learning*, so this is the language adopted to assess those aspects. Comparison is used solely as an analytical tool to further negotiate how each organisation shapes its programme and implicates the concept of heritage. Consideration is taken to refrain from conflating value claims with evidence or valuing one programme over the others. The findings presented here establish a foundation for further

exploring how practitioners (curators, artists, and the researcher) recognise, experience, or alternatively define this heritage in Chapters 5-6, as evaluated against the organisational perspectives that are the focus of this chapter.

4.2 Overview of organisations: missions, participants, and definitions of heritage

The findings across all three cases vary, with stronger parallels between Hospitalfield's and Mount Stuart's missions, especially regarding how built heritage, connections to the past, or conservation are discussed and incorporated into both programmes. Hospitalfield treats its heritage as a springboard for new curatorial directions, stressing development opportunities for contemporary artists above all else. Mount Stuart strives to immerse its visual arts programme (a discrete addition to its public programme) in continuous visual and conceptual dialogue with the heritage, citing clear benefits for both conservation and artist development. Jupiter Artland's mission demonstrates a weaker link between its visual arts programme and notions of heritage, and instead concentrates on building the organisation's international reputation, substituting a concern for heritage for an emphasis on contemporary art and landscape. Nevertheless, Jupiter Artland acknowledges aspects of heritage in its reports and website, with these features contributing to the scenery and ambience of its outdoor exhibitions. This section examines these issues and dynamics by exploring each organisation's definitions of heritage through an analysis of written mission statements, websites, and other publications generally dated between 2018-2023. It also shows how each organisation currently positions its arts programming in relation to this defined heritage.

4.2.1 Hospitalfield

Set apart from the main road by agricultural fields and a small woodland, Hospitalfield is a 19th century country house located within the large coastal town of Arbroath, Angus. As introduced in Chapter 1 of this thesis, Hospitalfield is known as the historic home of artist Patrick Allan-Fraser and his wife Elizabeth, who together were responsible for remodelling the house in its current Arts and Crafts architectural style. Following Allan-Fraser's bequest established in 1890, the house continued to function as a site for artistic education, first as one of Britain's early art colleges and then as a postgraduate painting school (Hospitalfield, 2025). Since 1994, Hospitalfield has operated as a charitable trust, aiming to encourage participation

in the arts as a centre for artistic education, research, and development. Under the current directorship of Lucy Byatt, Hospitalfield has grown from being a lesser-known artists' retreat to an internationally recognised producer of contemporary artworks, partaking in the 2015 Venice Biennale. Between 2021-2024, the gardens and artists' studios sustained major renovations, rendering the site more accessible to residents and the public year-round.

According to Hospitalfield's recent annual reports (using the 2021 report available on OSCR for reference), "the core of the programme is a series of nationally and internationally significant residency programmes for artists, curators and writers which are accommodated within the house and purpose-built studios" (The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust, 2021, 2). Adapted from its founding mission established by Allan-Fraser, these aims are chiefly to "provide, maintain and administer" arts education and development opportunities at Hospitalfield House—with practitioners as key participants (ibid.). Hospitalfield's current programme follows Allan-Fraser's bequest by prioritising residencies and other learning programmes for creative practitioners, keeping the site "central ... in the arts ecology of Scotland" (ibid.). This continuation of arts educational practices, and an explicit emphasis on education or learning across its programme, is regarded as an extension of Hospitalfield's historical functions (ibid.). The programme and its insistence on education builds on this history, and thus current operations are perceived as connected to Hospitalfield's past as an artists' meeting place leading up to 1890 and later as an arts college and retreat (Beardmore, 2018). Hospitalfield's long-term association with artists and formal artistic education serves as a founding narrative for its current programme.

Secondly, conservation of the property and collections care are stressed in Hospitalfield's operations, as reflected in its annual reports and website. Hospitalfield is explicit in defining these material features as heritage, especially as delineated on their "Heritage" webpage, which highlights the architectural features of the house (2023). The first aim of its business plan is "to conserve and care for the outstanding heritage of Hospitalfield", including architectural features (Figure 4) and the historical collections (Figure 5) from Allan-Fraser's day to the present (The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust, 2021, 3). This built heritage umbrella not only includes the house (its Arts and Crafts interior, Scots Baronial exterior, and subsequent alterations), but also the Victorian fernery, walled garden, studios, and a mortuary chapel off-site. Both the architectural features and collections are inextricable

from stories of Patrick Allan-Fraser, whose personality and interests are at the crux of Hospitalfield's current heritage definition. A committed collections volunteer team, as well as experts in conservation and collections management, continue to study and maintain the painting and object holdings once belonging to Allan-Fraser (Fieldnotes, 2022). Like the historical narratives perpetuated by Hospitalfield about Allan-Fraser's bequest and the 20th century art college, the preservation of built heritage substantiates Hospitalfield's mission to continue working with artists and extend arts programming to the public.



Figure 4. View of Hospitalfield House from the replanted walled garden. Dooley, O. 2022.



Figure 5. View of Hospitalfield's picture gallery, in the manner of a period room. Dooley, O. 2019.

Hospitalfield takes an expanded view of heritage, incorporating trees, plants, soil, animal inhabitants, and bodies of water into its organisational definition of the historic site. The

surrounding rural landscape—including and beyond the estate itself—is incorporated into Hospitalfield's heritage definition, although this is not elaborated upon in annual reports (ibid.). The site's proximity to the North Sea (Visit Scotland, 2023), relationship with the agricultural identity of Angus (Hospitalfield, 2023a), and "peaceful natural environment" is emphasised on the Hospitalfield website (Hospitalfield 2023b). Additionally, Hospitalfield's programme includes nature walks (Hospitalfield, 2023c) and ecologically conscious commissions, such as Hanna Tuulikki's 2022 dance music EP *Echo in the Dark*, developed in collaboration with producer Tommy Perman "in the context of the lives and heritage of the pipistrelle bat populations ... at Hospitalfield" (Hospitalfield, 2023d). Alongside recording dance music tracks featuring bat echolocation sounds "collected by communities in Arbroath and Angus", Tuulikki and Perman hosted a series of crepuscular "silent raves" on Hospitalfield's grounds in 2022, drawing attention to the coexistence of humans and bats on a local scale (Hospitalfield, 2023d). This programming reflects an organisational interest in natural history and ecological conservation, as well as exploring connections between Hospitalfield's immediate cultural and natural ecologies. This theme of landscape as heritage recurs across all three of the organisations' published documents and websites.

Hospitalfield's dedication to material conservation and upholding Allan-Fraser's bequest offers insight into how its art programme intends to build on this history. Hospitalfield's perpetuation of historical narratives and custodianship of built heritage serve as a robust foundation for the current programme. However, the arts programme is the driving force and direction of the organisation as it endeavours to support creative practitioners in their development. It is made clear in Hospitalfield's annual reports that the organisation positions itself as "a place where time and space for new ideas is the highest priority", particularly for artists in residence (The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust, 2021, 2). This vision often extends beyond explicit references to heritage, making space for present-day concerns and needs. For example, with this same 2021 report, Hospitalfield describes its residencies as offering "time and rural space" for artists, mentioning nothing of the site's historic past (ibid., 6). Moreover, Hospitalfield aspires to develop international contemporary art collaborations, connecting UK-based artists, especially Scottish artists, to international networks via partnerships like Scotland + Venice (2015). Here, facilitating creative practitioners is paramount, superseding any deliberate connections to heritage that are otherwise emphasised

in annual reports (The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust, 2021, 6). However, Hospitalfield does not lose sight of the historical context altogether. Instead, it attempts to provide multiple access points "from the contemporary art programming to the range of historical narratives", so as not to alienate certain audiences (ibid., 3).

Conversely, heritage is sometimes mentioned independently from the contemporary art programme. For example, arguments for the conservation and use of built heritage stand alone in the reports: the site is referred to as "impressive", the collections as "vivid", the house as "fascinating", the interior as "exceptional" when "experienced in combination with the surrounding landscape", and the history as "valuable" (The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust, 2021, 2-3). In this way, the concept of heritage is leveraged to add value to Hospitalfield as a public site, appealing to funders and audiences. With a history of receiving grants from Historic Environment Scotland for the mortuary chapel, as well £626,000 in 2017 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of the 19th century fernery (McLaren, 2017), these subjective value claims by Hospitalfield are corroborated by national preservation efforts (Hospitalfield, 2023b). Both funding bodies stress contemporary access and use of heritage to "protect and promote the historic environment"—especially projects that "build capacity for local heritage management" (Historic Environment Scotland, 2023).

Dependent on these funds (see Section 4.3.1 on Hospitalfield's financial circumstances), it follows that Hospitalfield's annual reports and mission would appeal to the expectations of potential funders. In line with requirements from funding bodies like Tay Cities Deal (Tay Cities Deal, 2025), Hospitalfield's operational goals include long-term economic sustainability and engagement with new audiences, welcoming over 12,000 visitors in 2021, in addition to hosting artists and other creative practitioners in residence (The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust, 2021, 4). While the annual report claims that Hospitalfield seeks to serve the economic, social, and cultural needs of the local population, it scarcely reflects upon on its geographical location in Angus, which could be perceived as peripheral to Scottish arts institutions, exhibitions, and communities based in Scotland's cities. On the contrary, Hospitalfield highlights its active involvement in international residency schemes and collaborations with organisations in Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow (Hospitalfield, 2023e).

Noticeably, Hospitalfield frames the history of the site as not only locally important, but also significant in terms of Scotland's religious, literary, and cultural past. Hospitalfield's board argues that the house is "one of Scotland's treasures and one of national importance" (The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust, 2021, 3). As written in the 2021 annual report, the history of Hospitalfield dates to its 13th century monastic use as a hospice in association with Arbroath Abbey, though its current architecture portrays the Victorian tastes of Allan-Fraser (ibid.). Compared to the other two organisations, Hospitalfield's documents uniquely identify with Scottish history, as opposed to other identity markers.

Overall, Hospitalfield regards Allan-Fraser's house, collections, and bequest as a launching pad for its contemporary programming. This heritage is defined as locally and nationally important, as corroborated by funders. Great efforts are made to conserve and provide public/practitioner access to the house, historic studios, collections, mortuary chapel, gardens, and surrounding rural landscape. As dedicated as Hospitalfield remains to preserving the historic house and natural landscape for contemporary use, with residents living/working in the historic rooms, its organisational aims often extend beyond persistent links to the site's past. Instead of inviting artists to respond to the heritage, Hospitalfield's art programme foregrounds artistic development and forges collaborations with organisations in Scottish cities and internationally.

4.2.2 Mount Stuart

Mount Stuart is a country estate located on the east coast of the Isle of Bute, approximately four miles south of the port town of Rothesay. It has been the ancestral home of the Marquesses of Bute since the early 18th century. Following a fire in 1877, the house was rebuilt in the Gothic Revival style by the third Marquess; it is well-known for its lavish Italian marble interiors, as well as its status as the first home in Scotland to use electric lighting. While Mount Stuart remains the seat of the Crichton-Stuart family, the fabric of the house has been maintained by Mount Stuart Trust since 1989, rendering the historic rooms, art collection, and gardens accessible to the public. The Trust's visual arts programme, founded by Sophie Crichton-Stuart in 2001, operates on a seasonal basis, showcasing commissioned artworks by international and UK-based artists from April to October.

Relative to Hospitalfield, the mission of the Mount Stuart Trust more evenly blends conservation aims with programming for contemporary audiences, ensuring public access and offering learning opportunities (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021). The contemporary visual arts programme is framed as a learning initiative that "receives local, national, and international recognition" and which strives to "provide public access to contemporary art practice and to interface with the local community" (ibid.). This description of Mount Stuart's visual arts programme is seen to evolve across the organisation's annual reports, but "education" and "community benefit" remain key components, most recently highlighting the Emerging Artists Residency, which supports "socially engaged practice" (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021). In these annual reports, the public, residents of the Isle of Bute, and Scottish schools are designated as the key participants, alongside invited artists (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021).

The Mount Stuart website echoes this perspective and lends the historic house context more precedence. The logo on the home webpage, which reads, "Experience the Past. See the Future", illustrates this (Mount Stuart, 2023a). The logo plainly communicates the significance of Mount Stuart as an intact 19th century estate, which once experienced, grants crucial insight into the future. Provided this information alone, it is unclear whether Mount Stuart offers a contemporary art programme. However, upon closer examination, the arts programme is given a separate webpage, alongside other webpages about the house, gardens, rural, and learning. Further reading explains that the contemporary art programme is conceived as a continuation of Mount Stuart's historic patronage of the arts, working with only a few artists per year to "add value and vibrancy to the historical context of Mount Stuart and reinvigorate dialogue and enquiry" (Mount Stuart, 2023b).

Mount Stuart's website clearly states that it is a place for "supporting, enabling and promoting learning, innovation and creativity" and "providing stewardship of the heritage assets in our care" (Mount Stuart, 2025a). Compared to Hospitalfield's springboard approach, which builds upon its history of arts patronage in new directions, Mount Stuart positions heritage and contemporary art side by side. Described as in "dialogue", the heritage setting and contemporary arts programme are placed in continuous exchange, with both facets feeding on and embedding into the other (Mount Stuart, 2023b). Mount Stuart also claims that these two dimensions of its programme benefit the other, pushing both artists and conservation standards

into reimagined territories. Overall, this relationship is characterised as co-dependent and immersive.

Mount Stuart's website not only presents general information on the visual arts programme, but also communicates that the visual arts programme benefits participating artists—particularly in providing support to emerging artists (Mount Stuart, 2023c). Indeed, Mount Stuart claims to have "a strong record of commissioning artists at what transpires to be key points in their careers" (Gregor, 2022). Unlike at Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart works with a small number of artists at a time, producing only 2-3 exhibitions per year (Mount Stuart, 2023d). The exhibition books published by Mount Stuart document how this immersive approach benefits artistic practices, with testimony from participating artists in interviews. For example, director Sophie Crichton Stuart's interview with the artist Christine Borland (2018) details rich connections between her wider practice and a project at Mount Stuart, with Borland stating, "it's been wonderful to be able to share and overlap resources, information, and thinking" (6-7). With substantial space, time, and resources, Borland's 2018 exhibition *to The Power of Twelve* was an opportunity to channel fifteen years of research across Scotland, Flanders, and Belfast into a comprehensive series of new works (ibid.).

The concept of historic conservation and significance is pervasive in Mount Stuart's annual reports, once again highlighting the "heritage assets...held for their historical contribution" (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2022, 20). The historic collections are said to be "one of the world's finest" and "conserved to the highest standard" using catalogues and digitisation to improve access for visitors, students, and researchers (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021, 4). The gardens are also said to be "recognised by Historic Environment Scotland as one of Scotland's most notable designed landscapes" (ibid.). Additionally, Mount Stuart cares for tenant farmland, residential housing, and forestry on Bute, taking responsibility of the rural area as part of its mandate "as an outstanding example of an historic island estate" (ibid.). Like at Hospitalfield, the significance of this heritage is defined in comparison to the rest of Scotland's heritage; the reports also make claims of international importance regarding the collections (ibid.).

Across two decades of exhibition books (Mount Stuart, 2003; Mount Stuart, 2007; Mount Stuart, 2019), Mount Stuart routinely describes the historic house context in terms of its "extraordinary" Neo-Gothic mansion, which is of monumental scale compared to the other two houses considered in this study. John Patrick Crichton Stuart, the third Marquess of Bute,

built the current house in the late 19th century (Crichton Stuart, 2006, 7). His purported interests in "astrology, mythology, religion, and heraldry", as expressed in the interior architecture (Figure 6), are at the crux of the narratives upheld by Mount Stuart's programme (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021, 4). This is directly comparable to Hospitalfield's narrative surrounding Allan-Fraser, in that both programmes refer to the interests and personality of a previous owner. Unlike Hospitalfield's drive to take Allan-Fraser's mission in new directions, often leaving behind persistent or exact references to the heritage, Mount Stuart's art programme is designed to respond to the third Marquess of Bute's worldview.



Figure 6. View of the vaulted ceiling in Mount Stuart's Marble Hall. Dooley, O. 2021.

In the most general terms, the historical context of Mount Stuart is described as "the geography, archives, history, and architecture of the house, gardens and island" (Crichton Stuart, 2018a, 5**)**. Mount Stuart also "proud[ly]" promotes the "treasures" of the Bute

Collection (Mount Stuart, 2015), which comprises "eighteenth- and nineteenth-century portraiture, Italian masterpieces from the sixteenth century, Dutch and Flemish Old Masters, and extensive archives and libraries" (Crichton Stuart, 2018a, 5). The 18th century gardens and surrounding woodland are equally folded into this authorised narrative, with aims to "make the most of this special land and safeguard the rural integrity of Mount Stuart" (Mount Stuart, 2023e). In addition to the house, the land plays an equally central role in the development of visual artworks on the site—for example, Abbas Akhavan's 2022 s*tudy for a garden* directly responded to the domestication of woodlands at Mount Stuart, including the rerouting of rivers (Mount Stuart, 2007; 2022). Dating to the first show at Mount Stuart—Kate Whiteford's *Shadow of a Necklace* in 2001—we see repeated inquiries into historical (and prehistorical) changes to the immediate landscape, which further alter the landscape by leaving traces of temporary outdoor artworks (Mount Stuart, 2003).

Finally, Mount Stuart situates its programme within an island context of community, claiming to support tourism, "employment, education, access to nature, housing and much more" (Mount Stuart, 2023f). Mount Stuart's website lists several island-wide conservation projects and documents residents' stories, producing films like "Sandy's Story", in which a shepherd named Sandy reflects on his decades of work keeping sheep on the island (Mount Stuart, 2019a). In this way, Mount Stuart also positions itself as a custodian of island heritage. It is in this island context that Mount Stuart's Emerging Artists Residency was founded, discussed in more detail in Section 4.4.2.

To conclude this overview, Mount Stuart's definitions of heritage closely resemble Hospitalfield's, in that value claims are made in connection to the house, its collections, the grounds, and the local area. However, Mount Stuart makes bigger claims for its collection, stating its global significance. While Mount Stuart, like Hospitalfield, views its current visual art programme as a continuation of past art commissioning practices, it positions its few exhibitions per year in more persistent and explicit correspondence with the heritage setting. This heritage is inextricably linked to the personality of a previous owner, the third Marquess of Bute, like Hospitalfield's is to Allan-Fraser. Unlike at Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart's link to the Marquess is personal, as at least one family member is directly involved in managing the Trust and the arts programme.

4.2.3 Jupiter Artland

Jupiter Artland is a public sculpture garden founded by philanthropists and art collectors Nicky and Robert Wilson in 2009, located on the 120-acre grounds of Bonnington House near Wilkieston, West Lothian, with views of the Pentland Hills beyond. The manor house, built in the Jacobean Revival style from the 19th century, is the private residence of the Wilson family. Since Jupiter Artland's opening, over thirty contemporary artworks have been commissioned, forming an outdoor collection permanently sited within the surrounding meadows and woodlands. Operating as a charitable company, Jupiter Artland offers a programme of temporary exhibitions, events, and learning opportunities. In 2016, Jupiter Artland was a finalist for the Art Fund Museum of the Year award, gaining national recognition.

Across several of its annual reports, Jupiter Artland explicitly ranks its organisational aims, venturing "firstly" to establish an "internationally acclaimed Sculpture Park" seasonally open to the public, and "secondly" to make the grounds accessible to schoolchildren for free educational courses (The Jupiter Artland Company Limited, 2014-2021). This places its mission to gain international fame, via displaying a permanent collection of outdoor sculptures acquired since 1999, before its educational programme, complicating Jupiter Artland's claims elsewhere that education is foundational to its mission (Jupiter Artland, 2023d). This mixed message repeats throughout Jupiter Artland's public records, stating on the website that "beyond its status as 'museum' or 'gallery', Jupiter Artland seeks to be a more vital institution, one in which education and outreach is at the heart of its ethos" (Jupiter Artland, 2023d). This does not precede but follows a more explicit description of the organisation as an "award-winning" sculpture park, listing the commissioned artists by name and claiming its status as "one of Scotland's most significant arts organisations, with an international reputation for innovation and creativity" (Jupiter Artland, 2023d). By placing the status of the private object collection over heritage conservation, Jupiter Artland departs from the practices of Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart.

Unlike Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland does not foreground the conservation of heritage in these annual reports. Next to collecting, its "ground-breaking learning programme is at the heart of everything" (Jupiter Artland, 2023e), superseding the historic context of Bonnington House or the grounds. In fact, the term heritage is mentioned only as a

passing category of interest in Jupiter Artland's claims to promote "the advancement of arts, heritage, culture and science" (The Jupiter Artland Company Limited, 2021, 4). The website occasionally references the history of the site, describing Bonnington House as a Jacobean revival manor with extensive grounds, chiefly used for recreational hunting and arable farmland (Figure 7; Jupiter, 2023a). However, it more often prioritises the contemporary and outdoor elements of its programme, as well as the natural landscape preserved by a succession of independently wealthy landowners.



Figure 7. Distant view of Bonnington House from the pastures, where animals graze. Dooley, O. 2021.

Given this emphasis on landscape, the site is aptly called an "artland". "Jupiter" refers to one of the 16 figures of Geomancy (Laetitia, ruled by Jupiter retrograde), a type of divination informed by medieval astrology (Delves and Ormston, 2025; Bennett, 2012). This reference recalls Mount Stuart's interior design, based on the third Marquess of Bute's interests in medieval spirituality and astrology (Figure 6), but at Jupiter Artland, there is no clear visual or conceptual link to a particular historical context. More likely, the name refers to the careful placement of permanent sculptures in the landscape—a contemporary geomancy—playing on

mysticism associated with the grounds, which are said to coincide with ley lines (Unterdorfer, 2024).

This slant towards the contemporary over the historical is also evident in Jupiter Artland's overall identity construction. Any potential links to the identity of a past owner of Bonnington House are obscured by the contemporary context—the current homeowners, philanthropists Robert and Nicky Wilson, are pictured on the website (Jupiter Artland, 2023d). This sets Jupiter Artland apart from the other two organisations, which both root their organisational identities in personalities of the past. In the case of Mount Stuart, this link to the past is performed through family lineage and inheritance.

As the house is an active residence, Jupiter Artland operates outside the conventional format for contemporary art curation in historic houses—the house is off-limits to the public. The visitor maps depict an illustrated sign reading "private" alongside the words: "please respect the private House and surrounding area" (Figure 8; Jupiter Artland, 2022). However, there is enough of an overlap between Jupiter Artland's programme and other arts in heritage practices to consider it in this context, namely in the commissioning of site-specific artworks on the grounds. Outdoor art installations are ubiquitous across these case studies and other historic estates in the UK, placing Jupiter Artland's sculpture park in conversation with a network of similar sites.

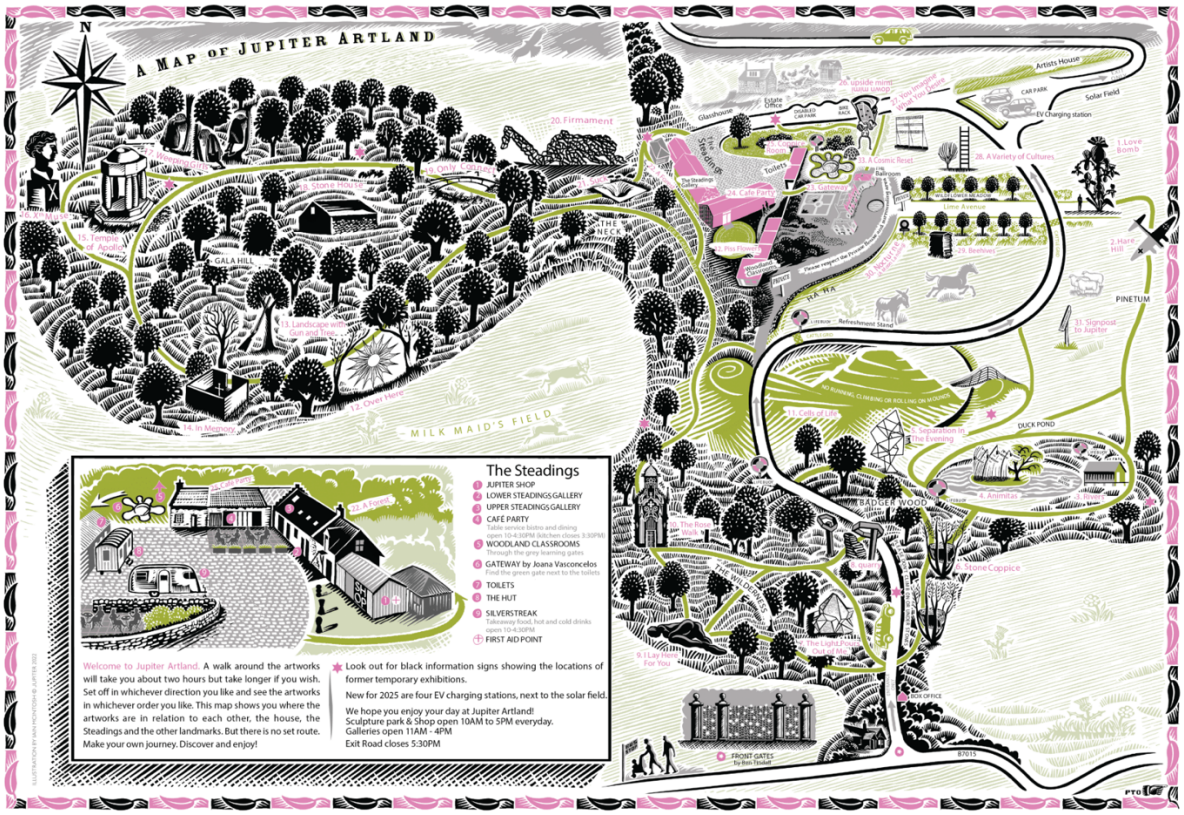


Figure 8. A public map of Jupiter Artland. Illustration by Iain McIntosh. © Jupiter 2022. Available from: https://www.jupiterartland.org/jupiter-artland-map/ (Accessed 31 August 2025).

Rather than validating the historical dimension of the landscape, we see the "safe outdoor environment" and health benefits of nature highlighted in the annual reports (The Jupiter Artland Company Limited, 2021, 4). While small details of the landscape's historical uses are pointed out, such as the historical landscaping feature known as a *ha-ha* denoted on the visitor map, or the evocative name of The Steadings (a collection of old farm buildings converted into a gallery, shop, and café bistro), these are integrated into the overarching romanticisation of the rural landscape (Jupiter Artland, 2022).

The Landscape page on Jupiter Artland's website also indulges in scenic descriptions of the weather and topography, noting how it contrasts with the "rugged post-industrial" surroundings of West Lothian (Jupiter Artland, 2023a). Jupiter Artland's 2022 visitor map, illustrated by Iain McIntosh, denotes its commissions as cultural landmarks in a sprawling landscape of fields and trees, with whimsical details such as creatures you might encounter on your visit (Figure 8). Here, the natural setting is depicted as more of a scenic backdrop, like living gallery walls, to the sculptural destinations on the map.

Given Jupiter Artland's above claims regarding the value of its landscape, it follows that Jupiter Artland tries to conserve a sense of raw nature—less for its preservation as a piece of history, and more to uphold an image of a landscape charged with "unconscious" energy, framed as a source of inspiration for contemporary artists (Jupiter Artland, 2023a). Like the other two organisations in this study, Jupiter Artland collaborated with the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh to protect and restore endangered and rare species of plants, claiming to nurture "the already verdant landscape" (Jupiter Artland, 2023a) as a custodian of the environment. However, it also intends to tap into this "generous landscape", inviting artists to harness the raw energies of nature to grow its unique collection of permanent sculptures (Le Feuvre, 2018; Jupiter Artland, 2023a). Ironically, these sculptures visibly alter the physical landscape, significantly increasing the foot traffic on this allegedly protected land. Thus, it seems more important to Jupiter Artland to create an "iconic" landscape with "world-class sculpture", as stated on their festival website (Jupiter Rising, 2023).

4.2.4 Summary

To synthesise findings thus far, Table 1 briefly summarises interpretations of heritage from institutional perspectives, including different dimensions of importance (national, local, and international), experience (tangible and intangible), and value claims. All organisations acknowledge the built heritage of their sites, and their definitions of heritage encompass natural and cultural surroundings. Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart both link their respective programmes to histories of art patronage by previous owners. They also both consider themes of local identity in organisational documents. Jupiter Artland acknowledges local socioeconomic contexts in its documentation; however, this does not seem to factor into its programme, which centres on the rural setting.

Organisational representations of heritage in public documents (2018-2023)

Themes	Hospitalfield	Mount Stuart	Jupiter Artland
Built heritage assets: listed buildings, historic landscapes, and conservation areas	19th-century house, mortuary chapel, fernery, garden	19th-century house, greenhouse, folly, landscaping	Jacobean revival house, steadings, Ha-ha, and dovecot
Special collections: culturally significant objects, musical instruments, books, manuscripts, and archives	Historic collections	Historic collections (The Bute Collection)	
Authorised narratives: histories about the site maintained in organisational documentation	Narratives about Patrick Allan Fraser/history of arts patronage	Narratives about John Patrick Crichton Stuart/history of arts patronage	Narratives about the historic estate: farming, hunting
Natural landscape as a heritage asset	Natural landscape (North Sea, plants, animals, soil)	Natural landscape (prehistory, geology, woodlands, tree conservation, moth conservation, shore)	Natural landscape (woodlands, meadows, plant conservation, animals, raw land)
Sense of place and place identity	Town/regional identity	Island identity	
Subjective claims about the value of heritage assets	Local and national value claims (regarding built heritage): "exceptional", "vivid", "valuable", "impressive"	Local, national, and international value claims (regarding built heritage): "outstanding", "one of the world's finest", "extraordinary"	Local value claims (regarding landscape): "verdant", "raw", "rich and vital"

Table 1. Organisational representations of heritage in public documents (2018-2023).

The concept of landscape permeates all three organisations' written documentation, ranging from prehistoric, historic, geologic, cultural, and natural in character, usually in the context of preservation. While Jupiter Artland strongly pushes the notion of landscape in its programme, with a permanent sculpture park and outdoor commissioning scheme, as well as conservation interests, Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart concern their respective programmes with conserving and using built heritage, as well as wider natural and cultural landscapes. Other than a scenic and distant backdrop in the extensive natural landscape (Fieldnotes, 2022), the private house at Jupiter Artland does not play a major role in the organisation's contemporary arts programming. This is not the case at Mount Stuart and Hospitalfield, where the house is the central hub within spacious rural surroundings.

Furthermore, Jupiter Artland's unmatched focus on collecting diverges from the two other organisations, often deriving value from the acclaim of its collections rather than the significance of its heritage or benefits to participants. While Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart also participate in international networks of art curation and seek recognition, they both split this evenly with community engagement—collecting is not a primary aim. In the following sections documenting elements of each public programme, this difference between Jupiter Artland and the other two organisations will appear even more pronounced, namely in its development of a permanent sculpture park.

4.3 Organisational structure and financial circumstances

This section juxtaposes the structure and financial context of each organisation, examining patterns of charitable income and spending. As the total numbers considered here (charitable income, charitable expenditure, and total income) conflate information on investments, trading, donations, grants, and fundraising, this analysis remains as specific as possible to show what these categories encompass. The numbers chosen for quantitative analysis provide a sufficient basis for charting major differences in total spending and expenditure across all three organisations.

4.3.1 Hospitalfield

Formed as an educational endowment in 1890, The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust is overseen by a board of five or more Governors who support finances, development, and fundraising activities (Hospitalfield, 2023f). It is the parent charity of the Hospitalfield Trading Limited, a company that manages the café, events, and other trading activities, partially directed by some of Hospitalfield's staff (Hospitalfield, 2023f). The core staff team is limited to a director, facilities administrator, engagement and volunteer programme coordinator, programme and communications manager, head chef, hospitality manager, bookkeeper, and two housekeepers (Hospitalfield, 2023g).

The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) has generated a schematic bar graph detailing Hospitalfield's annual income and spending, which offers a small glimpse into its financial changes and limitations (OSCR, 2023). Figure 9 shows that Hospitalfield's annual income regularly exceeds its yearly spending since 2018, with a substantial boost in funds—over three times more than the previous year (OSCR, 2023).

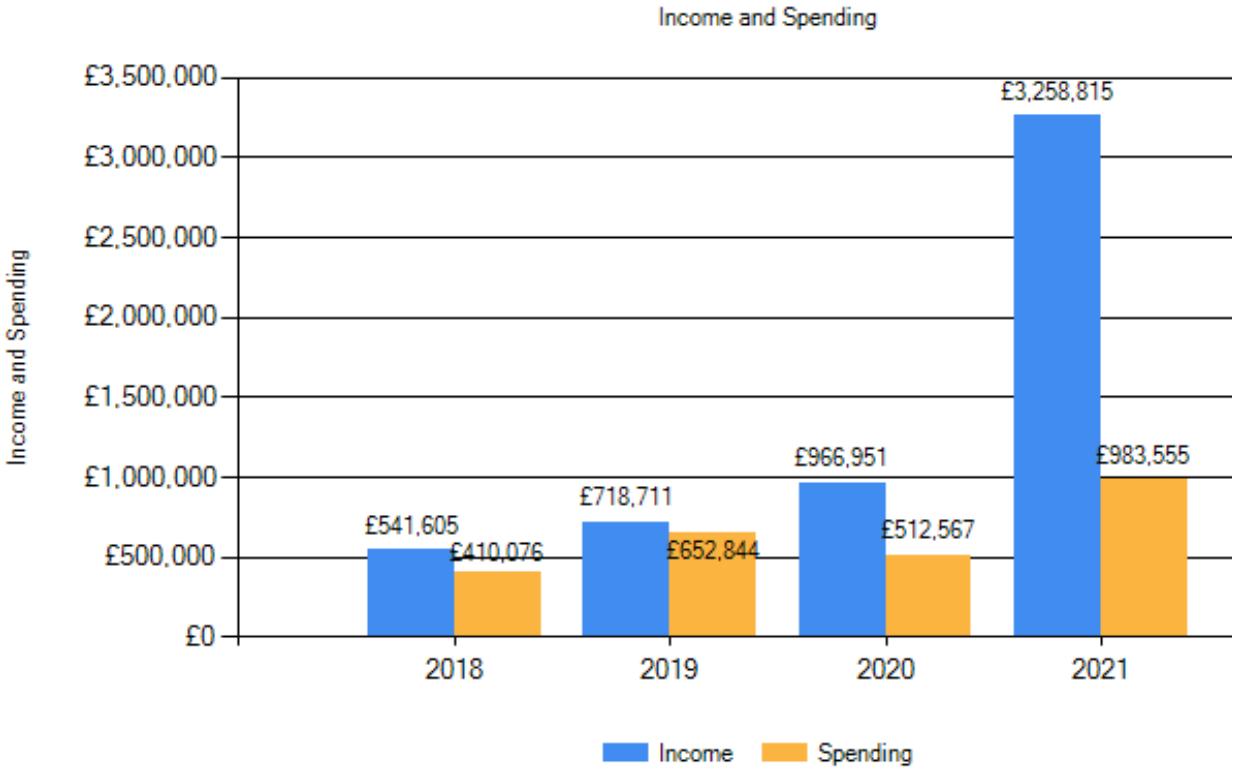


Figure 9. Bar graph generated by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, showing the annual income and spending of the Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust between 2018-2021. Available from: https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=SC009987 (Accessed 18 April 2023).

This graph shows income and spending in positive correlation with one another (except in 2020), but a larger sample size with a breakdown of charitable income and charitable expenditure is needed to better understand this correlation, as well as the relationship between these totals and the contemporary art programming. The 2021 report available online shows that of the £3,258,815 total income, 95% of these funds (£3,102,357) derive from grants and donations—the notes show that most of this funding is from Tay Cities, with other large grants from Creative Scotland and the National Heritage Trust (The Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield Trust, 2021, 16-29). The remaining 5% derives from charitable activities (£47,025), trading (£107,136), and investments (£2,297) (ibid., 16). Similarly, the 2020 numbers on this same report show that 88% of that year's income derived from grants and donations, suggesting that Hospitalfield's main source of income is grant or donation based (ibid.).

4.3.2 Mount Stuart

Founded in 1989 by John Crichton Stuart, the Mount Stuart Trust opened the house and gardens to the public in 1995 (Mount Stuart, 2023g). As "the parent charitable company", the Mount Stuart Trust's financial reports comprise financial statements regarding its own affairs, as well as those of its five subsidiaries (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021, 9). The Trust is governed by a board of trustees and chaired by Sophie Crichton Stuart. Operating adjacent to the board, the executive staff team is made up of a head of visitor operations and head of rural operations, with a vast range of departments such as business support, collections, contemporary visual arts, events, etc. (Mount Stuart, 2023i).

The Trust's affairs include running staff costs, maintaining access to and care of the house and gardens, collections care and management, the visual arts programme, as well as sustaining operations of the estate (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021, 9). The immense scale of these estate operations is evidenced on the Mount Stuart website:

> The Mount Stuart Trust is a charity managing and maintaining a series of assets across the Island, including Mount Stuart House and gardens, 36 farms, 100 residential properties, 1447 hectares acres of woodland and approximately 21 commercial properties, including golf courses, bowling greens, fishing and gaming leases (Mount Stuart, 2023f).

These assets are reinvested into the Trust to support "economic value for the Island of Bute through employment, tourism revenue, housing, and much more" (ibid.). As reflected in Figure 10 below, what qualifies as "charitable activities" in Mount Stuart's annual accounts (shown in red and blue) represents a small fraction of the Trust's overall income (shown in green). This total income encompasses a range of sources such as "donations and legacies", "charitable activities", "other trading activities", "investments", and "other income" (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021, 14). Mount Stuart receives a substantial portion of its yearly income from extensive estate operations, investment income such as property rent, and donations or grants (ibid., 25). This overall income consistently dwarfs the income derived from the charitable activities. For example, in the year 2018, Mount Stuart reported a total income of £6,168,878, with £2,058,480 from other trading activities, £2,257,646 from investments, and

£1,297,147 from donations and legacies, with only £361,715 from the charitable activities (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2018, 14).

Charitable income derives from tickets and entrance to the house and gardens and includes Scottish Government funding for the visual art programme. Charitable expenditure encompasses all costs associated with visual art commissions (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021, 24) and staff costs for tickets and entrance, the house, gardens, and archives (26). As Figure 10 shows, the charitable expenditure far exceeds the charitable income, but these numbers remain relatively constant over this nine-year period, with only a noticeable drop in income in 2020. This change in pattern is expected given the impact on charitable operations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

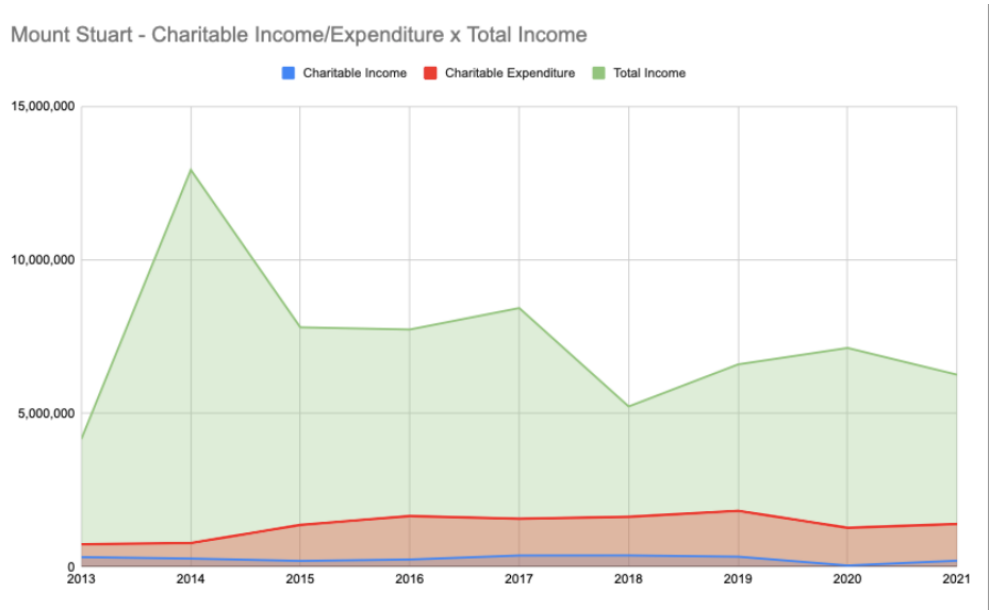


Figure 10. Line graph demonstrating Mount Stuart's substantial peaks in total income (green) between 2013-2021, consistently dwarfing the yearly charitable income (blue) and expenditure (red).

In relation to the visual arts programme, this quantitative analysis shows that a) the visual arts component is, in terms of spending and revenue, a small aspect of the overall operations of Mount Stuart, which extend to maintaining island-wide assets and b) the charitable income and expenditure (encompassing the visual arts programme) fluctuate very little over many years of business. Likewise, the staff structure shows that the visual arts department is a small component of a much wider range of operations.

4.3.3 Jupiter Artland

Founded by philanthropist collectors Robert and Nicky Wilson, Jupiter Artland opened to the public in 2009 to showcase the Wilson's growing outdoor art collection on the 100-acre grounds of Bonnington House (Simpson, 2021). The Jupiter Artland Company Limited (incorporated in 2007) is administered by a board of directors, who meet regularly to plan and fundraise for proposed projects, as well as assess risks (Jupiter Artland Company Limited, 2021, 8-9). The board also appoints a Senior Management Team of four members to manage the overall board operations. The staff structure at Jupiter Artland comprises of a director (one of the founders) and various teams overlooking exhibitions, learning, operations and events, and the estate (Jupiter Artland, 2023f).

Compared to the constant lines in Figure 10 showing Mount Stuart's total income and charitable activities, Figure 11 reflects a less stable picture for Jupiter Artland, with peaks and drops in total income (shown in green) and a gradual rise in both charitable spending and income (shown in red and blue). For example, the total income for 2017 was £2,379,466, while the total income for the following year plummeted by over half to £838,659 (The Jupiter Artland Company Limited, 2018).

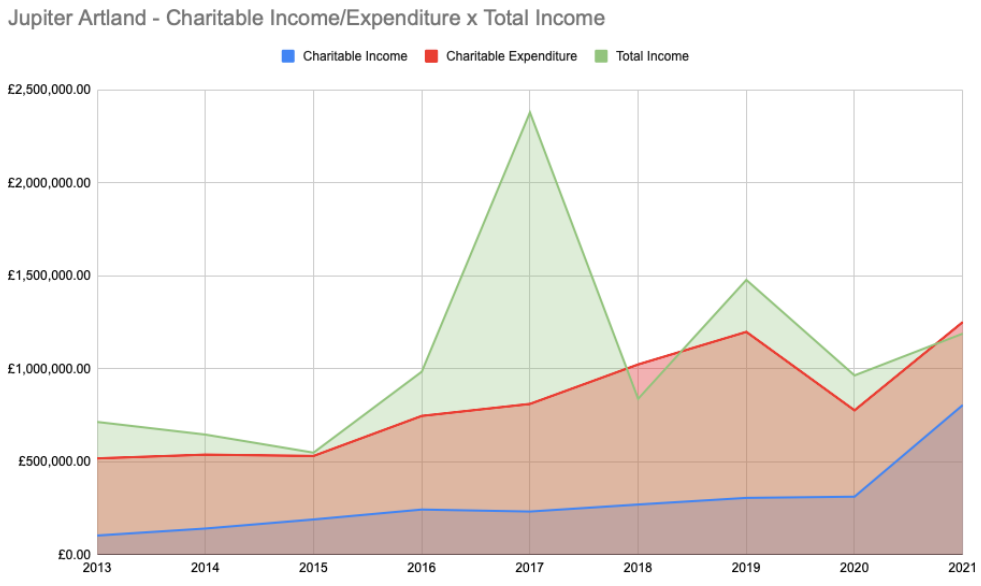


Figure 11. Line graph showing Jupiter Artland's fluctuating patterns of total income (green) between 2013-2021, with a peak in total income in 2017. The charitable expenditure (red) and income (blue) are generally on the rise, with expenditure exceeding income and rising in correlation.

To better compare with Mount Stuart's totals for charitable activities, the calculations from Jupiter Artland had to be adjusted to include income from the "sculpture park" and "education", and exclude the "other trading activities", "investment income", and "other income" categories listed in the annual statements. The charitable expenditure and income fluctuate less dramatically, trending towards an overall increase in both. These lines move in approximate correlation, with charitable expenditure consistently exceeding income by far. For example, in 2018, the total charitable expenditure (£1,198,504) exceeded the total charitable income (£311,787) by almost four times and surpassed the total income by £184,699 (The Jupiter Artland Company Limited, 2018). Again, the 2021 charitable expenditure exceeds the total income by £62,065. The overall numbers and smaller staff structure suggest that Jupiter Artland is operating on a much smaller scale compared to Mount Stuart's island-wide business ventures. For example, Mount Stuart's lowest total income from this sample is £4,159,088 in 2013, which is over double Jupiter Artland's highest total income in 2017.

Moreover, this analysis suggests that Jupiter Artland's total income is less predictable than Mount Stuart's steadier stream of income. Notably, most of Mount Stuart's total yearly income derives from investments and other trading activities. It also shows that Jupiter Artland takes risks on charitable activities by increasingly spending on its sculpture park and education programme, exceeding its total income in 2021.

Compared to the more detailed line graphs for Mount Stuart and Jupiter Artland, two details about Hospitalfield's finances stand out. Firstly, Hospitalfield operates on a significantly smaller budget than Mount Stuart, which had an average total income of £7,360,370 between 2013 and 2021. Secondly, though Hospitalfield seems closer to Jupiter Artland in budget, it usually expends less overall compared with Jupiter Artland's average expenditure on its sculpture park and education programming alone, which lands at an average of £821,523 between 2013 and 2021.

4.3.4 Summary

In terms of staff structure and financial circumstances, Mount Stuart approaches its programming with a small curatorial staff team but retains the most financial security, tackling a few large-scale commissions per year. According to Mount Stuart's annual reports between

2013-2021, the charitable income and expenditure is merely a small portion of the Trust's total annual income. Both Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland face more risks according to both their accounts in this same period. To remain in operation, Hospitalfield relies on an exceptionally small team, never letting its annual income exceed total income, and relying on grant money from both heritage and creative funders, as well as small trading ventures. Jupiter Artland has a slightly more expansive team and relies less on grant money. Its charitable costs are high, and its total income based on investments is erratic.

Overall, Mount Stuart is in the steadiest financial position to take on a visual arts programme and bear the costs of maintaining and preserving its heritage assets, especially the buildings (The Mount Stuart Trust, 2021, 29). It also works with the least number of artists per year, compared to Hospitalfield's extensive residency programmes and Jupiter Artland's seasonal programming. Despite its comparably small budget, Hospitalfield runs year-long programming and has pursued new conservation projects like rebuilding its fernery, walled garden, and studios. Finally, although Jupiter Artland employs a Keeper of the Landscape, its charitable expenditure focuses on growing the sculpture park and facilitating learning activities over conservation efforts.

4.4 Programme components

This section reviews components of each public programme, mapping how arts programming overlaps with heritage across the three cases. While Sections 4.2 and 4.3 consider each organisation in turn to establish three distinctive contexts, this section shifts to a comparative discussion to demonstrate the variety of programming activities enacted across all three historic house settings. The key activities are residencies, festivals, temporary commissions and exhibitions, permanent commissions, and learning programmes. All three organisations also offer other programming, such as events, publications, and workshops for practitioners and the public. Most of this programming overlaps with exhibitions, residencies, or festivals. Other elements of each programme stand apart from contemporary art and respond to the history of the historic house, e.g., Hospitalfield's and Mount Stuart's regular house tours; or the natural setting, e.g., Hospitalfield's recurrent guided mushroom walks (Hospitalfield, 2023c) and Mount Stuart's recurrent moth study events (Mount Stuart, 2023h). These additional elements will not be considered further, for the sake of drawing attention to the core

programmes presented in each organisation's annual reports, and how contemporary art programming like exhibitions, commissions, and festivals engage with heritage contexts.

4.4.1 Residencies

Of the three organisations, Hospitalfield places the greatest emphasis on residencies and its capacity to host these directly in the historic house. Hospitalfield's on-site residencies more often concern collaboration and development than responses to heritage, though some artists might choose to engage with the historical context. In contrast, Mount Stuart hosts only one artist per year in a community-focused residency programme that does not necessarily concern heritage (Fieldnotes, 2022). Finally, Jupiter Artland's residencies range from developing outdoor performances to online exhibitions, with no clear unifying approach, save for an emphasis on artist-led opportunities. In some cases, Jupiter Artland offers residencies to artists under-represented in the UK's creative sector, aligning itself with social justice movements (Jupiter Artland, 2023g). It is uncommon that Jupiter Artland's residencies include on-site accommodation, given that the historic house is a private residence (Fieldnotes, 2022).

Hospitalfield hosts on-site and off-site residencies, partnership residencies, and exchange programmes for creative practitioners based locally, across the UK, and internationally, including visual artists, makers, curators, designers, writers, musicians, and cultural researchers (Hospitalfield, 2023e). Starting with four residency programmes in 2014, Hospitalfield is now offering between 11 (in 2022) and 16 (in 2021) residency programmes annually, with over 60 documented residents (Hospitalfield, 2023e). For over 10 years, Hospitalfield has run the Graduate Programme, a group residency and mentorship opportunity for Scottish arts school graduates (Hospitalfield, 2023i).

Given that Hospitalfield primarily aims to advance the arts education of its users (OSCR, 2023), it upholds a wide range of residency options for practitioners seeking career development, new support networks, and studio space. Hospitalfield purports to nurture a welcoming, collaborative work environment that artists can return to as residents throughout their practices, though this must be achieved by invitation or application (Fieldnotes, 2022). Most residents are invited to stay in the historic house or the neighbouring apartments, independently or as part of a larger cohort, with designated studio space, access to most historic rooms, and communal meals (Hospitalfield, 2023h).

For graduates and other early-career artists, a residency at Hospitalfield is often considered a rite of passage, granting the time and space away from art school and work commitments (Fieldnotes, 2022). It is an opportunity to trial new ideas, receive mentorship, and build portfolios, rather than produce an exhibition (Fieldnotes, 2022). A substantial portion of Hospitalfield's programme focuses on designing and administering these residencies, both in the house and off-site. The success of these residencies relies on a small staff team and limited funds (see Section 4.3.1). From the organisational documentation alone, it is difficult to decipher how engaged with the history of the house these residencies are (or are intended to be), or if the aims of these residencies are met. Chapter 6 refers to practitioner testimonies to clarify if artists' residencies meet the expectations of artists and the extent to which they overlap with the heritage setting.

Mount Stuart has a streamlined residency programme that platforms one emerging artist per year (Mount Stuart, 2023c). Since 2018, Mount Stuart has selected an early-career artist to engage with the local inhabitants of Bute, focusing on the island community rather than the historic estate. While this approach renders the programme more exclusive, it offers the artist in residence direct support from curatorial staff and a long-term, immersive opportunity to grow their practice in the island's social context. Although the residents are not part of a wider cohort, as is the case with Hospitalfield's Graduate Programme, they are far from isolated in their work. Participating artists have chosen to collaborate with local artists, musicians, students, and other communities to carry out their projects, even with the Covid-19 restrictions in 2021 (Mount Stuart, 2023d).

These residencies draw on the island's social context, as well as its cultural and natural landscapes, to develop work unlike Mount Stuart's typical commissions which respond to the historic house setting. For example, Kaya Fraser (2021) developed the sound work *Milk + Two Sugars* in conversation with islanders; Hamshya Rajkumar (2019) embraced outdoor play in the woodlands of Bute; and Malcolm Mackenzie (2018) worked closely with primary school classes and sent his *Isle Love Bute* phone booth on tour to record the memories and dreams of the islanders (Mount Stuart, 2023d). Mount Stuart claims that these residencies strengthen connections between the visual art programme and the wider island community, while at the same time supporting early-career practitioners. Again, Chapter 6 analyses the testimonies of Mount Stuart's residents to better assess these organisational claims.

While Jupiter Artland has a history of offering residencies, these are not as well-documented, defined, or recurrent as those offered by Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart. Early annual reports state that "periodically" hosting "an [a]rtist in residence with living accommodation and studio space" is a primary objective of the company (Jupiter Artland Company Limited, 2014, 2); however, this aim is subsequently absent from all reports after 2014. Regardless, Jupiter Artland's website since claims to platform underrepresented artists by offering on-site and online residency opportunities. Jupiter Artland's 2020 Rising Residency was fully-funded and open to a specific group of historically underrepresented practitioners: "Scotland-based emerging artists who identify as womxn, a person of colour, LGBTQ+ and/or from a working class background" (Jupiter Artland, 2025a). Like Mount Stuart's Emerging Artist Residency and Hospitalfield's Graduate Programme, the Rising Residency was framed as a mentorship and career development opportunity (Jupiter Artland, 2025a). Jupiter Artland's Rotten TV Residency, more akin to Hospitalfield's international residencies, forged collaborations with artists beyond the UK, although it is unclear whether these connections have been sustained long-term. Given the historical house setting is not mentioned in Jupiter Artland's documentation concerning the residency programme, it can be inferred that Jupiter Artland's residencies are not positioned in response to the site's heritage.

Practitioner perspectives on the nature of such residencies and their intersection with heritage will be further articulated in the next two chapters.

4.4.2 Festivals

Festivals are recurrent events at Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland, typically as a celebration of culture or heritage. Mount Stuart has not chosen to host any visual arts festivals to date. While Hospitalfield draws from its local history and enduring agricultural pride to curate varied programmes of art, food, music, and other public events, heavily tied to ideas of heritage, Jupiter Artland hosts artist-led music and performance events as part of a festival platforming historically underrepresented artists.

Since 2017, Hospitalfield has hosted an annual Beer & Berries Festival, which celebrates the history of food and drink production in Angus (Hospitalfield, 2023j). The programme centres around The Great Angus Market with local stallholders, incorporating talks, contests, workshops, art performances, film presentations, and live music. Another festival, Arbroath

2020+1, celebrated the 700th anniversary of the famous signing of the Declaration of Arbroath (Arbroath Festival, 2025). The festival, with Hospitalfield as a key participant, reflected a vivid community effort to stage medieval-inspired pageants, family events, and public art exhibitions across the town (Visit Angus, 2023). Among a longer list of outdoor activities, the festival oversaw the development of heritage walking tours and performances in the town; the commissioning of the New Scriptorium, a bothy-style workspace for local writers in residence; and the parading of festive flags on the High Street (Arbroath Festival, 2025).

Finally, Jupiter Rising is an annual festival at Jupiter Artland branded as an exclusive spectacle of new music and other artist-led happenings (Jupiter Artland, 2023c). From its outset, Jupiter Rising has claimed to carve a platform for marginalised artists in a white-male dominated music industry (Armour, 2022). The Jupiter Artland website asserts its "reputation as an essential player in breathing ... progressive politics" into the music festival format (Jupiter Artland, 2023c). Again, Jupiter Artland claims to address historical underrepresentation in the art world via its programme.

4.4.3 Temporary commissions and exhibitions

All three sites have extensive histories of commissioning temporary exhibitions, either within the immediate context of the house or grounds, alongside this context, or in the case of Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland, off-site. At Hospitalfield, temporary exhibitions are a compelling part of the programme, but residencies take precedence. These sometimes engage with the heritage context, but this is not an intrinsic feature of the programme. At Mount Stuart, temporary exhibitions are the driving force behind the visual arts programme and sit in direct dialogue with the heritage context. Jupiter Artland has a discrete programme of temporary exhibitions, including performances and gallery shows, but the latter usually serve to contextualise or complement the permanent collection. As such, these gallery shows relate more to the contemporary "artland" rather than historic landscape or heritage context.

For the last decade, Hospitalfield's exhibitions have been incorporated into seasonal programmes and open weekends, either as solo exhibitions, collaborative works, or group shows. Described on Hospitalfield's website as installations, interventions, institutional critique, performance, or site-specific, these shows have taken place in the driveway, walled garden, studios, and house (Hospitalfield, 2023k). Many commissioned artists participate in a

formal residency with Hospitalfield, though not all residents are commissioned to exhibit work. According to Hospitalfield's online archive, several of its commissioned artworks explicitly respond to the heritage setting and collections. For example, James Rigler's outdoor sculptural work *The Dancing Stones* (2016) directly references a line in Sir Walter Scott's novel based on Hospitalfield, as well as the stone carvings and building materials on the site (Hospitalfield, 2023l). For an interior example, Susannah Stark and Hussein Mitha produced *Correspondences* (2019), a sound and light installation which "weave[s] a broken narrative that responds to the influences and ideas presented through the history of the western enlightenment as it manifests itself at Hospitalfield" (Hospitalfield, 2023m). There are also examples of commissioned artworks developed from Hospitalfield's historic collections, such as Yokollection's 2015 project inspired by "a white embroidered shawl from the collection", which "women connected to Hospitalfield" were invited to discuss and wear (Hospitalfield, 2023n). In some cases, musical artists are invited to compose work and perform with instruments from Hospitalfield's collection, such as the harpsichord and harp, both of which were used in the Sound of Yell's 2018 performance in Hospitalfield's drawing room (Hospitalfield, 2023o).

On at least one occasion, Hospitalfield has shown work commissioned by another organisation on a short-term loan basis, namely, a 2021 iteration of Christina Mackie's sculptural work *Judges III* (2013), which was not created with Hospitalfield's picture gallery in mind but rather contemplated the concept of collections in general (Hospitalfield, 2023p). Mackie's monotone and amorphous sculptures, spaced evenly on low tables and plinths, visually responded to the figural busts and framed paintings from Allan-Fraser's collection (ibid.). In this case, the conceptual link to Hospitalfield's historic setting is once removed, as Mackie originally developed the artwork in response to Nottingham Castle Museum collections. Nevertheless, it was visually reconfigured in this Victorian period room setting.

Few commissioned works at Hospitalfield respond directly to the heritage context. Many are rooted in conceptual frameworks removed from Hospitalfield's histories, but like Mackie's work, answer visually or with a distant conceptual resonance. For example, Laura Aldridge installed a series of banners in the walled garden in 2014. While these do not seem to explicitly reference the specific heritage setting of Hospitalfield, instead standing in bold

contrast to the wind-worn garden walls (Hospitalfield, 2023q), they are nevertheless loosely connected to histories of craft embedded in the heritage narrative at Hospitalfield.

In some cases, artworks are even more removed from the built heritage. This can be seen with artworks that are displayed in the study room, described on Hospitalfield's Spaces for Hire webpage as a "bright space" that is "a perfect fit for business meetings, presentations and workshops" (Hospitalfield, 2025a). More akin to a white cube gallery model, this white walled space contrasts with Hospitalfield's conventional period rooms (such as the picture gallery, cedar room, dining room, and drawing room, all of which retain historic furnishings) and provides a more minimalist setting for commissioned artists to display within.[11] For example, France-Lise McGurn's sweeping figural paintings were applied directly to the walls of this room as part of a 2018 commission *Extensa Suite*, reflecting a continuation of her usual practice in bar settings and galleries (Figure 12; Hospitalfield, 2023r). In an interview with Hospitalfield's director Lucy Byatt, McGurn describes an energetic and durational working method, explaining that her "immediate, instant" process responds to "what [she is] reading or interested in at the time" but she does not comment on the historic house setting (ibid.). The blank walls of the study room accommodated McGurn's murals, which overflowed across doors and ceilings, in ways that adjoining rooms in Hospitalfield House, densely populated with wood carvings, textiles, and framed paintings (Figure 5), could not.

[11] According to Tate (2025), white cube refers to "a certain gallery aesthetic characterised by its square or oblong shape, white walls and a light source usually from the ceiling".



Figure 12. View of France-Lise McGurn's 2018 exhibition 'Extensa Suite' in Hospitalfield's study room. Dooley, O. 2019.

Overall, Hospitalfield's commissions reflect a mix of curatorial approaches, some of which uphold connections to the built heritage, collections, and Allan-Fraser's legacy. In other cases, Hospitalfield invites artists to develop their existing practices in a new context, whether by redisplaying existing work in the historic house setting or by exhibiting new work in a gallery-like setting within the house, independent from the histories of the site.

Since 2001, Mount Stuart has consistently commissioned one or two artists each year to respond to the site, exhibiting their work on the grounds or in the house on a temporary basis. In one self-published exhibition book, these works are categorised as "land art, photography,

video, sculpture, installation, and painting" (Mount Stuart, 2006, 7). Many of the artists selected are based in Scotland, such as Kate Whiteford, Nathan Coley, Christine Borland, and Ilana Halperin, but others are from abroad, such as Abbas Akhavan, who is based in Canada (Mount Stuart, 2023d).

Given that Mount Stuart's commissioning practices rely on public funding, any artworks produced belong to the artists rather than to a private collection (Fieldnotes, 2022). While shadows of past exhibitions remain—such as the unmatching grass recalling Kate Whiteford's earthwork *Shadow of a Necklace* (2001), or the remaining metallic flecks applied on a pine tree by Anya Gallaccio as part of *Silver Seed* (2005)—these were intended to be either temporary or materially ephemeral (Fieldnotes, 2022). Most artworks are displayed in the immediate context of their creation and are then returned to the artist. They are officially documented in Mount Stuart's publications, but little to no physical traces remain apparent.

Although Mount Stuart has always framed its commissions as being in response to the immediate context of the estate (its built environment and natural setting), early examples of the resultant exhibitions were sited in Mount Stuart's visitor centre, a one mile walk from the house. Though nearby enough to be experienced as part of the Mount Stuart estate, this structure does not sit in physical sight of the historic house, nor does the assumed neutrality of this gallery-like setting obviously resonate with the past. Nathan Coley's 2006 solo show partially took place here, requiring an extra intellectual leap to connect his striped sculptures of religious buildings (*Camouflage Synagogue*, *Camouflage Mosque*, and *Camouflage Church*, all exhibited in the visitor centre) with his temporary outdoor installation *There Will Be No Miracles Here* staged closer to and within the house (Mount Stuart, 2006).

Unlike at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, many of the commissions at Jupiter Artland are outdoor sculptures incorporated into the permanent collection. The woodland and meadow paths are also dotted with signage, physically documenting past temporary exhibitions in the landscape, as noted on Jupiter Artland's public map (Fieldnotes, 2022; Figure 8). This signage resembles a memorial, cementing a record of temporary artworks in the landscape.

Many temporary artworks were performance-based, leaving little or no traces behind. This includes commissions such as Tessa Lynch's *Raising* (2014), which was a participatory performance that enlisted volunteers to collaboratively build a minimalist structure in a day,

only for the structure to be dismantled and erected again by different volunteers the following weekend. With reference to historical land rights, this is a rare example of an artwork that challenged Jupiter Artland's private ownership of the estate in a provocative way supported by the organisation (Jupiter Artland, 2014).

Aside from the outdoor commissions, Jupiter Artland also hosts exhibitions in bespoke gallery spaces. For example, to accompany the unveiling of Rachel Maclean's permanent film installation *upside mimi ıɯıɯ ʍop* (Maclean, 2021a), Jupiter Arland temporarily displayed Maclean's 2017 Venice Biennale commission *Spite Your Face* (a digital video film) and other earlier artworks (Maclean, 2021b; Jupiter Artland, 2023h).

Since 2022, Jupiter Artland has started expanding its commissions beyond the site with its Jupiter+ programme. The first project—Jupiter+ Perth—saw the commissioning of Maclean's *Mimi* in a disused shop on Perth's High Street from October 2022 to January 2023 (Jupiter Artland, 2023i). A new and temporary iteration of the permanent installation at Jupiter Artland, Maclean resituated the same film in a High Street context, where pedestrians unwittingly stumbled into an art experience (Ashenden, 2023). This new commission adds another layer of value and meaning to Jupiter Artland's permanent acquisition and strengthens the organisation's association with this widely exhibiting artist.

4.4.4 Permanent commissions and other changes

All three of the organisations considered have altered aspects of their sites to render them more physically accessible to contemporary audiences, creating new pathways, roads, carparks, and modern structures. Hospitalfield has altered its site the most in recent years, with more changes ahead as part of a five-year development plan. Jupiter Artland most adamantly pursues large-scale changes to its site via permanent commissions and acquisitions. While Hospitalfield also acquires work, it prioritises temporary exhibitions over permanent ones. Mount Stuart only commissions temporary displays.

While most of Hospitalfield's commissions are exhibited on a temporary basis, it also acquires new artworks for its permanent collection, such as a pen and gold leaf drawing by Graham Fagen commissioned and curated by Hospitalfield for the 2015 Venice Biennale (Hospitalfield, 2023s). More permanent displays of commissioned work include the tables for the café, designed by Mick Peter, featuring imagery in direct conversation with the recently

redeveloped garden, as well as with the historic architecture of the house and objects in Hospitalfield's collection (ibid.). Hospitalfield views its collection as continuous with historic practices, explaining:

> [It spans]19th Century paintings commissioned by Patrick Allan-Fraser, 20th Century works donated by artists who studied here, and a growing selection of 21st Century artworks acquired though our contemporary art projects (Hospitalfield 2023s).

This statement is congruous with Hospitalfield's overall narrative relating its current strategies to Allan-Fraser's commissioning practices and bequest.

Additionally, Hospitalfield is engaged in a site-wide £11m redevelopment plan (2021-present), which so far has seen the building of a modern café, improvements to its public programme and services, and the restoration of the historic gardens, fernery, and art studios (Hospitalfield, 2023a). This reflects Hospitalfield's shift from mainly serving practitioner audiences, to engaging more with public audiences. Overall, this Future Plan blends historical conservation interests with contemporary needs, both improving public and practitioner access to otherwise neglected features of the site and adding facilities such as a car park to serve its new audiences (ibid.). The physical changes to the site reflect a desire to remain neutral (the glass café and fernery structures) and prioritise historical references, such as the Victorian fern craze informing the fernery reconstruction or the new garden design, informed by 800 years of history (Dunnett, 2023).

Since 1989, few intentionally permanent changes have been made to the house and grounds at Mount Stuart, save for visitor-friendly pathways and roads, as well as the integration of the Conifer Preservation Programme. Mount Stuart refers to this pinetum as the "living collection", which is maintained by Mount Stuart's horticultural team (Mount Stuart, 2023j). All contemporary art commissions are framed as temporary or ephemeral in contrast to the permanent maintenance of the house and its extensive collections. In a few rare cases, the artists have chosen to donate artworks to the Trust, such as the coloured panes on the glasshouse from Abbas Akhavan's 2022 exhibition *study for a garden*, or one of the mica-coated sculptures from Ilana Halperin's 2021 exhibition *There is a Volcano Behind My House* (Figure 13), now integrated into the mansion's library display (Fieldnotes, 2022).



Figure 13. A selection of Ilana Halperin's mica sculptures from her 2021 exhibition at Mount Stuart. Dooley, O. 2021.

In 2001, John Crichton-Stuart (7th Marquess of Bute) commissioned design consultants at Atelier Ten to build a visitor centre on the estate for housing a ticket office, temporary exhibitions, toilets, and a restaurant. This modernist structure, built with the architecture firm Munkenbeck and Partners, was designed to both "blend in with the surroundings of the natural landscape" and sit "in stark contrast to the spirit of nineteenth-century invention embodied in Mount Stuart, a neo-gothic Victorian Mansion" (Atelier Ten, 2023). Presented as a neutral and unobtrusive, it is physically and aesthetically removed from the historic context. However, exhibitions staged within it, such as Nathan Coley's 2006 solo show, thematically responded to the house or grounds (Mount Stuart, 2006). Compared to the other two organisations considered, Mount Stuart's collecting practices and permanent changes to the landscape are modest, with the pinetum and an outdoor sculptural commission by artist Martin Boyce (*An Inn For The Phantoms Of The Outside And In,* 2019), being the most prominent examples.

Of the three case examples, Jupiter Artland's "developing" landscape is the most visibly altered in a permanent capacity, as documented on its collection webpage (Jupiter Artland, 2023j). This is a list of over 30 "permanent and unique site-specific sculptures" now in Jupiter's growing collection, many of which are fixed in the grounds and connected by visitor-friendly pathways. These include works by artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, Phyllida Barlow, Tracey Emin, and Nathan Coley, whose names are listed on a main page of Jupiter Artland's website—stressing the perceived value of the collection (Jupiter Artland, 2023d). Ticketholders are provided with visitor maps that include the locations of each commission, illustrated by landmarks along the pathways, labelled by title (Figure 8).

Unlike other public art commissions that are left to wear and tear with little to no monitoring[12], Jupiter Artland treats the permanent outdoor works with a level of care somewhere in between public and gallery standards (Fieldnotes, 2022). Although ephemerality is typically a characteristic of land art or earthworks, Charles Jencks' *Cells of Life* (2003-2010) is maintained by Jupiter Artland with signage instructing people to follow set paths or, in the winter months, to refrain from stepping on the terraforms altogether (Fieldnotes, 2022). Similarly, installations that one must enter to view—like Anya Gallaccio's 2012 outdoor work *The Light Pours Out of Me* (a steep descent into a grotto of jagged amethysts, some of which have been pilfered)—undergo regular monitoring, reflecting common gallery practices (Fieldnotes, 2022).

In 2019, Jupiter Artland commissioned Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos to design a permanent swimming pool. Named *Gateway* (2019), this functional pool (a colourful splash on the aerial satellite view in Figure 15) references traditions of Portuguese tile painting, astrology, and stories of ley lines running through the site (Jupiter Artland, 2023k). Hidden by rows of yew hedges with a commanding view of Bonnington House, the pool remains a summer attraction with bathing sessions available to the public for a price (Figure 14).

[12] For example, Martin Creed's 2011 *Work No. 1059* near Waverley train station in Edinburgh, also known as the Scotsman Steps, is often littered with cigarette butts and smells like urine.



Figure 14. The Gateway pool at Jupiter Artland, with a view of Bonnington House behind the yew hedges. Dooley, O. 2022.

Beyond artist commissions, Jupiter Artland also modernised several existing structures adjacent to the pool and gardens, known as The Steadings on the stylised map in Figure 8. This includes two bespoke gallery spaces, a gift shop, toilets, gardener facilities, and the pop surrealist Café Party bistro (Figure 15). This cluster of buildings primarily serves as a visitor hub, where ticket holders can meet, eat, shop, and refresh before exploring the wider grounds (Fieldnotes, 2022). The temporary gallery shows often correspond to recent commissions, to contextualise or add value to the permanent sculptures. Finally, Jupiter Artland built an "Artist's House" in the grounds for overnight stays starting at £1100 for two nights (Jupiter

Artland, 2025b). This is presented as a luxury retreat, decorated with a “private collection of contemporary artworks” to appeal to patrons of the arts (Jupiter Artland, 2025b).



Figure 15. Satellite image of Bonnington House, included to show recent development of Jupiter Artland. From Google Maps. 2025.

To conclude this section on permanent commissions and changes, it is worth stressing that Jupiter Artland’s mission departs from the other organisations’ missions in that it explicitly seeks to permanently transform the historic estate into a contemporary “artland”, rather than to conserve heritage features. Although Jupiter Artland claims to alter the natural landscape in a sustainable way, the acquisition of sculptures appears to supersede conservation concerns. The sheer scale of the sculpture park at Jupiter Artland eclipses the relatively modest temporary outdoor commissions at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, characterising Jupiter Artland as more akin to an outdoor gallery space than historic house. This renders Bonnington House a scenic, pastoral backdrop to this outdoor permanent collection.

4.4.5 Learning programmes

What qualifies as *educational* in arts programming is often conflated in organisational records to include all charitable activities. This thesis uses this terminology in relation to discrete learning programmes, as delineated on each organisation's website. *Education* and *learning* are both terms used by all three organisations, so this analysis follows suit. This section excludes the category of general visitor education to focus attention on learning opportunities designed specifically for schools, youth groups, university students, and adults.

Hospitalfield highlights arts education, once again harkening back to its history as an arts college. Its core learning scheme incorporates the Free Drawing School, a discursive summer school for creative practitioners (Hospitalfield, 2023t), the Young Artists Club (Hospitalfield, 2023u), the annual children's procession (Hospitalfield, 2023v), and other activities. Many of these programmes are artist-led and build on connections to Hospitalfield's historic setting, as well as the local heritage and landscape, to inspire a range of participants to learn creatively.

Mount Stuart's approach to learning is less centralised but varied, including school projects, work placements for students in higher (or tertiary) education, tours of the exhibitions and house, horticultural apprenticeships and staff training opportunities, contributions to academic publications, and external research visits (Mount Stuart, 2023k). For example, Mount Stuart has partnered with Rothesay Academy to facilitate work experience placements within the organisation, either with the Garden and Maintenance team or the Guiding and Visitor team (ibid). It also supports research on the collections, family history, landscape, and contemporary visual arts programme at Mount Stuart, publishing findings with the Paul Mellon Centre's online essay collection *Art and the Country House* (ibid). Mount Stuart's website documents a wide variety of educational activities, including school projects "coinciding with specific exhibitions, objects or events within the house, grounds and island at large" (ibid.). Many facets of learning at Mount Stuart directly relate to the historic house and collections, as well as current exhibitions. Other aspects centre more on practical skill-building opportunities.

Jupiter Artland offers a comprehensive and regular learning programme, with a combination of ticketed and free opportunities for children of all ages, focused primarily on the outdoor art environment and imaginative play rather than historic setting (Jupiter Artland, 2023e). This

focus is reflected in the organisation's staff structure, which includes multiple learning coordinators and an assistant to manage these regular programmes, tours, and other projects (Jupiter Artland, 2023f).

4.4.6 Summary

Taking a closer look at the programming activities of each site gives a fuller picture of how contemporary art practices intersect with organisational concepts of heritage, keeping budget and wider organisational goals in mind. The most prevalent programming elements includes residencies, festivals, temporary commissions and exhibitions, permanent commissions or changes to the sites, and learning programmes. Rather than simply facilitating occasional site-specific commissions within settings that otherwise function as historic house museums, these three Scottish sites are all actively commissioning artworks, with Hospitalfield operating throughout the year, and Mount Stuart and Jupiter Artland on a seasonal basis.

Starting with the residency framework—most prevalent at Hospitalfield—we see no explicit conceptual emphasis on heritage from any of the three sites. Of Hospitalfield's many residencies, the on-site ones are uniquely based within the historic house itself. However, it is unclear in annual reports and other documentation published by Hospitalfield whether these residencies are intended to respond to the historic setting, as this is not highlighted in residency descriptions. Instead, cultivation of artistic practice and facilitation of new collaborations appear to be at the crux of these residencies. Hospitalfield supports many of these per year with its limited budget, framing its residency scheme as a continuation of its history as an arts college and artists' retreat. Mount Stuart's sole residency for one emerging artist per year is distanced from the history of the house, instead described as sited within the community or the wider social context of the island. Lastly, Jupiter Artland's less consistent residencies sidestep any references to heritage, instead responding to the natural landscape or the historical underrepresentation of marginalised artists.

The festivals facilitated by Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland diverge in approach. On the one hand, two of Hospitalfield's festivals—Beer & Berries and Arbroath 2020+1—explicitly respond to town heritage and identity, as well as the site's own history in the case of the latter. On the other hand, Jupiter Artland's Rising Festival does not make any clear connections to

the heritage context but does position itself as aligned with progressive politics by platforming historically marginalised artists.

At Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, temporary commissions and exhibitions are most prevalent. While Hospitalfield commissions a wide range of artworks per year with several explicit references to the heritage, grounds, and collections, this is not imperative. On the contrary, Mount Stuart exclusively commissions artwork that responds to the site and a wide definition of heritage, encompassing deeper geological and prehistorical pasts. Its collection of self-published exhibition books, which contain essays and interviews with artists, serve to drive home these heritage connections, as evidenced by academic research and curatorial testimony. It is in these books, as well as on the Mount Stuart website, that we see Mount Stuart carefully frame its contemporary commissioning practices as a continuation of the Crichton Stuart family's record of arts patronage, particularly in the nineteenth century (Mount Stuart Trust, 2006). At Jupiter Artland, temporary exhibitions are not ubiquitous, but this model is sometimes used in the grounds or bespoke gallery spaces. These temporary exhibitions primarily serve to expand upon or contextualise a new permanent acquisition. Other than loose historical references, Jupiter Artland's exhibitions are contemporary in focus.

Jupiter Artland places the most emphasis on permanent changes to the landscape above any conservation of or connections to the past. This is a clear link to its philanthropic mission to grow a reputable and predominantly permanent sculpture park. While Hospitalfield also acquires some of its commissions, this is secondary to commissioning temporary artworks. However, Hospitalfield has made a concerted effort to redevelop its grounds, making permanent changes to the built heritage using public funds (e.g., the fernery and studios). These changes are framed as supporting both efforts to preserve the building and contemporary artists working on-site. Even more extreme in its approach, Mount Stuart exclusively commissions temporary and ephemeral exhibitions, excluding donations. The most permanent changes to the site include a modernist gallery space, which showcased temporary artworks intended to deepen heritage connections, and the pinetum, which also inspired artists. For both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, it is in their favour to leave the period room style displays in their interiors largely unchanged, as it tangibly contributes to their respective heritage claims (Mårdh, 2015) and reasons for establishing contemporary art programmes.

In terms of learning opportunities in relation to perceived heritage, the results mirror other aspects of each organisation's wider programme. Like its temporary commissions and festivals, Hospitalfield's learning programme explicitly references the site's history, general town history, and the natural landscape. Otherwise, it focuses on artistic practices such as illustration or performance. Despite its small staff team and budget, many of these programmes are free and some accommodate hundreds of participants. Mount Stuart's education initiatives are less well documented but include collaboration with schools and academic research. These are often in direct connection with the history of the house and its collections. Jupiter Artland also greatly invests in its learning programme, as reflected in its staff structure, offering a mixture of free and ticketed opportunities, none of which are explicitly linked to heritage; instead, the emphasis is on the outdoors and creativity.

4.5 Conclusion

Overall, heritage is a recognised concept in documentation across all three organisations, with a strong emphasis on historical narratives and conservation of built heritage from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, and a weaker acknowledgement of the historical setting from Jupiter Artland. While the first two bear striking similarities in their definitions of heritage, attaching value to the historic house, collections, grounds, and surrounding natural/cultural landscapes, Jupiter Artland prioritises building the reputation of its contemporary sculpture park and showcasing the "raw" natural landscape over making visual or narrative connections to the histories of the estate (Jupiter Artland, 2023a).

With all three sites acknowledging heritage in organisational records, we can begin to understand how each positions its art programme alongside or within heritage. This ranges from strong narrative and visual conversation between contemporary art and heritage (Mount Stuart), steady narrative and visual conversation between contemporary art and heritage with practitioner development at the forefront (Hospitalfield), and treatment of heritage environment as scenic backdrop to contemporary art, with little narrative and some visual conversation (Jupiter Artland). While Mount Stuart situates its streamlined art programme in direct and constant exchange with heritage, Hospitalfield uses the heritage context as a foundation for new curatorial directions. Meanwhile, Jupiter Artland does not foster any strong heritage links but pushes the aesthetic of the rural/agricultural setting to market unique

outdoor experiences of its contemporary art collection. This close analysis of organisational missions, staff structures, financial circumstances, and curatorial elements demonstrates that heritage is a pervasive concept throughout art programming at Mount Stuart, a strong foundation for most arts programming at Hospitalfield, and an aesthetic backdrop at Jupiter Artland, where few links to heritage are sustained. Curatorial perspectives have started to come to light through the preceding examination of organisational document, but only under the umbrella of organisational aims and objectives. The next chapter takes up these threads and focuses on individual curatorial perspectives alongside those of artists to expand upon, complicate, or contradict the organisational visions discussed here.

Chapter 5: Exploring practitioner engagement with heritage

5.1 Introduction

In response to RQ 2, Chapter 5 deliberates the relevance of heritage in contemporary art experiences at Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland.

> RQ 2: Based on the perceptions and experiences of contemporary art practitioners working within historic house settings, in what capacity does heritage play a role (if any) in the curatorial/artistic process?

The findings are divided into two sections, analysing themes evident in interviews with curators (5.2) and artists (5.3).[13] This structure is informed by three key methods of analysis:

- Manual coding with support from NVivo coding software, comprising of parent and child nodes, resulting in the identification of key themes in the interview data.
- Close readings of language used in excerpts of the interview transcripts, exploring nuanced perceptions of heritage as described by artists and curators.
- Comparative analysis is used throughout, not to directly compare the three sites and their programmes or engagement with artists, but rather to bring out common or divergent themes.

The themes are used to structure the chapter, each with its own section. The themes are not always exactly the same as expressed by curators and by artists, though this research attempts to draw common threads and has grouped the discussions accordingly. The chapter closes with a comparative discussion of the range of heritage engagement evident across all three case studies, identifying points of tension between different engagement activities and user interests. Finally, it considers how practitioner experiences overlap with or push up against the organisational perspectives presented in Chapter 4.

[13] Curators are cited as C1, C2, C3, etc. in order of appearance in this thesis, while artists are cited as A1, A2, A3, etc. Direct references are also followed by the corresponding page number(s) in the interview transcripts.

5.2 Curators

A set of fourteen themes emerged via rigorous analysis of six curator interviews, varying in emphasis at each site, and each will be discussed in turn. This includes: 1) *conservation and/or collections care*; 2) *special access to historic house and collections*; 3) *neutral spaces*; 4) *curatorial resistance to conventions*; 5) *programmes modelled on historical narratives*; 6) *artistic responses to heritage setting*; 7) *heritage as a social barrier*; 8) *immateriality of heritage*; 9) *curatorial acceptance of conventions*; 10) *connections to place*; 11) *sense of exhibition history*; 12) *absent/unknown heritage*; 13) *land as belonging to people*; and 14) *rural context*. These were determined to be either key themes or general themes in the Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland datasets. Key themes were determined by their explicit emphasis and/or frequency of appearance in curator interviews of a particular site. General themes were assigned if they appear in curator interviews of a particular site, but with less direct emphasis or frequency. In some cases, a theme was entirely absent in curator interviews from a particular site, suggesting that the theme is irrelevant to that site. The role of the researcher in both interpreting interview data and selecting key themes cannot be overlooked here. Each subsection starts with a brief description of how key themes were differentiated from general themes in a particular dataset, lending more transparency to this subjective process through reflexive commentary (Davies, 1999; Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Before presenting the findings, it is also important to explain the number and types of interviews conducted.

At Hospitalfield, two long-term curatorial staff members participated in a group interview, conducted on-site. As these informants are the sole full-time facilitators of Hospitalfield's programme, it follows that their views direct and shape the organisation's programme. For this reason, curatorial and organisational perspectives proved to be inextricably intertwined. Yet, it remains important to avoid conflating the views of individuals with an organisational standpoint, directly citing each informant, although it is recognised that the perceptions and choices of these curators drive the programme. These findings also contain some contradictions, reflecting the complexity of curating contemporary artworks and hosting residencies in a historic house setting, with a divide between "heritage zones" and living spaces (C1, 31), as well as indoor and outdoor components. Contradictions are indicated on a case-by-case basis.

At Mount Stuart, three curatorial team members participated; one on an individual basis, and all three as part of a group interview. These interviews were conducted on-site and heavily reflect the perspectives of the organisation in question, merging with personal views. Though one of the interviewees endeavoured to consider her role as a creative practitioner separately, she acknowledged that the full-time role envelops her personal practice and is in many ways inextricable (C3, 111). Additionally, C4 grew up at Mount Stuart and founded the contemporary visual arts programme in 2001, compounding the personal biases present in this dataset.

Finally, only one curator from Jupiter Artland participated. This informant was in the process of ending a long-term position, but still spoke on behalf of the organisation, choosing to use the first-person plural. The interview was conducted off-site in Edinburgh.

It is not the case that all participants explicitly identify as curators. Their job titles range from director to exhibitions coordinator to head of visitor operations. Nevertheless, each plays a major role in shaping and maintaining each programme. For the sake of simplicity, this chapter refers to individuals in these roles of care, fundraising, and directorship as curators.

The following subsections are structured by key themes evident in curator interviews about each site in the following order: First, Hospitalfield; then both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart; then Mount Stuart; then Jupiter Artland; and finally, both Jupiter Artland and Hospitalfield. Mount Stuart and Jupiter Artland lack key themes in common and thus are not discussed together here. Findings from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart demonstrate three key themes in common: *programmes modelled on historical narratives*, *artistic responses to heritage setting,* and *heritage as a social barrier*. Findings from Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland demonstrate two key themes in common: *land as belonging to people* and *rural context*. This is illustrated in Table 2, presented in Section 5.2.15, which summarises curatorial perspectives and indicates parallels between case studies.

5.2.1 Conservation and/or collections care

A key theme in the Hospitalfield dataset. The importance of conserving and caring for material heritage assets, such as buildings or collections, was directly addressed by Hospitalfield's curators. Conversely, conservation was only mentioned in passing by Mount Stuart's and Jupiter Artland's curators and not discussed at length.

As concluded in Chapter 4, the preservation of heritage assets plays a major role in Hospitalfield's current operational strategies and definition of heritage as tangible. Hospitalfield's curators identify conservation of the house and collections as an important component of the organisation's redevelopment plan (C1, 31).

In the case of conserving the tangible heritage, defined as "the paintings" and "fabric" of the house, Hospitalfield's curators directly addressed the staging of heritage rooms as a display strategy for communicating historical authenticity. C1 referred to the staged and static nature of preserving heritage spaces, which previous custodians of Hospitalfield have instated:

> It's a very historic art school, in which many of the rooms have been kept pretty much the same. It's very unusual ... people have worked hard here to keep these rooms historically, somehow, authentic. So, I suppose they are, to an extent, static (C1, 28-29).

In this excerpt, C1 describes many of the rooms at Hospitalfield as period rooms, a conventional house museum method of display in which historic objects are presented within each room of the house as if frozen in the past, promising an accurate depiction of how the house once was. This conveys the importance of not only preserving the material heritage qualities of the site but also protecting this sense of authenticity (Mårdh, 2015).

C1 maintained that such conventional practices need to be embraced, but not at the expense of the artists' working conditions (29-31). C1 explained that by inviting artists to learn more about the conservation demands of the house and collections, they are involved in a culture of material care for their work environment:

> We will have to follow more conventional museum values. And that doesn't not prioritise the artist, but it gets the artist to understand what we need to do to take care of these environments (C1, 31).

C1 continued to express the importance of artists understanding that, for example, temperature is controlled to conserve the rooms in the house, stating:

> It's very important that artists understand ... [that] they're taking a shower and living in a bedroom that is in February 20 degrees ... but that the hallway is kept to a different temperature. And the heritage rooms are even lower in temperature ... because we can't

> have breathing and heating ... [that would] compromise ... the materiality of that space (C1, 31).

Notably, C1 differentiated between domestic zones (where artists shower, sleep, and eat) and heritage zones (the period rooms such as the dining room or the picture gallery) when discussing how the temperature will be regulated throughout the house (31). C1 still advocated for use of the historic rooms by residents at Hospitalfield, but only partially, also acknowledging that conventional practices are effective (32). The degree to which artists should work in heritage zones is under negotiation by Hospitalfield's curatorial team:

> There's a very strong accepted idea that you look after spaces by not letting people use them ... it does work. That's why it's such a dominant form ... so we just have to take judgement (C1, 32).

C1 and C2 noted an exception to this established rule of minimal usage in the case of musical instruments (Figure 16), hinting at the merging point of tangible and intangible definitions of heritage:

> Musical instruments are conserved through playing, so that's how we ... filter through who plays those instruments and how we look after them (C2, 32).

C1 viewed this practice as working against "the death of the museum" (32), seemingly referring to the new museological stance that public interaction with and equal access to collections make up a sustainable curatorial approach (Witcomb, 2003). However, C1 more likely meant that the use of collection objects keeps them alive, working against the stasis present in museum displays. Witcomb discusses this complex rift between traditional museum practices and modern dialogic approaches in her 2003 book *Reimagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum.* Witcomb's argument more concerns *who* is empowered to engage and make meaning with collection objects, among other categories of heritage, rather than the physical use of these objects as a conservation practice (C1, 32; Witcomb, 2003, 3). Nevertheless, C1's comment (32) indicates a tension present within the organisation. Seeking to gain UK Museum Accreditation (Hospitalfield, 2023w), Hospitalfield is pressed to find a balance between traditional museum practices and a desire for regular engagement with the material heritage of the house by artists and other practitioners.



Figure 16. Hospitalfield's recently restored Erard Grecian Harp, displayed in Hospitalfield's picture gallery alongside other collection items. Dooley, O. 2021.

In contrast, Mount Stuart's curators merely allude to the organisation's commitment to the conservation of the house and its material culture—pointing to a knowledgeable team of archivists, librarians, and other experts in collections care (85). Compared to Hospitalfield,

Mount Stuart has more financial and structural capacity for maintaining traditional conservation standards. Notably, the informants also framed the contemporary art programme as pushing conservation efforts in new directions. For example, C4 explained that "The Langlands and Bell installation helped us restore and revive that space" via new research and redirection of funds (C4, 82). The 2004 exhibition *Re Awakening* by artist collaboration Langlands and Bell utilised a small private chapel in Mount Stuart, covering the floors in mirrors to reflect the ornate interior. The 3rd Marquess of Bute commissioned the architect William Burges to design the chapel in 1873, and the resulting structure, replete with paintings and gilded carvings, survived a fire "that destroyed most of the house in 1877" (Knox, 2004). According to the exhibition catalogue, "Langlands and Bell's intervention in the Burges Chapel ... enabled [the chapel] to be shown to the public for the first time" (Knox, 2004).

At Jupiter Artland, heritage conservation does not appear to be a dominant concern. However, the findings support organisational claims that Jupiter Artland aims to restore and protect its landscape (Jupiter Artland, 2023a). C6 mentioned that the estate of Bonnington House is not a protected site, though some of the features are listed, including the centre of the house, the sundial, and the dovecot (200). C6 did not mention a historic collection, focusing instead on the architectural features of the house. The Ballroom Gallery (opened in 2015) is described as restored based on a historical footprint, rather than conserved—with attention to the aesthetic details including the "spectacular" stucco work of the gallery's ceiling (207). Additionally, the grounds are registered as a design landscape, though not necessarily legally protected from housing development (200).

5.2.2 Special access to historic house and collections

A key theme in the Hospitalfield dataset. Hospitalfield's curators claimed to facilitate artists' access to the historic house and collections, speaking at length about how the artists are free to use the heritage rooms for living and working in. The Mount Stuart curators do not emphasise that artists are granted special access to the house for working in, and only passively mention that artists are introduced to collections staff.

Hospitalfield's curators claimed to open locked doors for practitioners on residencies or site visits, providing "more access" in recent years (C1, 32). C2 elaborated on this claim by stating that artists are "given access that they're not given in other places" (32). This includes access

to the special qualities of the interior spaces. For example, C2 mentioned that musicians are drawn to the unique acoustics and reverb of the rooms within the house (27). C2 clarified that this access is not absolute, due to conservation concerns: “There are things they don’t get access to, like the paper archives and letters and drawings because they’re too fragile” (C2, 30). Based on this statement alone, Hospitalfield might be understood as a place where curators gatekeep who gets access to heritage and when. However, C2 shed light on Hospitalfield’s more dialogic approach, explaining that curators must “mediate access to the heritage objects and collections, and books”, inviting artists to ask questions and feel more involved in decisions around conservation (30).

As an act of extending some conservation responsibilities to resident artists, C2 explained that they are trusted during set hours of access to designated heritage zones and even empowered to use this access responsibly: “We’re trusting them in the house and trusting them is a really ... empowering thing” (C2, 32). The curatorial intention here is that, while curators still serve as mediators between heritage and heritage users, practitioners are treated as active and autonomous participants in the conservation process. Building on these points, C2 characterised Hospitalfield as a place for artists to live and work on an everyday basis, regularly interacting with the historic rooms designated as heritage zones: “They live and work in the house and they can access and work in all of those rooms, we’re not there, we trust them” (C2, 30). C1 clarifies that heavy use of heritage rooms is uncomfortable and poses conservation risks, thus encouraging artists to primarily work in studio spaces and use designated domestic zones for eating and sleeping (C1, 31). Overall, it seems conservation demands loom larger in importance than appeasing practitioner demands to live and work in the heritage rooms, but some regular use occurs.

The Mount Stuart curators did not dwell on mediating access for practitioners specifically, other than mentioning that artists are introduced to archivists and collections staff upon visiting the site. This might reflect a difference in funding, staffing, and museum accreditation, as the collections at Mount Stuart are portrayed as carefully maintained and researched. While the arts staff at Hospitalfield appear to be actively negotiating the conservation and value of its own collection for practitioner and public use, Mount Stuart’s collections care and management sits apart from the visual arts department.

5.2.3 Neutral spaces

A key theme in the Hospitalfield dataset. Hospitalfield's curators explicitly state the importance of providing artists with access to neutral or minimalist spaces outside of the historic house setting. Mount Stuart's curators did not explicitly express this importance but briefly reference an external gallery space.

From Hospitalfield's curatorial perspectives, minimalist studio spaces are vital resources for artists working in historic house settings, superseding the importance of the historic setting itself.

> If you've got those studios, it doesn't matter whether you're in a historic building. You've just got a bedroom and a place to roll out of bed and go make your work. That couldn't be more of a dream for artists (C1, 27-28).

Viewed as separate from the historic house context, C1 characterised the studio spaces on the grounds of Hospitalfield (under renovation at the time of this interview) as essential for artists in residence.

The curators at Mount Stuart did not explicitly cite the need for more neutral spaces inside or near the house. They do, however, reference a white cube gallery space once situated in visitor centre at Mount Stuart, where Nathan Coley exhibited in 2006 (121).

5.2.4 Curatorial resistance to conventions

A key theme in the Hospitalfield dataset. Hospitalfield's curators spoke at length about challenging house museum conventions and common approaches to interpreting heritage settings. Neither Mount Stuart's nor Jupiter Artland's curators directly opposed heritage house conventions.

Findings from Hospitalfield uniquely point to an intentional and active resistance to historic house museum conventions, in some cases using historical precedence to uphold Hospitalfield's status as unique and progressive. Throughout the group interview, C1 maintained that Hospitalfield is unlike the other organisations throughout the UK based in historic houses, in that it goes beyond repurposing "some old, nice arts and crafts house that's fondly regarded in a community" (29-30). C1 evidenced this by indicating Hospitalfield's long-term dedication to the education of artists (C1, 29-30).

C1 portrays Hospitalfield's programme as more original or forward-thinking than similarly categorised organisations. C1's insistence that Hospitalfield goes beyond heritage house norms reflects the organisation's attention to the organisational ecology in which it operates, as well as its intention to exceed the confines of the historic house designation (30). However, C1 did not overlook the ways in which Hospitalfield resembles a traditional historic house museum, and in other areas of the interview defines certain conventions as good practice. For example, C1 acknowledged that Hospitalfield's mortuary chapel, built by Allan-Fraser for public use, required a curatorial approach that is "maybe even conventional ... but with something quite magnificent added ... It's not an art gallery, it's a chapel, isn't it?" (C1, 34). This suggests that Hospitalfield sometimes embraces conventional display practices to better fulfil Allan-Fraser's intentions and elevate the public experience of this heritage space (C1, 34). C1 recognised this as a task that would require care, stating: "We have to give it back in a functioning way that people feel isn't wacky, but it's ... respectable, respected, rather beautiful" (C1, 35). To achieve this, Hospitalfield proposed to commission artist Cerith Wyn Evans to design a "beautiful lightwork" for the mortuary chapel (C1, 35). Despite investment in the first stage of this commission as part of Hospitalfield's redevelopment plan (Tay Cities Region Deal, 2022, 58), there is no documentary evidence it has yet been completed, and it is not recorded in Hospitalfield's programme archive (Hospitalfield, 2025b).

In the same interview, C1 also highlighted ways in which Hospitalfield resists convention, namely eschewing a permanent exhibition about the owners of the historic house and a timeline for the site. Implying that permanent displays such as these are commonplace, C1 theorised more dynamic approaches to storytelling in response to the house and its collections, stating: "If we did a whole set of [temporary] exhibitions ... it would say so much more about the story of this place than doing a timeline" (24-25). In addition to advocating for multiple temporary exhibitions, C1 imagined an interdisciplinary response to a particular item in Hospitalfield's collection: "The depth of inquiry that could all emerge from ... asking artists and architects and historians to work together on something that is inspired by this lovely thing" (C1, 25). While using historical objects to inspire new stories is arguably conventional, what C1 is advocating for is more cross-disciplinary collaboration (C1, 25). Furthermore, C1 contended that Hospitalfield strives for less dogmatic approaches to telling these stories, explaining:

> That's the dominant culture of a heritage organisation isn't it, to say 'there's one story to tell here' ... and ... there's so many thousands of stories ... I suppose what we want to do is fog it all up so it seems that you're learning (C1, 24).

Finally, C1 defined Hospitalfield as "a space in which many things happen rather than the place where you're told what used to happen" (19). Here, Hospitalfield is framed as exceeding the conventions of a heritage house museum, instead catering to a range of present-day uses, only some of which concern retelling the past.

Overall, these findings from Hospitalfield read as contradictory—reflecting curatorial interests to approach the heritage setting with original, layered, and collaborative ideas, while also protecting the original purposes and perceived authenticity of the buildings. The house is maintained as a place where artists can both work and live, while the mortuary chapel is maintained as a place where locals can still hold social functions without the excessive interference of visual changes by artists.

5.2.5 Programmes modelled on historical narratives

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Hospitalfield's curators explicitly claimed that its programme was inspired by historical narratives about the house and its previous 19th century owner—Patrick Allan-Fraser. Similarly, Mount Stuart's curators directly cited the innovative drive of the 19th century inhabitants of the house as a source of inspiration for the current programme. The curator from Jupiter Artland did not mention historical narratives as a source of inspiration.

Hospitalfield's curators cite the history of the building—in association with artist Patrick Allan-Fraser and the 20th century art school—as the source of inspiration for the existing contemporary art programme (C1, 18). This aligns with the narrative presented in the organisational documentation that was analysed in the previous chapter, framing Hospitalfield's contemporary arts programme as a continuation of Allan-Fraser's perceived values and Victorian modes of thinking. For example, C1 explained that Hospitalfield's cross-disciplinary approach to programming is modelled on 19th century ideas of social integration as opposed to what C1 perceives as Enlightenment-era disciplinarity and segregation of society (19). Regarding the use of the mortuary chapel as an exhibition space, C1 indicated how such historical views might act as a launching pad for curation, reciting: "We thought,

what would Allan-Fraser do? ... What would the arts and crafts model be?" (C1, 34). These historical values, as interpreted by the current users, feed the curatorial vision of Hospitalfield as a multimodal space, where one building serves multiple audiences and needs. For instance, the mortuary chapel can concurrently act as a place for contemporary art installations, christenings, workshops, and ceremonies (C1, 34).

According to C1, the local public accepts the narrative that Hospitalfield has long been a place for artists, explained by a "150-year legacy" of artists using the site (C1, 30). This legacy is explicitly upheld by Hospitalfield in its publications, which maintain Allan-Fraser's "intention ... to leave a legacy for the support of artists and education in the arts" (Hospitalfield, 2023a). C1 upheld this historical precedence as sufficient evidence that artists still belong at Hospitalfield, claiming that it keeps the public from perceiving artists as outsiders "in their fondly held historic property", which she implies would be the case otherwise (C1, 30).

Regarding Mount Stuart, two informants uphold the organisational narrative that it is a "house of firsts" (C5, 85). C4 directly linked the "innovative" drive of Mount Stuart's contemporary art programme with its history:

> From the outset [the programme] ... was about innovation and this house has always been about innovation. It was one of the first houses to have central heating. It's very eclectic, it's sort of full of extraordinary references ... Our focus was always about continuing that innovative practice (C4, 81).

This line of reasoning recalls the narrative presented by Hospitalfield's curators, justifying the organisation's commitment to working with artists in accordance with a 150-year precedent.

5.2.6 Artistic responses to historic setting

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Hospitalfield's and Mount Stuart's curators both offered direct examples of how artists have responded to each respective historic setting. The curator from Jupiter Artland clearly stated that artists have not chosen to respond to Bonnington House or the wider historic setting but also mentioned ways in which artists have remained aesthetically sensitive to historic architectural details.

C1 claimed that Hospitalfield turns away from the conventional response-based approach to curating contemporary art in the heritage setting (C1, 34). In reference to the mortuary chapel

associated with Hospitalfield, C1 conveyed that this public space is "not a place for artists to fiddle about", but to restore a space to its intended purpose—to be used, rather than to be perceived as laughable or disrespectful (C1, 34). Regardless of this resistance to conventional approaches, both curators acknowledged a range of artistic responses to the built heritage and narratives of the house, collections, and garden. C2 explained that some artists arrive at Hospitalfield with "parallel interests that ... work well in this place" (C2, 33). Some artists also showed interest in the mortuary chapel, such as an artist researching "architectural, Victorian symbolism around love, romance, and death" (C2, 34). Other artists chose to respond to the garden, with projects about herbalism and medicinal plants, which "evolve well" and are integrated in the community (C2, 33). C2 also cited some collections-based responses, such as Susannah Stark and Hussein Mitha's 2019 work *Correspondences*, which was exhibited within the house (C2, 33-34).

Unlike at Hospitalfield, the curators at Mount Stuart did not express any dismay for response-based approaches to the perceived heritage. C4 framed the archives as "intellectual springboards and creative springboards for a practice", implicating the historic collections in the creative process. One informant identified the key challenges of displaying visual responses to heritage inside the house. C3 specified that Mount Stuart is not a white cube, stating that "there's not much that's clean" (121), so it is challenging to compete with the visual detail present in the interior. According to C3:

> [It is] easy [for artists and visitors] to feel overwhelmed, because Mount Stuart isn't some sort of austere Georgian kind of place with lots of space. It's a very Gothic Victorian [design] ... Every inch ... has something (121).

This can be seen in Figure 17, which shows a detail of Monster Chetwynd's *Moths* (2023) exhibition at Mount Stuart. Here, an enormous sculpture of a moth, mounted on a purple wall, is closely framed by wooden and marble carvings staged within one of the mansion's ornate period rooms. C3 maintained that "remarkably" artists do overcome this challenge of exhibiting in aesthetically maximalist spaces, and "it's not necessarily something to be fought against" (121).



Figure 17. View of one of Monster Chetwynd's moth sculptures for her exhibition Moths (2023) at Mount Stuart, framed by the ornamental interior of the mansion. Unlike the bright walls that are characteristic of a white cube gallery, this period room is painted dark purple. Dooley, O. 2023.

In the Hospitalfield dataset, C1 mentioned that the mortuary chapel associated with the house "needs to be a living breathing chapel". However, this differs from C3's comments, as it is in

reference to the function of the space, rather than expressing a direct interest in reanimating heritage.

At Jupiter Artland, the "dominant model is of commissioning in response to the landscape" (200). C6 answered that no artists have taken the initiative to respond to the history of the site to her knowledge, though they have chosen to respond to "trees, and mycelium and [geological] formations" (208). Although C6 framed the history of the house as unrelated to Jupiter Artland's commissions, it seems that historical architecture still factors into decisions around installation and display. C6 described the stucco ceilings of the Ballroom Gallery (restored according to the blueprint of the historic house) as a challenge for artists, who either chose to compete with or remain "sensitive" to it (207), echoing anecdotes by Mount Stuart's curators about the Marble Hall. C6 maintained that "the most successful response" was by Lindsey Mendick, who chose to work with white sculpture for the first time to "pay respect to the space" (208). C6 argued that Mendick's work was "very much ... in response" to the stucco interior (207). While this represents an aesthetic response to historical architectural features, the findings from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart contain more site-specific examples of this theme.

5.2.7 Heritage as a social barrier

A key theme in both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Both Hospitalfield's and Mount Stuart's curators clearly described the social barriers presented by each respective historic house setting. The curator from Jupiter Artland did not explicitly mention social barriers posed by Bonnington House.

Curatorial informants from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart clearly indicated ways in which both heritage settings pose barriers to public access. In the case of Hospitalfield, this idea was explicitly mentioned, when C1 stated that the architecture deters the public: "The physical building is the worst possible deterrent because ... it feels like it's a big posh house ... It ... therefore has many, many, many barriers, just fixed into it" (C1, 19). Later in Chapter 5, this comment is supported by artists who either have personally experienced feelings of intimidation regarding the physical house, and the story of wealth embodied, or have witnessed the apprehension of the public in response to this. Similarly, the informants at Mount Stuart indicated social barriers inherent in the physical layout and historical

architecture of the estate. C3 called Mount Stuart "an island within an island", which was "historically kept very private ... They used to say you can only see it from the sea" (127). Elaborating on this, C3 noted that Mount Stuart is in the process of "work[ing] out its relationship with the wider island ... in terms of farms and land ownership" (127). As at Hospitalfield, the history of wealth is undeniably at play—the legacy of landownership by the Stuarts of Bute continues to complicate relations with island residents today, as confirmed in artist interviews.

5.2.8 Immateriality of heritage

A key theme in the Mount Stuart dataset. Mount Stuart's curators directly differentiated between material and immaterial dimensions of heritage at this site. The curators from Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland inferred that their perceptions of heritage contained immaterial dimensions but mostly focused on material examples of heritage at each site.

In the interview with Hospitalfield's curators, the idea of heritage was usually described as material—an object or element of the architecture—rather than immaterial. However, C1 mentioned the "thousands of stories" that emerge from these materials, most effectively when engaged with by artists (C1, 24). This understanding of heritage as a collection of innumerable stories recurs throughout interviews with other curators and artists.

In comparison, descriptions of aspects of the house and its history as immaterial were made to a greater extent by the curators from Mount Stuart. Although Hospitalfield's team referred to the emergence of countless stories associated with the site, Mount Stuart's team more overtly discussed heritage as an immaterial experience. Also mentioning the "wealth of stories and ideas and research possibilities" (C3, 122), the informants at Mount Stuart made a point of looking beyond what emerges from the physical aspects of the house and its collections, explicitly differentiating between material and immaterial heritage. C4, who is drawn to the medieval, arts and crafts, mythology, and astrology features embedded in the collection and architecture at Mount Stuart, simply stated that "it's a mystical house" (C4, 87). In this discussion about mysticism, C4 seemed to differentiate between the immaterial and the material, saying the myths and stories "would be the heritage aspects of the house which interest [her] the most rather than, for instance, the painting collection ...[or] the family portraits" (C4, 87).

C5 described a dreamworld attributed to the third Marquess of Bute, more clearly defining the immaterial, imaginative qualities of this history:

> It's about living and breathing in that Third Marquess's fantasy land, in that dream ... It feels as though we in this present moment ... we're part of that. So there's no beginning and there's no end. We're just a part of that process ... It's less about the collections; it's less about the building. It's more about the being and the feeling that it gives ... It feels like being consumed within a dream (C5, 87).

Here, the informant explicitly stated that this heritage is less about the physical objects and the house, and more about the process of being—an overtly immaterial definition of heritage.

C3 elaborated on this in defining the immaterial qualities of this heritage as ghostlike:

> [The heritage exists] in the ghosts, not that there are actual ghosts ... It's the past, isn't it ... communications, ... stories ..., interests, and motivations. So some of that will be captured through letters and things ... in the archive. But ... there's [room] for supposition. I think that's quite an interesting creative space (C3, 122).

Interestingly, C3's statement highlights the potential for creative practice to inhabit the space between physical and storied heritage—valuing this realm of speculation as an interesting creative arena.

Regarding Jupiter Artland, C6 also discussed the site's past in immaterial terms, but discussion of this past was limited. Viewing the site as "at the intersection of multiple histories, identities, and uses, past and future", C6 understood the "many existences" and "multiple histories" of Jupiter Artland as social, political, and temporal phenomena (99).

5.2.9 Curatorial acceptance of conventions

A key theme in the Mount Stuart dataset. Unlike curators from Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart's curators clearly embraced the historic house designation. Historic house museum conventions were not mentioned by the curator from Jupiter Artland.

Other than their claims of innovation, the informants from Mount Stuart did not insist that the contemporary art programme resists conventional standards of practice. This differs from C1's focus on avoiding commonplace approaches and side-stepping repetition at Hospitalfield (24-

25). In one instance, C4 insisted that Mount Stuart is "a heritage house, not a museum", implying that this is a common misconception held by users of the space (C4, 82). Likewise, this statement suggests that the historic house context is what makes Mount Stuart itself, not its object displays or exhibitions of art. At first, this seems to resonate with the position of curators at Hospitalfield, whose words embrace the original functions of Hospitalfield as a domestic space and art school, insisting that it is a place for artists to use. The key difference is that Hospitalfield's curators maintain a reactionary position against both the museumification of the house *and* heritage house conventions, while Mount Stuart's team embraces the heritage house designation.

5.2.10 Connections to place

A key theme in the Mount Stuart dataset. Mount Stuart curators directly addressed practitioners' personal connections to the historic house and the wider rural context. Sense of place/personal connections were not directly mentioned in Hospitalfield dataset, nor in Jupiter Artland's. While the sole curator from Jupiter Artland expressed interest in and admiration of the historic setting, she did not explicitly claim to experience a connection to place.

The interviews with Mount Stuart's curators repeatedly referred to a deep sense of place when discussing the historic house. C4 summarised:

> Whoever comes into the house has an enormous feeling of place ... I think it becomes a very sensual experience for artists that work here ... Sense of place is hugely important to whatever they make here (C4, 87).

This sense of place encompasses Bute as a holiday destination, an island, and an agricultural and residential landscape still largely owned by the Stuarts of Bute. C5 explained that for artists, their relationship to Mount Stuart resembles a "love affair":

> They get connected to the island ... come back ... for holidays ... or to come and have their wedding ... So, there's connections that just continue long beyond (C5, 84).

On a more personal note, C3 referred to her own relationship to Bute, which she claimed feels familiar and grounding: "There's another expression my partner's used, it's being hefted to a place, being connected to a place" (C3, 127). Using this concept of grounding as a working

definition for sense of place, C3 stated that she relates to Mount Stuart through her upbringing and family history on the Clyde coast: “I think I always feel at home when I’m by a stretch of open water, not necessarily on it ... nor in it, but beside it, with it” (C3, 127). This answer disregards the house itself as part of the place experienced, focusing entirely on the familiarity of the natural landscape (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Coastal view from Mount Stuart's grounds. Dooley, O. 2023.

Echoing this, the curatorial findings from Jupiter Artland also touch upon connections to landscape. While C6 deemed the heritage of the house irrelevant to Jupiter Artland's programme, she did express her personal curatorial interests in the "multiple histories that the lands tell us" (199). C6 discussed West Lothian's industrial history, the geological landmass that Bonnington House was built on, and the site's recent social history, all of which she framed as relevant to contemporary art practices (199). The curator from Jupiter Artland also used romantic language to describe the historic setting. For example, C6 stated that "the house is so beautiful" (C6, 207). C6 also described the plastered ceiling in the Ballroom Gallery as "spectacular" and "absolutely one of the most stunning things in the world" (207). This language matches the way artists from the Mount Stuart case study discussed the "beauty", "magic" and "splendour" of the house in its island setting (A6; A7). Notably, C6 did not critically reflect on these value judgements, stating them as fact.

5.2.11 Sense of exhibition history

A key theme in the Jupiter Artland dataset. Jupiter Artland's curator clearly stated that Jupiter Artland's recent exhibitions will replace other histories of the site in historical importance. Hospitalfield's and Mount Stuart's curators did not explicitly mention the historical importance of recent exhibitions at each respective site.

The findings from Jupiter Artland reflected a strong focus on recent exhibition history over other aspects of the site's history. C6 explained that artists are aware of this and "are looking back at what other artists have done" to situate their site-responsive practices (207). This aligns with the testimony of the artists who were interviewed, which focused more on the contemporary changes to the landscape via Jupiter Artland's permanent commissions and temporary exhibitions. While the curatorial staff at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart also nod to recent commissions, discussions of exhibition histories did not dominate these datasets. This suggests that the more recent exhibition history at Jupiter Artland, and its timeline as a contemporary art organisation, is more relevant than the site's historical context. C6 explicitly supported this by stating that the permanent collection at Jupiter Artland has become one with "the landscape" and "will be the heritage" of the site (202).

5.2.12 Absent/unknown heritage

A key theme in the Jupiter Artland dataset. Jupiter Artland's curator clearly stated that heritage is an irrelevant or unknown factor for artists working on-site.

Unlike the findings at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, which explicitly and implicitly discuss heritage as a relevant factor in relation to the historic house, the findings from Jupiter Artland describe an absence of heritage. C6 claimed that heritage is not in Jupiter Artland's organisational "remit" nor part of the "charitable objectives" (199). Indeed, Jupiter Artland's annual reports, analysed in Chapter 4, do not mention heritage in the organisational objectives and aims (The Jupiter Artland Company Limited, 2021; 2020; 2019). C6 surmised that this is because most of the history of the estate "has been lost", meaning that, unlike the other two sites considered, the house is not associated with a singular historical figure or story (208). Instead, C6 argued that the site is a "locus of many, many social, cultural, historical, political currents", overriding a dominant historical narrative (201). For the permanent commissions, C6 explained that Jupiter Artland "trust[s] artists to have an immediate ... response to the land as they see it rather than providing them with historic context" (199). To her knowledge, C6 claimed that no commissioned artists chose to respond to the history of the house on their own initiative (208).

5.2.13 Land as belonging to people

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland datasets. Hospitalfield's and Jupiter Artland's curators both directly raised the point that the land associated with each historic house "belongs" to the public. Mount Stuart's curators did not raise this point.

Significantly, the interview with Hospitalfield's curators strongly reflected the standpoint that the grounds should be used by both artists and locals, and not gatekept by the organisation. Artists and dog walkers alike are invited to make use of the fields and wooded areas free of charge:

> These public places ... as well as charities do belong to ... folk, they're not just ours, we're just here to look after it within the frame of its intentions. So, we do have to find clear strategies for people to enjoy it and feel that this is theirs (C1, 35).

This statement suggests that the land surrounding the house is maintained not just with private interests in mind, but to extend to contemporary needs and collective ownership.

Regarding Jupiter Artland, C6 also mentioned that the grounds of a country home provide something vital to society: green spaces (204). C6 contended that Jupiter Artland assumes "a civic function" in addressing unequal access to culture and land, given its historical and ongoing status as a privately owned estate and its participation in Scotland's cultural ecology (202). According to C6, "the use of land for recreation is very racialised ... it's pretty dominantly a white space of leisure" (202). C6 argued that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the organisation's duty to attend to this question of who has access to "the wellbeing benefits of nature" became "even more important" (202). C6 gave the example of Jupiter Artland's music festival, arguing that it helped more people feel "welcomed" or that they had "ownership of that space", but did not specify in what ways inequality was addressed, nor whether this access was free of charge (202).

5.2.14 Rural context

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland dataset. As discussed in Chapter 4, the concept of the historic house site is often bound up with the presence of the surrounding rural context. Curators from both Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland directly addressed the importance of having access to an outdoor setting and/or natural landscape. Curators from Mount Stuart also mentioned the importance of the rural context to artists, but exclusively in discussions of connections to place, setting these findings apart.

The grounds at Hospitalfield, preserved as part of the historic estate, were integral to the curatorial understanding of the site and perceived as an advantageous feature for artists. C2 implied that the outdoor setting of Hospitalfield supports artistic experimentation outwith conventional gallery conditions in cities, such as when artist Jade Montserrat carried out a week-long charcoal burn (C2, 26). In this case, the grounds were utilised for a durational performance work, which required the physical space and logistical flexibility that is difficult to come by in either privately owned or more developed landscapes.

Uniquely, findings from Jupiter Artland mainly focused on the outdoor context. C6 stated that for the first ten years, Jupiter Artland's programme was "defined by inviting artists to make work in response to the landscape", contributing to Jupiter Artland's permanent collection

(204). Notably, C6 criticised the concept of a sculpture park, which she described as "plopping things in a landscape" without critical thought (209). C6 maintained that it is crucial to "critically think … through what it means to create outside of the gallery space" given the outdoor focus at Jupiter Artland (209).

Reflections on the natural setting of Mount Stuart as a site for artistic contemplation appeared more prominently in discussions of connections to place in Section 5.2.10.

5.2.15 Summary of curatorial perspectives

The findings indicate an overlap in curatorial perceptions of heritage engagement at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart. In both datasets, heritage is mentioned in terms of its material value and as a basis for a range of curatorial and artistic responses to the history of the house and the past in general. In the interviews from both organisations, heritage is perceived as a significant aspect of the site, which each programme engages with on tangible and immaterial levels, and as part of a wider rural landscape. Findings from both organisations point to how the historic architecture and reputation of each site pose social barriers, framing heritage as a problem to overcome.

The curatorial findings from Hospitalfield place the strongest emphasis on themes of conservation, special access and everyday use of heritage, and the staging of period rooms. Informants from Hospitalfield also expressed a strong preference for neutral exhibition and studio spaces to both protect the material heritage and provide comfort for the artists. Additionally, they uniquely claimed to resist the conventional curatorial impulse to respond to the heritage, unless the projects occurred over longer timeframes, or if a particular space needed to retain its intended function. This might reflect a difference in staff structure at Hospitalfield, where the boundaries between contemporary curating and heritage management are collapsed within roles. This differs from findings at Mount Stuart, where conservation and collections access are managed by heritage/library specialists rather than the visual arts department.

The findings from Mount Stuart especially focused on the immaterial aspects of heritage and connections to place. Mount Stuart informants did not strongly object to heritage house conventions, nor did they express a clear interest in maintaining neutral exhibition/studio spaces for artists, although clear differentiation between historic and neutral spaces occurred.

The findings from Jupiter Artland stand apart from both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart in that heritage associated with the historic house was framed as absent, unknown, or less relevant to the contemporary arts programme, superseded by curatorial interests in the outdoor context, natural/geographical features, and contemporary political and social topics. Nevertheless, the findings acknowledge that the history of the site has curatorial potential either within or beyond Jupiter Artland's current commissioning scheme.

Below, Table 2 summarises the key themes (in bold text) appearing in association with each site. It also indicates which themes are touched upon but not emphasised (not in bold). While this table demonstrates general overlap across thematic findings from all three sites, there is more thematic overlap across the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets, especially regarding key themes.

Key themes in curator interviews

Hospitalfield	Mount Stuart	Jupiter Artland
Conservation and/or collections care	Conservation and/or collections care	Conservation and/or collections care
Special access to historic house and collections	Special access to historic house and collections	
Neutral spaces	Neutral spaces	
Curatorial resistance to conventions		
Programme modelled on historic narratives	**Programme modelled on historic narratives**	
Artistic responses to historic setting	**Artistic responses to historic setting**	Artistic responses to historic setting
Heritage as a social barrier	**Heritage as a social barrier**	
Immateriality	**Immateriality**	Immateriality
	Curatorial acceptance of conventions	
	Connections to place	Connections to place
Sense of exhibition history	Sense of exhibition history	**Sense of exhibition history**
		Absent/unknown heritage
Land as belonging to people		**Land as belonging to people**
Rural context	Rural context	**Rural context**

Table 2. Key themes in interviews with curators illustrating the relevance of heritage in practitioner experiences of each research context.

This overlap exists most prevalently in relation to three themes: 1) the modelling of contemporary art programmes on historic settings; 2) artistic responses to historic settings; and 3) heritage as a social barrier. This suggests that historic context is especially relevant in curatorial experiences of these two sites. There are also two instances where Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland's key findings match, regarding 1) discussions of land belonging to the public

and 2) rurality, suggesting a shared curatorial interest in how the rural landscape is utilised and/or framed within each contemporary art programme. Overall, curatorial findings from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart demonstrate that heritage is valued, embraced, acknowledged, and responded to by practitioners at both sites. Findings from Jupiter Artland tend towards claims that heritage is an unexplored or less relevant aspect of its programme but still exemplify ways in which the historic setting and architecture are valued and embraced by practitioners.

Curators repeatedly indicated the inextricability of personal practice and a full-time institutional role, explaining that one becomes bound up with the other without any clear distinctions. For this reason, answers from curators are treated as a reflection of institutional views. This bias is further compounded by the fact that most interviews were carried out on-site, during working hours, and in a group setting, with the intention of representing the programme in a favourable light. This differs from the findings from artists, who were interviewed off-site after the completion of their residencies or commissions.

This conclusion strongly correlates to organisational perspectives examined in Chapter 4, which suggests that curatorial findings are shaped by these institutional approaches to communicating about heritage, and vice versa. For example, all organisations also acknowledged heritage on tangible and intangible levels within their public documents, sometimes within the context of conservation requirements. The concept of landscape also appeared throughout this documentation, in reference to both natural and cultural settings. As with the conclusions drawn in the previous chapter, the organisational views of Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart often overlap with each other more than they do with Jupiter Artland's. Both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart tie historical narratives about previous owners/arts patronage to their current programme models. Conversely, Jupiter Artland gives prominence to the rural landscape over historical narratives/materials in its arts programming.

As compared to the earlier analysis of organisational documents, the curatorial findings presented here offer a more nuanced understanding of how these heritage definitions relate to on the ground operations. For example, curators at Hospitalfield shared their challenges mitigating social barriers presented by the historic setting, and they reflected on the importance of having neutral spaces for artists to work in. At Mount Stuart, curators clarified their personal connections to the historic site, and meditated on how curating contemporary art

inside the house reanimates the past. Finally, at Jupiter Artland, the curator affirmed that permanent, outdoor collections take precedence over temporary, indoor exhibitions, differing from the other sites.

The next section considers artist perspectives, further mapping how heritage relates to practice at these sites.

5.3 Artists

A range of artist experiences at Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland are captured in a second set of eight artist interviews, lending insight into the relevance of heritage in processes of artistic creation. It is apparent that several of the themes identified in interviews with curators recur here, amplifying some of the findings discussed above. New themes also emerge in association with each site, indicating a divergence in experiences between curators and artists.

Twelve themes were identified: 1) *special access to historic house and collections*; 2) *rural context*; 3) *connections to place*; 4) *immateriality of heritage*; 5) *artistic responses to heritage setting*; 6) *heritage as a social and physical barrier*; 7) *challenges posed by conservation and/or collections care*; 8) *neutral spaces*; 9) *progressive histories*; 10) *artistic resistance to historic house setting*; 11) *sense of exhibition history*; and 12) *absent/unknown heritage*. As explained in the introduction to Section 5.2, these were determined to be either key themes or general themes in the Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland datasets. Key themes were determined by their explicit emphasis and/or frequency of appearance in artist interviews of a particular site. In a rare instance, a key theme (*artistic resistance to historic house setting)* was detected in the Mount Stuart dataset based on one artist's unique yet firm stance against the heritage of the house. General themes were assigned if they appear in artist interviews of a particular site, but with less direct emphasis or frequency. In some cases, a theme was entirely absent in artist interviews from a particular site, suggesting that the theme is irrelevant to that site. As in the previous section, each subsection starts with a brief description of how key themes were differentiated from general themes in a particular dataset to lend more transparency to the findings.

All artist interviews were conducted off-site, either in the informant's personal studio, in a public space in Edinburgh or Glasgow, or online over Zoom. This spatial distance from the

historic house setting seems to have afforded some critical distance from the experiences in question. Since completing past residencies or commissions, artists from all three research contexts reflected on how these experiences related to their wider careers. This critical distance is most apparent in Section 5.3.3, which discusses artists' connections to place at all three case sites. Simultaneously, observations by some artists in this section are shaped by memory, nostalgia, or affection for the sites discussed.

Regarding experiences at Hospitalfield, interview participants included one illustrator, one movement and performance artist/writer, one sound artist, and one exhibiting artist working primarily in sculpture. Three of these practitioners took part in Hospitalfield's residency programme, and two were commissioned to produce work for temporary exhibitions (one on the grounds and another inside the house). One of these commissioned artists worked collaboratively with another artist, not interviewed for this study.

Only two artists were interviewed regarding experiences at Mount Stuart: one emerging artist in residence (who self-identified as a public sculptor) and one commissioned poet-choreographer. The latter artist claimed that her collaborative work exists outside "normal channels of commissioning" (A5, 174), offering a rare example of a trustee-funded (rather than publicly funded) commission at Mount Stuart. While three other commissioned artists were invited to participate in this research, this was not possible due to their lack of response to multiple email requests. The dataset thus lacks the perspective of artists invited as part of the established commissioning scheme. Nevertheless, the two perspectives included lend significant insight into how heritage is conceived of and experienced by practitioners working both within the house and the wider island context.

Finally, two artists were interviewed regarding their experiences at Jupiter Artland, both of whom were invited to do temporary performance-based works. Both artists understood their respective projects as experience-building opportunities at an early stage in their careers. One of these artists considered the historic house setting in the development of her work.

The following subsections are structured by key themes evident in artist interviews about each site in the following order: First, both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart; then Mount Stuart; then Jupiter Artland; and finally, across all three sites. Findings from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart are strongly correlated, with eight key themes in common. This is illustrated in Table 3,

presented in Section 5.3.13, which summarises artist perspectives and indicates parallels between case studies.

5.3.1 Challenges posed by conservation and/or collections care

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart expressed anxiety over compromising conservation or collections care efforts during residencies and/or commissions.

Some artists expressed discomfort and anxiety regarding display conditions in Hospitalfield House, particularly in response to conservation efforts by the organisation. A2 described the house as "awkward" during her group residency, perceiving Hospitalfield as a conglomeration of period rooms and living quarters with ambiguous rules:

> The house itself was awkward ... [because of] rooms that were display rooms and the rooms that were not display rooms and maybe where you were allowed and not allowed to go ... It felt a little bit like school ... which ... makes sense in the context of a historic building (A2, 55-56).

A2 noted that residents "had to ask beforehand" about entering the heritage rooms, explaining there were "limits on what times of the day you could be in there" which reminded her of being mistrusted as a child (A2, 58). Overall, A2 felt that having these rules in place, some of which were unclear, "wasn't conducive to feeling particularly at ease in those spaces" (58). This finding sits in stark contrast to A4's testimony that she felt free to "work in any space there" (140) during a collaborative commission (discussed in Section 5.3.1). This might indicate that Hospitalfield grants different permissions to commissioned artists, allowing them to work in the historic house and "have a whole room to yourself" (A4, 140) compared to artists during group residencies, who are usually encouraged to use the studio spaces rather than the heritage zones (C1, 31). However, A4 also described feeling anxious to "get things dirty or make too much of a mess in certain spaces", especially given the near constant presence of the curator (151). This created tension, as the artist felt "protective" over the process, contrasting this more exposed setting with her own studio (A4, 151). A4 expressed a preference for working without surveillance, stating that "the best times were when we were left to our own devices" (151). Nevertheless, A4 found that conversations with curators could also resolve tensions or ambiguities around conservation concerns, attesting to the openness of

Hospitalfield's curatorial staff. Regarding the application of coloured gels to old glass windows, A4 explained that her collaborator was "allowed to use a certain type of tape ... There was a work around for sure" (145).

As at Hospitalfield, artists working at Mount Stuart expressed anxiety over both display conditions and security regulations within the house. Perceiving the interior environment as precious in terms of material value, A6 admitted that: "It just got quite awkward ... about how much mess I was going to make in the house ... I was just muddy all the time" (45). Soon after, A6 requested a studio, which was granted, located a 20-minute walk away from their accommodation (45).

Unlike at Hospitalfield, the rules at Mount Stuart were described as clear and regulated but similarly presented access barriers in the form of closed doors. A5 characterised Mount Stuart as having "strict" levels of security and surveillance, describing the careful behaviour of security guards and the meetings held before they were granted access to certain areas of the house (188). A5 explained that this "atmosphere around permission", which meant that there were "certain doors that [they] weren't allowed to open", incited a state of unease as she stayed overnight in the artists' flat (190). It is unclear whether this atmosphere of high security reflects conservation concerns or protects private interests, as the house itself remains the seat of the Crichton Stuarts. Overall, A5 reported that many of her attempts "to see all the behind the scenes" were successful, given they followed guidelines.

5.3.2 Special access to historic house and collections

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart explicitly mentioned having access to the historic rooms and collections during their residencies and/or while developing commissions. This was not mentioned by the artists interviewed about Jupiter Artland.

Artists from the Hospitalfield dataset attested to special access to rooms and collections on a daily or regular basis. A4 best described the freedom of "roam[ing] around" and "hands on" access to all the rooms at Hospitalfield during work on her collaborative commission, saying:

> You can work in any space there. And you can ... have a whole room to yourself ... I've not really experienced that within a ... heritage house context before where you

> can ... literally just go and sit on a chaise longue and ... play an old harpsichord (A4, 140).

A4 clarified that this was directly beneficial to her practice, claiming that it "generated a lot of ideas for the work" (A4, 140; 150). Overall, A4 characterised Hospitalfield as an "immersive" and "intimate" space to work in (150).

Compared to Hospitalfield, access to archives, collections, and heritage rooms at Mount Stuart was characterised as a more regulated process. A5 recounted archive visits to Mount Stuart as part of a routine in developing her collaborative project, looking for ideas and consulting the "very knowledgeable" archivist (179-180). A5 described a high level of access to the "secrets" and hidden stories of Mount Stuart, characterising the archivists as "experienced enough ... to understand how artists work differently than historians" (179-180). She did not mention any confusion or ambiguity regarding access to these materials.

A5 also recalled, despite the rigid security processes at Mount Stuart, a fair amount of access to parts of the house that are not accessible to the public. However, she also mentioned that she had to "press ... hard to see all the behind the scenes", sometimes needing to wait for a green light from staff (190-191). This access also extended to use of the grounds, though A5 mentioned the uncomfortable presence of floodlights and surveillance cameras, and A6 recalled the restrictive winter conditions on the island. Although A6 spent their residency time in the studio space or Rothesay, the main town on the Isle of Bute, they also described comfortable access to and regular use of the estate grounds, stating: "The grounds ... became my garden" (44).

5.3.3 Neutral spaces

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart expressed a clear preference for neutral or minimalist working spaces, away from historic collections or period rooms. Artists interviewed about Jupiter Artland did not explicitly differentiate between heritage and non-heritage zones.

In the Hospitalfield interviews, artists differentiated between neutral and historic rooms. Usually this mirrors a differentiation between working spaces (perceived as neutral) and heritage rooms, but not exclusively. Overall, the choice to work in a neutral or minimalist

environment was informed by a desire for more working space, warmer conditions, less visual distractions, and/or room to make a mess (A1, 130). A4 found that during her residency, she "gravitated towards one of the rooms that was ... a bit more of a neutral room, less filled with collection items" because it was smaller, less decorated, and convenient for surround sound experiments (139). She clearly differentiated between working/living spaces and the heritage zone, stating:

> I felt more when I was in residency ... I had ... a sense of ... everyday life informing my work ... We worked in a totally different part of the house in a way, because we were in the kitchen, that more neutral room, and the studios ... Somehow the rest of the house feels more like this heritage thing that's ... a bit separate (A4, 144).

A4 referred to the working/living parts of the house as "cosy or more contemporary ... neutral so that you didn't have all these things", indicating a preference to break away from the heritage zone during her residency (145). Contradicting this, the artist also explained that she developed later work in the house proper, describing a stream-of-consciousness method of writing while situated in each of the historic rooms (143).

Like at Hospitalfield, artists working at Mount Stuart demonstrated a desire for more neutral working environments, separated from the conservation needs and public use of the historic building. As referred to in other sections, Mount Stuart provides accommodation to artists, known as "the flat" (A6, 40). Both artists interviewed for this case study positively reflected on Mount Stuart's hospitality. A6 requested access to a modern workshop space, "the Old Learning Studio ... a barn ... about a 20-minute walk through the grounds from the flat" (45). This was to accommodate their working methods as a sculptor, which involved "collecting big rocks on the beach" and getting "messy" (A6, 44). Similarly, A5 reported that the visitor centre was the only place her collaborator could rehearse dances and "roll about the floor", explaining that the Marble Hall had too many strict security levels and daily public tours. She said they "had to find a way of operating ... around the systems of the building", which was always a compromise (A5, 188).

5.3.4 Progressive histories

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart made claims about the historical progressiveness of previous

inhabitants of the house. Artists interviewed about Jupiter Artland did not comment on the progressiveness of previous inhabitants of Bonnington House.

Artists were sensitive to the ways in which the history of a site seems progressive for its time, perceiving contemporary values in stories and characters from the past. In Hospitalfield's case, A1 identified Elizabeth Fraser as a key player and financial agent in designing the architectural features and garden at Hospitalfield, preferring to give her name the spotlight over Patrick Allan-Fraser. This feminist reading of Hospitalfield, which hinges on the contemporary acknowledgement that women are agents rather than passive side characters in history, echoes A5's interpretation of the past in her work at Mount Stuart, which intentionally amplifies the perspective of a female mythological figure (177).

A5 supports curator claims that Mount Stuart has always been ahead of its time, with feminist ideals and pioneering technology embedded in the architecture. A5 characterised Mount Stuart as historically "amazingly progressive", explaining that the Marquess of Bute promoted feminist empowerment for his daughters in the depiction of female Muses on the ceiling of the house (177). Later, A5 claimed that Mount Stuart is "out of time" in that it was built with a swimming pool and central heating, proving itself "ahead of its game in terms of architecture" (181). This matches the official narrative of Mount Stuart as "a house of firsts" (C5, 85), which includes the contemporary art programme.

5.3.5 Artistic responses to historic setting

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart dataset. Artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart offered clear examples of how their on-site practices directly or indirectly responded to the historic setting. Artists interviewed about Jupiter Artland did not clearly state that their on-site practices directly responded to the historic context of Bonnington House, but one artist acknowledged that her outdoor artwork sat in visual and symbolic juxtaposition to Bonnington House.

A couple of the artists defined the work they developed at Hospitalfield as a response to the history of the house, collections, or garden. Inside the house, the period rooms seem to have been of particular interest. A4 deliberately responded to the stasis of this display convention, and the reductive guided tour, which presents rooms as frozen in time (154). She also directly engaged with the collections by using the harpsichord to compose a new work. A4 was the

only artist at Hospitalfield to express an interest in reanimating history. According to A4, her improvisational voice practice is a suitable tool for “reanimating the past through the present”, giving voice to the otherwise dormant setting (152). Conjuring images of ghosts or spirits, A4 also stated that “there was some desire ... to reinhabit the rooms” with many voices (146). A4 also portrayed the house itself as an entity which needed awakening, stating that “the house was like a body, as an entity unto itself” (141). She imagined the people who once lived there “trying to communicate through the walls” (A4, 141). Again, she commented that she wanted to “breathe a bit of something into the space as well” (A4, 148).

A1 claimed that what worked well about Hospitalfield’s Free Drawing School, which they participated, was “having the house right there to be ... inspired” (130). A1 explained that she was also drawing from the garden whenever possible during her year-long residency, seeing how it evolved over the seasons and gathering stories about its development from staff members and volunteers (130). This practice eventually resulted in a commissioned publication of a graphic novel relating the history and evolution of the garden at Hospitalfield.

While not all the informants claimed to directly respond to the history of the house, collections, and gardens at Hospitalfield, one referenced historic houses and Victorian history generally, forming cursory links to the site. A3 best demonstrated this, affirming that her work was in response to the historic house context in general rather than the specific history of Hospitalfield:

> I don’t think that work was specific to Hospitalfield. But I think it was ... in response to a stately home (67).

This is evident in A3’s choice to use “custom made digital printed scaffolding mesh" in her outdoor sculptures (65). This material is often "used at heritage sites" and is printed with an image of the "the building that’s getting refurbed to ... make it look less like the scaffolding [is] in progress” (A3, 65.). This choice of material served to “produce connections and contrasts to the site that was within Hospitalfield’s grounds” (A3, 65). A3 listed a few examples of historical references in the work, including a nod to the Victorian hot houses in the title: “I decided I wanted to make ... Victorian almost hot houses that were going to be outside” (66). This is more a general reference to Victorian trends rather than direct, although the artist also knew that Hospitalfield had a hot house (or fernery) adjacent to the kitchen, in

ruins at the time of the commission. A3 characterised her sculptures as blurring histories and boundaries, explaining that:

> They were like ... strange farm-like structures ... They became a kind of reflection on the idea of a Victorian outhouse or a greenhouse and domestic and industrial farming production facilities as well. So, it kind of played with those ... histories [and] blurred these boundaries (A3, 67).

A3 hoped this mode of "tangling" references to the site culminated in "an impact that's both critical and reflective" but with "layers that you can just float through" (69). This recalls C1's curatorial perspective that heritage is better approached indirectly, also advocating for a "fogging ... up" of historical references (24).

Notably, neither of the artists from the Mount Stuart dataset considered their work to be direct responses to the site. A6 did not perceive their residency at Mount Stuart as a response to the historic house, collections, or grounds, focusing on "a different strand of heritage on the island" (46). Nevertheless, A6 stayed in the artists' flat on the grounds and engaged with Mount Stuart's archivists. They admitted that "it's really difficult to know ... whether any of that bled in" but they did not consider the historic house setting as a direct factor in the development of their work (A6, 46).

A5 conceived of her work at Mount Stuart as a folding in of multiple influences: her pre-existing interests in choreography (170), her proclivity for imaginative thinking in historic house settings (194), a timely encounter with her collaborator (170), and inspiration upon engaging with Mount Stuart, specifically as experienced with her collaborator, who "took over as guide" during her first visit (172). A5 stated that her collaborator's words "really captivated [her] imagination ... igniting that space for [her]" (172). In this way, A5's project was not a straightforward response to the house, yet the house became a necessary spark, providing direction for a collaboration already underway. A5 explained how her encounter with the archive at Mount Stuart transformed the stories of Greek Muses into reality, stating that "seeing these ... as not just sort of metaphorical beings ... they became ... real people with real stories" (177). Here, A5 describes a reanimation of the fictional characters painted on Mount Stuart's ceilings (177). A5 explained how these processes (described as voices in communication, much like A4 describes the voices communicating through the walls at

Hospitalfield) show up in the physical record or "bricks and mortar" of the house, becoming a real "access point" for her retelling of the story of Callisto (177). Importantly, A5 and her collaborator approached the curator with their ideas, working outside the usual parameters of the commissioning scheme (174). The interview suggests this resulted in a gradual realisation of the work rather than fitting into Mount Stuart's usual timescale and funding requirements.

There are no direct examples of artists responding to the heritage context at Jupiter Artland. However, A7 interacted with the historic estate setting, comparing the size and symbolism of her outdoor sculptural work with that of Bonnington House, less for its status as an historical house and more as a symbol of exclusivity or wealth. She stated: "There is something about this house ... one family ... live[s] in this house, and it isn't accessible to the public" (A7, 93). She said she only "realized that ... the house was there" while making the work, comparing the size of her sculptural work, which was meant to resemble the shape and "size of an average UK house", with the grandness of the estate (A7, 92). Although A7 disagreed with the relevance of heritage in Jupiter Artland's programming, she still described loose connections to the past developed during her performance series. For example, A7 stated she felt more connected with the labour of the past through her performances, which performed "the physical work of ... raising the walls" when building one's own house (107). She said that "as an artist, you get these ... glimpses into ... other things that are going on", and by scaling up her work, she could think of how the skillset required to construct buildings has changed over time (A7, 108). This claim potentially supports Hospitalfield curator C1's statement that peripheral vision is more interesting; inferring that an indirect approach is more suited to creative exploration.

5.3.6 Heritage as a social and physical barrier

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart directly attested to ways in which the historic house setting posed social barriers (to the public and creative practitioners) and physical barriers (to creative practitioners).

One artist voiced her opinions regarding the social barriers embodied in Hospitalfield House. This closely resembles the perceptions of curators analysed in the previous section. A2 started by indicating that Hospitalfield is a "very grand building, almost ... prohibitively grand" (55),

describing herself as coming from another "world" (56). A2 found it darkly amusing that the "history of a place like that is so apparent in its architecture", explaining how the artists in group residencies are separated into a hierarchy of bedrooms:

> We got put in the servants' quarters ... There [were] some very grand bedrooms in the ... grand halls ... and then there were these very not grand bedrooms above the kitchen ... We were a little bit further away from everyone (A2, 55).

A2 not only perceived the historical building as alienating but pointed to the contemporary changes as well (55). She described the refurbishment of the buildings and studios as "swish" and expressed a personal preference for the "charming" and "casual" qualities of the garden before Nigel Dunnett's changes (A2, 55). Overall, A2 found that historic house settings are by nature socially charged, both for artists with "the upstairs downstairs element" (57) and for residents of the town too (59). In A2's experience, UK heritage sites "are often associated with spaces that belong to the upper classes", which leaves a residue of exclusion in the physical spaces (61). This criticism of wealth and privilege was echoed in the interview with A4, in which she recounted her collaborative exposition of bourgeoisie ideals present in Hospitalfield's collection and interior spaces.

A4 elaborated on how an arts programme set in a historic house setting offers a chance for a critically informed reinhabiting of domestic settings and landscapes shaped by wealth, particularly in Scotland where "a lot of people were ... removed from land that they lived on" and lost their Gaelic language (155). A4 maintained this history of oppression complicates processes of connection but argued that art programmes offer the potential for spaces to be "reinhabited" and spaces to be questioned (155).

Finally, A2 referred to physical barriers experienced in Hospitalfield House (60). While the curator dataset mentions uncomfortable temperatures in the carefully conserved heritage zones, A2 points to physical pain due to these conditions (60). According to A2, heritage spaces are too cold for movement practice because of how "cold can affect pain", particularly for those with existing pain conditions (60). "Old houses are beautiful, but often not that comfortable", A2 stated, indicating that this is a major barrier for her usual working habits.

Comparably to findings at Hospitalfield, artists interviewed as part of the Mount Stuart case study indicated ways in which the grand design of the house itself, built on the estate's

longstanding and ongoing accumulation of wealth, poses social and even physical barriers. For A6, the heritage rooms incited overwhelm, especially upon arrival. A6 recounted their stunned reaction to both the grandeur of Mount Stuart and the everyday use of this space by seemingly unaffected individuals: “It was bizarre and I couldn’t contain myself ... It was just really kind of ... disconcerting how little everybody around me seemed to be affected by where they are” (45). The scale of the house not only produced emotional bewilderment, but also physical confusion. More than once, A5 referred to Mount Stuart as a maze or labyrinth, recounting the “rat run” she would perform upon travelling from the artists’ flat to the Marble Hall (190).

The estate sits in stark contrast to the rest of the island, which A6 called its “own kingdom” (43). A6 who partook in Mount Stuart’s socially engaged artist residency, articulated social tensions between locals and the estate:

> There was distaste in it, which I immediately became aware of ... These guys [are] the sort of mega landlords ... Everybody's houses are owned by these people, everybody’s businesses, everything (A6, 43).

This thorny history of landownership, which A6 described as setting the tone between the estate and Rothesay residents, gives A6 ample reason to reject their association with Mount Stuart when fostering connections with the locals: “It felt really important to introduce myself as ... an artist independent [of] Mount Stuart” (A6, 43). Indeed, the enduring operation of the estate, paired with strong feelings of distaste amidst islanders, poses challenges for the socially engaged residency, especially for the artist who needed to act as an intermediary between Mount Stuart and the island communities directly affected.

5.3.7 Immateriality of heritage

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart extensively described their engagement with the heritage setting in immaterial or imaginative terms—acknowledging the many stories and voices of the past activated during their on-site experiences. Artists interviewed about Jupiter Artland did not discuss heritage in this same language.

Artists demonstrated an understanding of heritage which goes beyond the tangible qualities of the house and grounds of the three case studies, located instead in the immaterial realms of stories, voices, and imagination.

Regarding her work at Hospitalfield, A1 reflected that her main interest in working at heritage sites resides in this realm:

> I'm drawn to projects that are about storytelling and subjects ... that I don't know anything about ... I'm ... learning about the world through researching specific topics and ... joining them all up (133).

While her practice cultivates an interest in conveying historical accuracy about the site, A1 also heavily relied on hearsay and her imagination to construct her graphic novel.

Similarly, A4 based her contributions to a collaborative exhibition on "the many different ways people have gathered" at Hospitalfield, explaining: "We have all these different rooms and each room ... seems to have its own resonance or story that's ... told through different crafts that are displayed" (141). Later, she clarified that they tried to "give each room a distinctive character" in the exhibition (A4, 142). For this, A4 referred to the material heritage (each room and the objects contained) as a point of imaginative departure.

A4 suitably described her collaborative exhibition as a "fantasy" of "voices in the present speaking to the past ... Maybe it is about seeking ... justice" (147). In this excerpt, A4 summons a polyphony of voices rather than settling for just one perspective: "The idea was that there [were] multiple voices in the work, literally, but also ... [it] evok[ed] historical people and voices" (144). This reflects an artistic desire to give voice to historic house settings, particularly by animating otherwise static period rooms. Veering into the supernatural, A4 characterised the heritage at Hospitalfield as a haunting, with voices trying to communicate to each other through the walls (141; 144). She even claimed that her and her collaborator felt "possessed by the house or something" (A4, 151).

As at Hospitalfield, artists from the Mount Stuart dataset discussed heritage through stories, hearsay, and imagination. A5 explained her interest in the stories at Mount Stuart, mostly relayed to her orally by her collaborator, but also encountered in archival visits, elaborated

upon by Mount Stuart's "experienced" archivists (173; 180). A5 also heard stories from cleaners who once worked in the house, some of them referring to ghosts (190).

A5 referred to one story, deemed apocryphal by some; it nevertheless sowed the seeds of the artwork:

> It could be this thing that's passed down generations and I think ... she heard it from a guide ... so where the guide got it, we don't really know, and we still haven't been able to prove it. But it doesn't matter, ultimately it provided this ... germ of the idea in the first place (A5, 174).

Here, A5 described a passing down of reworked stories: first, through the Marquess of Bute's depiction of Greek myths in the interior design of Mount Stuart, and next via her collaborator's retellings of stories picked up on tours or archive visits, eventually feeding into their project—itself a retelling of Greek myth blended with new interpretations of Mount Stuart's architecture and Daoism (176). Like A4 (from the Hospitalfield dataset), A5 also used fantastical language to describe experiences of Mount Stuart as a sort of spell or conjuring. A5 described her initial tourist visit as spellbinding, stating: "We became completely spellbound in that moment", as if the house itself was an "entity" (172). A5 also described Mount Stuart as a vision, "conjured" into reality, not only by the powerful Marquess of Bute, but also by the skilled artisans local to Bute (181).

Comparatively, A6 showed less interest in the narratives of the house; instead, they prioritised the voices of the residents of Bute, many of whose family histories are inextricably linked to the estate. A6 mentioned that their work tries to "tell a story that's personal to people" using local materials, iconographies, and references to the "history of the island, the industries, and landmarks" (42). They explained:

> The whole work was about stories ... over different periods of time and how they were different, how they changed and mapping ... and archiving that in a different way that brought it forward ... to be recognised (A6, 46).

This interest in sharing multiple alternative narratives of Bute relates to A4's polyphonic sound work at Hospitalfield. While A6 explored stories of queer people from the Isle of Bute, A4 "wanted to insert ... the voices of those silenced by Enlightenment reason ... [and] more

marginalised voices" (142). In both cases, the artists embraced an opportunity to amplify the voices of those historically unrecognised or overlooked.

5.3.8 Connections to place

A key theme in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets. Artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart explicitly describe feelings of belonging or personal connections to place. Artists interviewed about Jupiter Artland did not use this language to describe their on-site experiences, although one artist felt nostalgic about Jupiter Artland's natural setting.

Many of the artists described personal connections to heritage, expressing a sense of belonging in relation to the historic house or the local area. This appears more prominently in the Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart datasets, but one artist from the Jupiter Artland dataset expressed a fondness for the natural landscape. Artists were also prone to characterising such settings using sentimental language, usually pointing to the magical, secret, quaint, or scenic qualities of the sites. However, this does not always appear in direct connection to the historic house settings. For example, two artists from the Hospitalfield dataset reflected on their personal connections to the regional area, which seemed to contribute to their engagements with Hospitalfield House. While one artist from the Mount Stuart dataset felt a deep connection with the rural community and culture of Bute, this did not seem to deepen their engagement with the historic house setting. In the Jupiter Artland dataset, neither artist expressed a connection to Bonnington House.

In direct reference to Hospitalfield as an art school, A1 felt included in a longer history, stating: "The fact that I was part of that history [at Hospitalfield] is incredible ... I'm one of the artists that have worked there in the past", recognising her role in a much longer art history of the site. (131). A1 felt that through her residency and graphic novel commission at Hospitalfield, she "got a much broader understanding of history ... because [she] had to learn ... what people wore at different times, what kind of foods they would have eaten, [and what] furniture [they would have used]" (135). She went on to clarify that she feels she is "a part of that history" at Hospitalfield now that she has shared a new narrative with her book (A1, 135).

A4 also experienced a personal connection to Hospitalfield, but this seems to have been based on its location relative to where she grew up on the east coast of Scotland (A4, 154). She elaborated that it was "quite a strange feeling ... seeing elements of things that ... [feel] a bit

hidden, seeing them in a different light ... [It] is quite personal, it's also to do with Scottish history and ... things in the culture that you see differently through doing this work" (A4, 154). In A4's case, her experiences at Hospitalfield reframed an existing connection to the region and enabled her to think more deeply about "how land is used in Scotland, people's connection with it, [and] who owns land ... informing so much of what [she] would say to be Scottish" (154). A2 also responded to the regional history of the area on a personal level, explaining: "Part of my dad's family were vagrant farmers in the area around Arbroath ... It made me feel more connected ... because I didn't really know that part of Scotland before going there" (A2, 56). Here, A2 aligns herself with the farmers historically present in the region, rather than the landowners of Hospitalfield.

In these three examples from Hospitalfield, the artists referred to history to establish their place in the historic house setting. A2 articulated: "These ... personal ... connections ... helped me feel ... like I had a place there or I had a reason [for] ... working there myself" (56). Statements like this suggest that, on the surface, artists do not necessarily feel entitled to being in these settings, until a personal connection to place is made, or new perspectives about the area are gained. In one case, personal connection to the past was less relevant to practice. For example, A3 expressed that she felt little connection to the past compared to other projects, but that this was because, as part of a wider doctoral research project, "the way [she] approached it" was "so specific" (77).

There are only a few examples of romantic language being used to describe Hospitalfield in the interviews, though A2 discussed this as a problematic trope in rural settings generally (55). A1 experienced Hospitalfield as "a special and hidden away kind of magical place" (131). Meanwhile, A3 referred to the setting as "picturesque", something she aimed to juxtapose with her sculpture commission.

Findings from Mount Stuart show that one artist felt connected to the house itself through enacting "a dialogue" with it, explaining that she "had this great sense of generosity that came from not just the people ... involved ... [but also] the building itself" (A5, 196). A5 used personification when describing the house throughout the interview, calling it both an "entity" and a "person" with whom she developed the work. For this reason, she felt "connected to that place" which "changed" her (196).

In A6's case, these connections arose more so from the rural culture, which they understand as familiar, having a rural upbringing personally, and conversations with local islanders. A6 claimed that they have "memories in parts of [the house]" but that they "only ever saw a fraction of it ... It never really felt like a piece of [them]" (45). However, A6 connected with a group of shepherdesses on Bute, making a film piece which represented the "togetherness" between "land, animals, and one person" of an enduring yet "very ancient form" of labour (49). This connection was described in terms of personal identity, as they "spent quite a lot of time around sheep growing up" (A6, 49). A6 also referred to the island as "a piece of [them]", recalling that their return to the island after the project was like "coming home" back to "familiar" territory (51). Though they described elements of that homecoming as being difficult, because it reminded them of the intense (self-inflicted) pressure they were under during their short residency, they ultimately felt proud of the work and the relationships they developed there (A6, 51). Later in the interview, they stated that "they felt properly embedded" but also experienced "mixed feelings" akin to "a breakup" upon reflection (A6, 51). Overall, A6 defined the opportunity as "full of value" on a personal level, connecting with locals of Bute and experiencing self-growth, as well as growth on a professional level with the creation of "a whole new body of work" exploring themes of rurality and queer identity (51).

As at Hospitalfield, artists perceived Mount Stuart as a magical, unknowable, and scenic place; however, realist counterpoints were also made. A6 criticised the romanticisation of Mount Stuart by those not linked to it, explaining that "if [islanders] don't have a familiar link or any other kind of context for [Mount Stuart] then it's just deemed as this magical ... place" (43). Similarly, A5 specified that the tourist experience at Mount Stuart as "that angle of very awestruck place of its beauty, splendour, its historical ... aspirations" with an "atmosphere about it" (172). During her first visit, A5 said the splendour of the house "captured" her, describing the experience as spellbinding (172). Upon spending more time at the house, A5 also described a unique mystique of the place, which served as a sort of creative puzzle for her sensibilities: "This ... magical place ... I knew that it held secrets, but I didn't know what the secrets were" (182). In this case, it is the unknowability of the extensive house with its secret libraries and esoteric designs, which enchanted the artist and piqued her creativity.

In a more critical discussion about the artist's perceptions of Mount Stuart, A5 demonstrated both an awe-struck response and a pragmatic acknowledgement of power imbalances inherent in the construction of the house (182). A5 said that the place is unusual in that it reflects:

> A slippage between [being] a product of ... Victorian aspiration ... But also, it's magical. It's got this outsider-ness to it which ... was really compelling (A5, 182).

This romanticism is balanced by her statement that the "gilded wealth" of Mount Stuart still contains "that sense of the hands that built it", also discussing both the poverty of the builders as well as the family's coal investments which funded its construction (181). Overall, A5 admired the deliberateness of the house, which she describes as a complete vision—notably, it is this awe that largely inspires the development of the collaborative work. However, A5 was careful to acknowledge the real labour enacted to make and maintain this so-called dreamlike setting.

Compared to findings from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, findings from Jupiter Artland regarding personal connections were less articulated. A7 claimed she has a sense of the natural landscape at Jupiter Artland, saying: "It ... feels a bit nostalgic, like the woods near where I grew up ... I have a fondness for it" (108). Notably, this nostalgia is for the grounds rather than Bonnington House. A8 did not claim to have experienced connections to the past during her project at Jupiter Artland (166). "It was all the grounds to me, both times I've [worked] there", A8 explains (166). A8 repeated that she does not "have an ongoing artistic connection with them [Jupiter Artland as an organisation]" but has since worked with an associated curator externally (165). A8 also characterised the experience as an anomaly and just "one of the many places that [she has] performed" (165).

While artists working at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart referred to the beauty and magic of these historic sites, this language is largely absent from the Jupiter Artland dataset. Once, A7 portrayed Jupiter Artland as a "magic" place for retreating to as an artist (108), but in the context of its landscape rather than its history—though the current shape of the landscape is partially a consequence of its history of private ownership, as at the other two sites.

5.3.9 Artistic resistance to historic house setting

A key theme in the Mount Stuart dataset. Across all artist interviews, only one artist made a stance against the historic house setting and distanced their practice from the historic house setting. This finding stands out as significant because the artist firmly reacted against the heritage of Mount Stuart.

Uniquely, A6 deliberately distanced their practice from the heritage of the house and Crichton Stuart family, allowing histories to emerge from their socially engaged practice in Rothesay and other parts of the island: "My work has to be about everything that isn't this ... sifting out the Mount Stuart from the culture of the island, and seeing what was left" (46). The artist described their practice as dealing with heritage "in a backwards way ... [It deals with] the heritage of the future of the island ... separate from Mount Stuart ... in terms of legacy ... landmarks ... ownership ... and people in space" (A6, 46). They continued to qualify this statement, explaining how they dealt with the queer histories emerging from conversations with islanders, but not "the heritage of Mount Stuart" (A6, 46). This position aligns with the ethos of Mount Stuart's socially focused residency at Mount Stuart, which curator C3 frames as an opportunity for artists to engage with residents beyond the estate. Nevertheless, a tension seems to exist between the reputation of Mount Stuart as a lucrative estate and the role of the artist as mediator.

5.3.10 Sense of exhibition history

A key theme in the Jupiter Artland dataset. One artist interviewed about Jupiter Artland highly regarded artworks previously commissioned by the organisation, mentioning the physical size of the sculptures and the "huge" reputation the artists commissioned. This awareness of exhibition history is less articulated in the Hospitalfield dataset and does not appear in the Mount Stuart dataset.

A7 explicitly referenced Jupiter Artland's place in recent exhibition history, and her own participation in this modern milieu: "It was really special ... to do something at scale outdoors in a location where so many other artists have shown, are showing or have shown before" (97). Notably, A7 referred to temporary shows here, beyond the permanent collection. Later in the interview, A7 also mentioned that Jupiter Artland owns "these huge sculptures by ... huge artists, and their Charles Jencks [land art sculpture] is bigger than ... the Modern Art

Gallery's" placing Jupiter Artland in conversation with Scotland's national collection (101). These comments imply that Jupiter Artland is a significant player in recent art history. Paired with the findings on absence of heritage, it seems as though this contemporary use of the site overshadows potential historical narratives.

In her interview about Hospitalfield, A1 briefly commented on feeling included in the site's longer history, proudly stating "I'm one of the artists that have worked there in the past" (see Section 5.3.8). However, this speaks more to Hospitalfield's 150-year-long history as a site for artists' residencies than it directly pertains to the site's exhibition history.

5.3.11 Absent/unknown heritage

A key theme in the Jupiter Artland dataset. Both artists interviewed about Jupiter Artland explicitly challenged the existence of heritage on-site. None of the artists interviewed about Hospitalfield/Mount Stuart denied the existence of heritage on-site.

According to A7, her commission at Jupiter Artland "felt more like a retreat ... than heritage", explaining that "it isn't heritage ... because you don't really access the house" (108). A7 then conceded that "it's a kind of history or talks about the kind of history of itself" but expressed that the story of Jupiter Artland is more about its agricultural history, evident in the farming buildings, and the contemporary sculptural changes to the landscape (108). She concluded that Jupiter Artland is "markedly different" from sites managed by "Scottish Heritage and National Trust Scotland" and would not "specifically say it feels like heritage" (A7, 108). Likewise, A8 said that she would not label Jupiter Artland as a heritage site (163). A8 could not recall the house, explaining: "I ... don't think we could get inside the house ... It's their ... private home so ... I didn't think of it as a heritage site at that time" (163). The privacy of Bonnington House might be what eliminates heritage from the perception of the artists working there. Like A7, A8 also used the National Trust scheme as a metric for detecting heritage. She stated that she understood Jupiter Artland "very differently" in comparison to the National Trust buildings that Arts&Heritage have chosen to commission artwork for, calling it a sculpture park and a folly (A8, 161-162).

5.3.12 Rural context

A key theme in Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland datasets. In all three datasets, artists characterised the rural context as inextricable from the historic estate.

While "still a town [and] ... not ... in the middle of nowhere", Hospitalfield was experienced by artists as a rural setting with extensive grounds, woodlands, and access to the coastline (A2, 59). A2 explained that artists "don't have the same distractions that you ... might have in a city", giving them distance from "the place where you have most of your interpersonal relationships" (59). However, A2 also noted that this could be the case in a different city, where one might feel "just as isolated ... as being somewhere like Hospitalfield", and that ultimately, Hospitalfield offers a neutral space for artists to retreat to (59).

Findings from interviews with both A5 and A6 described the inextricability of Mount Stuart from the rest of the island, both in the past and present. A6 consistently referred to the island setting, which they understood as both rural and remote, as the site of their work (43). According to them, the wider island community is embroiled in the history of Mount Stuart, which manages most of the land on the island:

> These guys are the monarchs and the legacy and, and there's always ... difficulty with that ... so it was ... met with distaste ... Everybody has a link to them as well. And everybody has a story about them because they're one of the biggest kind[s] of employers (A6, 43).

A6 also noted that in many cases, residents of the island had never been to Mount Stuart, despite having heard of it, which they explained by saying: "Everybody's houses are owned by these people, everybody's businesses" (43).

A5 similarly referred to the "rural community" workforce who built the house, saying they poured "all blood sweat and tears in that house" (181). She also commented on the "poverty of the hands that built the building", making obvious the wealth and power discrepancy between the labourers and the owners of the house (A5, 181). Both A5 and A6 made clear that the residents of the island have ongoing connections with the house, including guides, cleaners, electricians, and kitchen staff.

Artist testimony from Jupiter Artland also referenced the grounds in association with the historic house. The house was often described as either a backdrop to a more contemporary environment or hidden from site. For example, A7 differentiated between the "the ancient land" and contemporary changes to this landscape, giving the example of the relatively recent "footprint" of a temporary exhibition (93). This comment refers to a patch of land that previously hosted *Scaffold* (2012), a temporary sculpture by Sam Durant. A7 described this patch, which became the site of her work, as "a little brown field site ... alongside everything else", situated nearby the "family ... house ... inaccessible to the public" but in sight (93). In this description, Bonnington House is presented as a backdrop to a changing contemporary landscape. In contrast, A8 barely remembered the house (166).

5.3.13 Summary of artist perspectives

As with the curator perspectives discussed earlier, the findings from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart overlap. Both datasets show that heritage is valued or embraced as subject matter by artists. A majority of the informants from Hospitalfield claimed their work responded to the material or immaterial heritage of the house or grounds, while half of the informants from Mount Stuart directly responded to the historic house setting. In both cases, the artists who chose not to engage with the heritage setting were short-term residents. In a rare example, one artist from Mount Stuart firmly positioned their artistic practice against the heritage of the house. Nevertheless, the artists in both cases cited instances of interacting with the heritage zones during their residencies. Significantly, artists from both cases experienced physical and social barriers, either because of conservation requirements, the air of exclusivity that surrounds rural estates, or the public nature of heritage houses.

Again, the Jupiter Artland findings sit apart from the other two case studies in that the heritage of Bonnington House is deemed irrelevant, although the historic estate setting is referenced by one artist. Neither artist expressed interest in the history of Bonnington House, although both artists interacted with the estate grounds and highlighted the site's more recent exhibition history. The artist findings, even more than the curator findings, emphasise the rural context, with no clear concept of heritage at play.

Key themes in artist interviews

Hospitalfield	Mount Stuart	Jupiter Artland
Challenges posed by conservation and/or collections care	**Challenges posed by conservation and/or collections care**	
Special access to historic house and collections	**Special access to historic house and collections**	
Neutral spaces	**Neutral spaces**	
Progressive histories	**Progressive histories**	
Artistic responses to historic setting	**Artistic responses to historic setting**	Artistic responses to historic setting
Heritage as a social and physical barrier	**Heritage as a social and physical barrier**	
Immateriality	**Immateriality**	
Connections to place	**Connections to place**	Connections to place
	Artistic resistance to historic setting	
Sense of exhibition history		**Sense of exhibition history**
		Absent/unknown heritage
Rural context	**Rural context**	**Rural context**

Table 3. Key themes in interviews with artists illustrating the relevance of heritage in practitioner experiences of each research context.

5.4 Conclusion

The interview findings from both curators and artists suggest that heritage plays a tangible and active role in curation and art production at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, as an aspect of the sites that is regularly engaged with by practitioners on material and immaterial levels. The findings also suggest that at Jupiter Artland, heritage is an unknown or irrelevant factor, playing little to no role in the contemporary art programming and on-site practices.

However, the findings also show instances to the contrary. At Hospitalfield, curators encourage artists to engage with the heritage setting less directly or redirect those inclined to work site-specifically. One short-term resident from the Hospitalfield dataset (A2) independently chose against engaging with the heritage in her work, despite having a precedent of working with historical themes. At Mount Stuart, the emerging artist residency encourages artists to engage with the residents of the Isle of Bute rather than respond to the history of the house, as evidenced in both the curator and artist interviews. And at Jupiter Artland, one artist (A7) acknowledged that her outdoor artwork sat in visual and symbolic juxtaposition to Bonnington House.

Table 4 summarises the most prevalent themes in practitioner interviews at each site. Themes that appeared in both curator and artist interviews are indicated in bold text, showing points of

agreement or misalignment between these datasets. This table also fosters comparative analysis between case studies. Again, findings from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart strongly overlap—with 11 themes in common—as opposed to only one instance of thematic overlap with Jupiter Artland (*rural context)*.

While the organisational documents examined in Chapter 4 were not systematically coded, there is some noticeable overlap between the way heritage is represented by these organisations and the themes appearing in the interview data. Themes that overlap with Table 1 (summarising organisational representations of heritage in public documents) are marked with an asterisk.

Summary of strong themes across interviews

Hospitalfield	Mount Stuart	Jupiter Artland
Special access to historic house and collections	Special access to historic house and collections	
Conservation and/or collections care*	Conservation and/or collections care*	
Challenges posed by conservation and/or collections care	Challenges posed by conservation and/or collections care	
Neutral spaces	Neutral spaces	
Programme modelled on historical narratives*	Programme modelled on historical narratives*	
Progressive histories	Progressive histories	
Curatorial resistance to conventions		
	Curatorial acceptance of conventions	
Artistic responses to historic setting	**Artistic responses to historic setting**	
Heritage as a social (and physical) **barrier**	**Heritage as a social** (and physical) **barrier**	
Immateriality*	**Immateriality***	
Connections to place	**Connections to place**	
	Artistic resistance to heritage setting	
Land as belonging to people		Land as belonging to people
		Sense of exhibition history
		Absent/unknown heritage
Rural context*	Rural context*	**Rural context***

Table 4. Strongest themes across practitioner interviews illustrating the relevance of heritage in practitioner experiences of each research context. Themes in bold indicate overlap between curator and artist perspectives, while themes marked with an asterisk indicate overlap between practitioner and organisational perspectives.

According to these interview findings, artists conceptualise and encounter heritage slightly differently than curators, drawing out alternative perspectives or challenges. For example,

curators from both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart recognised barriers created by the previous or current wealth of the historic house and claimed to remain open to critique, but artists went much further in articulating such critiques. Some artists attested to acute physical, social, and emotional discomfort. Artists better identified such barriers, which affect not only audiences, as curators suggest, but also affect the artists invited to work in these settings. These effects were long-lasting for some of the artists interviewed, making them less likely to choose commissions and residencies in small heritage organisations again.

The findings also point to some contradictory experiences, sometimes within single interviews. Most pressingly, conservation efforts and contemporary use of the heritage zones are at odds—with artists viewing conservation requirements as a barrier to their practice or personal comfort. While curators from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart strive for a balance between conservation (which conventionally calls for static treatment of the material heritage) and regular engagement (a more dynamic treatment of the material heritage), more conversations between artists and curators would prove to be a productive way forward.

Again, these qualitative findings illustrate that analyses of practitioner experiences expand upon organisational perspectives on how heritage intersects with contemporary art practices, particularly concerning these barriers posed by heritage. Most of the interview data affirmed institutional stances, particularly resonating with the value of built heritage, the prevalence of historical narratives in programming (at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart), the importance of rural/natural landscapes, and the role of place identity in building definitions of heritage. However, the interview data revealed the depths of personal connections to place (especially at Mount Stuart) and that artists prefer having access to so-called neutral spaces while working at Hospitalfield or Mount Stuart. Additionally, interviews offered crucial insight into how artistic projects were developed in response to the historic setting (directly or indirectly), intangible aspects of the past (stories, hauntings, imagination), landscape, or to recent exhibition histories. Overall, the qualitative findings highlighted the complexities of programming contemporary art in historic house settings, showing that even if heritage is acknowledged by an organisation, it might not consistently factor into or drive its programme.

The next and final analysis chapter (Chapter 6) examines how common curatorial strategies play out within each historic house context, exploring how practitioners think beyond these approaches.

Chapter 6: Thinking beyond common curatorial strategies in historic house settings

6.1 Introduction

The last of three findings chapters, Chapter 6 addresses RQ 3 to determine how common curatorial strategies feature in the programmes of Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland. It also explores ways that both curators and artists think beyond these common frameworks, weighing the perceived benefits and drawbacks of participating in these three programmes.

> RQ 3: How do common curatorial strategies (such as site-specificity or intervention) factor into curatorial and artistic practices within historic house contexts? How can contemporary art programmes in heritage contexts exceed or challenge these common frameworks? What are the perceived practitioner benefits/challenges of these programmes?

To answer these questions, Chapter 6 is divided into three main parts, building up to a conclusion that synthesises the varied perspectives of curators, artists, and the researcher.

The first section (6.2) elucidates how artists and curators respond to terms such as *site specificity* and *intervention*, assessing the applicability of this terminology to their practices when situated within historic house settings. Employing close-text readings, it analyses interview data and proposes more relevant terms. While many practitioners expressed semantic opposition to the terms *site-specific* and *intervention*, both were still recognised as useful and relevant models, given the definitions of these terms were expanded upon or customised. The next section (6.3) highlights ways in which curators and artists also think beyond these common frameworks, fostering and supporting more nuanced, experimental, and process-based modes of creating. This section draws on interviews and ethnographic/curatorial fieldnotes for evidence. Thematic coding and descriptive narrative were used here. The final section (6.4) considers the benefits and challenges of contemporary art in heritage practice identified by artists and curators in each setting. Again, this refers to interviews and fieldnotes and uses both thematic coding and descriptive narrative. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 folds in the researcher perspective by directly referring to qualitative fieldnotes, including the results of

practice-based research carried out in collaboration with Hospitalfield. As a frame of reference for qualitative data, it is advantageous to juxtapose my observations alongside those of other practitioners to seek out alignment of perceptions or points of departure. Lastly, Section 6.4.4 builds on these case-specific findings and offers practical recommendations for the organisations and creative practitioners involved in this research and adjacent arts in heritage practitioners.

6.2 Common Frameworks

Site specificity and are two curatorial strategies commonly identified in contemporary art in heritage literature (Mårdh, 2015; Cass, 2015; 2019; 2020; Park, 2020; Ashton, 2020; Williams, 2020; Black and Farley, 2020; Breen, 2020; Powell, 2020). Participants in this study had mixed reactions to questions within interviews that utilised this language. Some felt such terms did not apply to the projects in question, others responded that the framework is useful, and others yet offered alternative language to replace or update the lexicon. While these terms recognised within art history are regarded by many practitioners as loosely relevant to their work at historic house settings, most informants opted for different vocabulary that better suited their individual practices and values. Accordingly, each subsection on site specificity and artists' interventions suggests alternative language for sector use and scholarly consideration.

6.2.1 Site specificity

This subsection considers the perceived meaning of the term site-specific and attempts to determine its relevance as a framework to the practitioners interviewed.

Curators from all three organisations expressed familiarity with site specificity as a model in arts in heritage programming. Curators from Hospitalfield conveyed acute apprehension towards the approach, while informants from Mount Stuart and Jupiter Artland appealed to its relevance or usefulness as a model—some with suggestions for alternative terminology, summarised in Table 5. All three teams raised questions about the definition of site and whether site-specific artwork can exist beyond its original context.

Across all three contexts, artists expressed mixed responses to the topic of site specificity. Patterns in the findings indicate two main factors, which seem to correlate: a) if the artists practice site specificity outside the historic house context and b) if certain creative practices

better suit site-specific models. Artists who more closely identified as sculptors or visual artists more readily embrace site specificity as a framework (A4, A3, A1, A6, A7), while artists who aligned more with performance and gestural practices, rather than visual, demonstrated more resistance to the site-specific model. For others, including those who work with sound and performance, preferences for site specificity seem to be case by case. Artists in favour of site specificity tended to interpret the site loosely (A3), rather than rigidly, or describe the format as a "toolbox" (A6) for reframing one's own practice.

Another potential factor is how long the artists were invited to engage with the site, whether for residencies, commissions, or a combination of both—however, this sample size is too concentrated to comprehensively explore this correlation. In at least one case, a short residency is considered "too loose" to engage in a site responsive capacity (A2, 56). For another informant, the risk of exploiting local communities for the sake of site-specific projects was criticised (A6, 41). Other informants, curators and artists alike indicated that many months or years were required to develop and create a site-specific project.

In conversations about site specificity, curators demonstrated openness in their definitions, describing a range of possible "sites" beyond the history of the house, including natural or geological landscapes and contemporary social contexts. On the other hand, artists often interpreted site specificity as something connected to the history of a specific place, which implies that artists agree that the sites are of historic importance.

Hospitalfield

Curators at Hospitalfield explained that the organisation's art programme deliberately discourages site-specific approaches amongst its residents. However, they also recognised examples of commissions and projects that were specific or responsive to the site. While these informants did not outwardly contest the relevance of site specificity, they raised important criticisms regarding the model's efficacy as a framework for artistic development.

Hospitalfield's programme asks artists in residence "not to be site-specific, and that's for a number of reasons" (C2, 25); firstly, the informants argued that it "is not that appealing as a prospect" to artists practicing nationally or internationally (25). C1 claimed that "holding a mirror up to [Hospitalfield] ... would be very boring ... in the end", arguing that it is more interesting to let the artists lead the inquiry with a proposal and consider the site more indirectly (25). In C1's words, Hospitalfield's curators are "not saying [to artists] come and

work with us on this, [they are] saying come chip in but ... essentially ... do your own project", rather than make work that is specific to Hospitalfield (25). C1 also suggested that periphery observations are clearer, rather "than if [they] ask people to focus, sharpen their full vision" (25). C1 offered examples of this, such as asking an artist to develop or show existing work, which then might lead to a "tripping" point, sparking new conversations about the site "from the periphery", rather than "if [they] instrumentalised the artists to come and respond to site" (25-26). Secondly, C2 indicated that "it takes time to develop or percolate" site-specific works, meaning residencies of two weeks or one month are generally not long enough (25; 27). Residencies, which often involve working on multiple projects at once, invite opportunities for spontaneous interest or further conversation, but are "not necessarily about this place" (C2, 26). C2 explained that some residencies lead to more site responsive projects over months or years but need this time to play out (26).

However, the curators at Hospitalfield acknowledged that site specificity occurs within some residencies and commissions. According to C1, musicians have acted in a much more site-specific way at Hospitalfield, some "writing an EP all about ... Hospitalfield" because "music is ... more conceptual ... than visual art practice" (26). This might also be because of the acoustics of the building explored through sound: "Like the atmosphere and reverb and the instruments ... there's certain things that you have heard that you can't find or access in many other places, so that ... enables that site specificity*"* (C2, 27).

Overall, site-specific approaches were deemed by C1 as not only uninteresting, but also not "good for an artist", since "what artists need is time to work on the thing that they want to work on" (25). C2 maintained that a site-specific remit can be appealing to artists at first but does not "encourage longevity of practice"; therefore, artists in residence are instructed away from site-specific tendencies (25). Both informants stressed the limitations of the model on artistic development.

Most of the artists interviewed attested to being discouraged from site specificity at Hospitalfield, but some did not follow suit. All four artists (A1, A2, A3, A4) conveyed sustained interest in the model of site specificity in general and three (A1, A3, A4) regarded the work they carried out at Hospitalfield as site-specific. The fourth artist was a short-term resident.

As part of a commission, A4 composed a song on a harpsichord in Hospitalfield's drawing room, which supports C1's comment that musicians and sound artists are drawn to using site-specific models. A4 testified that Hospitalfield at first discouraged her and her collaborator from "doing anything directly influenced by the house" but said "it was almost like we were ... possessed by the house ... " (A4, 151). They eventually produced work that responded directly to Hospitalfield's historic collections, which are a vital element of the site (A4, 151). A4 agreed that the term *site-specific* accurately reflects her preferred way of interacting with places, clarifying that she often uses the term "process site" to describe where a work derives from (152).

Movement artist A2 significantly revised the definition of site specificity, disparaging its art historical rigidity. A2 stated that she sometimes makes performances which are "site responsive" and concern the history of a certain space, "either explicitly or implicitly", but she described her summer-long residency at Hospitalfield as "a much looser thing" because she did not have an expected output (56). A2 notably rejected the term *site-specific* because it is "too rigid" (59). According to A2, *site responsive* or *site sensitive* is a better term:

> Site responsiveness ... feels ... more natural in terms of how I like to respond to a site. There'll be elements of it influencing me, but I'm also influencing the environment by being there (A2, 60).

A2 defined these alternative terms as having a different "phenomenological approach to how you might interact with a space as opposed to something that's very fixed and rigid and only material" (62). A2 argued that the term *site-specific* sounds "patriarchal", claiming that it "brings to mind things that ... impose themselves quite strongly on a site" (62). Instead, A2 advocated for more gestural approaches which are less permanent or physically obtrusive (62).

Illustrator A1 claimed that her Free Drawing School Residency at Hospitalfield took a site-specific angle in that it focused on the house and gardens of Hospitalfield. The artist claimed that her preferred way of illustrating involved drawing everything in sight. A1 made no further comments on the framework of site specificity, other than the length of time (one year) it took to develop her residency-related commission.

Lastly, A3, who was commissioned to make an outdoor sculptural work at Hospitalfield, found that she benefits from "coming up with something that will suit sites, and let people

think about it in a different way and ... reveal an aspect of that history" (68). Like the other three artists interviewed, A3 understood site specificity as linked to the history of a site. A3 described this positively, explaining that this approach challenges artists to "fit" their practice into layers of historical contexts (68). A3 did not refute the term *site-specific* but leaned more towards *suitability* over specificity. In A3's work at Hospitalfield, the site-specific framework was loose. While the work incorporated a mix of relevant aesthetic connections to Victorian hothouses, agricultural shelters, country homes, and heritage reconstruction sites, it also referenced science fiction, circuit boards, and connectivity generally.

While neither curators nor artists offered a comprehensive definition of site, many hinted at how it might encompass more than just the historic house. For instance, C2 differentiated between site and place when discussing Hospitalfield's approach to programming its annual *Beer and Berries* festival:

> How are questions we are asking and works we are presenting relevant to the audiences that come to this place, and whether that's to do with the thematics or whether that's actually because that artist has studied in the region or in the art? ... How are we relevant to this place? (C2, 27).

In this case, C2 argued that the festival does not assume a site-specific approach as much as it is concerned with the social context, which she differentiates from site (26).

Artist A3 described her outdoor sculpture commission as not "specific to Hospitalfield" but "specific to[and] ... in response to a stately home" (67). At first, this suggests the work might be transferable to any other stately home. However, A3 also argued that the piece responded to the geographical region, stating that it has "a lot more to do with Arbroath and its surrounding area, and its soft fruit production, and the farming structures which the work looked a lot like" (68). It was not decided whether this renders the work transferable to other rural areas with this agricultural history. Further, A3 understood the work as specific to a certain time, maintaining that it was an "extension of ... the gallery shows I was working with, whilst also suiting the site" (68). These layers of meaning complicate the question of whether a work termed site-specific can be restaged elsewhere.

Regardless, some artists are encouraged by curators to tour site responsive work, which was the case for A4 (152). A4 explained that touring her installation originally produced and

presented at Hospitalfield could have worked practically, as it responded to a broad set of reference points, such as the ideas of the Enlightenment and large art collections:

> I suppose it's about things to do with ... British history ... I think that would work in other spaces ... maybe it doesn't exist in exactly the same iteration, but the same core components are there. It could exist in another place in time (A4, 152).

However, A4 also explained how the work required full immersion in each room of Hospitalfield and upon display felt incomplete, as she and her collaborator intended to fully transform the space and could only scratch the surface (149-150). This complicates the notion of a touring artwork and brings us back to C2's argument that site-specific work requires an extended exhibition period to reach its full potential (25).

Mount Stuart

According to the curators at Mount Stuart, commissioned work does not have to be site-specific but must be specific to "place", meaning the house, the grounds, or, more broadly, the Isle of Bute (C3 and C4, 89). In their definitions, the *site* is a contested concept, and *place* is used instead to describe the overlapping contexts considered by the arts programme. While commissioned work is still expected to be "specific" to Mount Stuart, it is not a label curator C3 would "apply and certainly not across the board" (117). C3 called site-specific a "loaded term" and "a little bit restrictive" because the site should be defined by the artist, rather than curators (116-117). Overall, the curators at Mount Stuart disagreed that the model is relevant, unless the site being considered by an artist includes more than just the house.

Of the artists interviewed, the two artists with experience working with Mount Stuart elaborated on the model's relevance to their practices, and both warned of its limitations. According to artist A6, who described their work as primarily public sculpture, site specificity is a useful "toolbox of [history and materials] to work with" (50). Interested in the process of foraging local stories and materials, and then interrogating that, A6 explained that having a remit provides structure, which leads to new "relationships to those places ... through investigation of all ... that makes [it] up" (50). According to A6, "it all came from the same initial toolbox" but "it is funnelled and regurgitated through you as a practitioner" (50). This reflection recalls A3's description of fitting one's existing practice into a new context to reveal aspects of a site's history (A6, 50; A3, 68). A6's words echo C2's cautionary statement that site-specific work takes a long time to percolate (C2, 27). Specifically regarding socially

engaged responses to site, A6 pointed to a certain "bad practice" when "people [are] parachuted in, they rinse people for their stories" (41). Further, they wanted it to feel "authentic" as they "care a lot about that mood [of socially engaged practice]" and did not want to exploit the community for their stories for a short window of time and then leave the island (41). This raises the issue that site specificity can be an exploitative model, especially when it implicates current members of the community.

A5 strongly preferred the term *site responsive* to *site-specific*, having done "a lot of thinking around that area in terms of ... practice" (178). She explained, "I use the word responsive because I am responding in an active way to that context ... an engaged thoughtful listening" (A5, 178), an observation that echoes the thoughts of A2 from the Hospitalfield dataset. A5 differentiated between site-specific, which she calls "a closed loop", and *site responsive*, which is this "back and forth ... dialogic model ... in which there's a ... flex point between" the site and the practice, comparing this to call and response music (178-179). Once again, this echoes A2's opinion that the definition of site specificity is too rigid or fixed. A5 described how her collaborative work at Mount Stuart (which blended poetry, choreography, and dance) quite literally performed this responsiveness, involving a dance duet with a mirrored image, visually reflecting the house and body in a disorientating way which required the dancer's active attention to her own movement (179).

Overall, performance and movement practitioners who worked at Mount Stuart seemed more likely to move away from the confines of site specificity as a term, eager to experiment with less material, less permanent formats. This trend in the data complicates C1's argument that musicians are *more* drawn to site-specific modes of working because it is more conceptual than visual art. The performance artist (A2) and choreographer-poet (A5) considered in this study resisted site specificity because it is not conceptual, immaterial, or responsive enough. As C2 proposed, it is likely the physical qualities of the space, captured in a sound recording, that explains this inclination for site-specific modes of working amongst sound artists.

Like A4, who was encouraged to tour her installation developed at Hospitalfield, A5 was asked by curators if her performance piece, made for Mount Stuart's Marble Hall, could be restaged under other "celestial ceilings in ... stately homes or country houses", or travel to places like the National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh or Grand Central Station in New York. At first, A5 envisioned that restaging this artwork elsewhere would cause "too much of a

rupture" (185). A5 then contradicted this, stating that "the idea could be flexible in other places" if reconfigured over time (185). Most artists agreed that site-specific work by nature resists touring or serialisation without changes. Site-specific approaches, then, seem to benefit from retaining the original context. Findings suggest that artists would either prefer to work dynamically, loosely, and intuitively from the beginning, or commit a significant amount of time to creating a site-specific work. Regardless of whether it would be possible to tour the resultant work later, on a practical basis, the artists interviewed seemed resistant to changes in context or feared that their work would lose meaning if the context changed.

Jupiter Artland

Like curators from other organisations, C6's definition of site specificity is tied up with the question of whether a work could be installed elsewhere or not. According to C6, some of the works at Jupiter Artland are "very much site-specific" and "can never leave", while other artworks, particularly the acquisitions, "could potentially" leave the site (198). Acquisitions like the artworks by Anish Kapoor or Antony Gormley could be housed elsewhere "if something unforeseen happened" to the owners, but commissions such as the artworks by Andy Goldsworthy and Charles Jencks "can only ever exist there", in situ at Jupiter Artland (C6, 198).

C6 conjectured that the 2022 acquisition of Tracey Emin's bronze sculpture *I Lay Here For You* is an exception to this rule, because the artwork was pre-existing, but stated that, even then, the "site she chose acutely shifts the meaning of the work, fundamentally" (200). Further, Emin visited Jupiter Artland over a two-year period while making this sculpture off-site (C6, 200). C6 suggested that although Emin's sculpture had been sited at Jupiter Artland in retrospect, it still retained some qualities of site specificity "by definition" because the artist deliberately chose the new context for the work, changing its meaning (200).

At first, C6's explanations of site specificity seem contradictory. On the one hand, C6 maintained that "the longevity [of the collection] is focused around the ... [works] that are site-specific", implying that acquisitions could not also fit this definition (198). On the other hand, C6 argued that "there isn't any work that…isn't completed by the landscape or isn't by definition site-specific…even the acquisitions" (200). However, C6 continued to examine ways in which the organisation, in collaboration with the artists selected, pushes definitions of site specificity to encompass work both on-site at Jupiter Artland and in other contexts.

C6 elucidated that she perceives all the works in Jupiter Artland's collection as "site-specific" but claims that the organisation continues to "redefine what that word means because we're working with living artists, [and] we're working with site development" (200). According to C6 this entails "not just looking back at the collection" but actively considering "where could site specificity go to in the future?" (200). C6 offered the example of the 2021 artwork *mimi ɹuiɯ uʍop* by artist Rachel Maclean, which first took the form of a "Hansel and Gretel upside down shop" and then, with the support of Jupiter Artland, travelled to "an actual high street", first in Perth in 2022 and then in Ayr in 2023 (206). In this alternative setting, C6 argued that the work changed in meaning, while remaining "the same work" (200-201). She explained that Maclean's work is both "site-specific at Jupiter [Artland]" and "on the high street", which challenges the organisation's "notion of what…site specificity is" (C6, 201). Later in the interview, C6 refers to this project as "its own mini-institution" in the UK, which recalls the ubiquity of a franchise or company, found on every high street (206).

C6 notably differentiated between two different types of site-specific projects, some of which "could never be installed elsewhere" because of the "nature of the commission" and others which could be (198). C6 described the first type of commissions as "completed by the landscape" and "by definition site-specific" (200). According to C6, this definition can also be reworked with living artists to consider the question "where could site specificity go to in the future?" (201). This comment was made in reference to the Maclean commission as an example of a project originally developed in response to Jupiter Artland's landscape but then brought to a new context, "challenging our notion of what site specificity is" (201). This illustrates how the restrictive connotations of the term, criticised by other practitioners, might be expanded upon. Here, C6 sees the programme and the contemporary artists as agents of change, capable of revising established models.

When asked if the term *site-specific* adequately described this way of working, C6 expressed a preference for *site responsive*, as it better reflects "theories of situationism" which maintain that sites encompass "multiple histories, identities, and uses, past and future" (201). According to C6, "commissioning in response to landscape" is the "dominant model" (200), but she also described site responsiveness in relation to temporary commissions in the Ballroom Gallery (207). Here, artists "compete" with the impressive stucco ceilings, posing a display challenge familiar to those working in the other historic house settings (C6, 207). One artist chose to

black out the details, while another remained "sensitive to it" by drawing on the walls (C6, 207). C6 claimed that Lindsay Mendick "very much made…work in response to that space", choosing to make white sculpture, which she described as "a massive deal" for the artist (207-208).

Artist A7 attested to using site-specific methods for her temporary commission at Jupiter Artland but felt ambivalent towards the terminology (103). A7 described the term as intimidating at first but clarified that, when broken down, "it is about the histories or the architecture of the building or ... built environment around it or ... the materials of the building" (103). A7 expressed that she enjoyed this process, because she prefers "a work to have relevance", but said sometimes "site-specific sounds quite boring" (103). This latter statement echoes C1's opinion that "holding up a mirror" is boring for artists and audiences (25). However, like other sculptors interviewed (A3 and A6), A7 maintained that site-specific frameworks can be engaging and has opted for this approach in other contexts: "I always like working out ... a context ... it might be working off the architecture or history of the site" (102). A7 explicitly defined site specificity as a response to an environment, rather than only historical contexts: "I don't necessarily look for historical angles, I feel like I'm always quite open to the environment" (103). This reflected a loose application of the model, recalling A3's method of layering references to build a site-suitable work (68). A7 did not advocate for alternative terminology.

A8, who has done performance work at Jupiter Artland, claimed that she usually "steer[s] away from things that respond to site" (164). A8 noted how a site-specific brief hinders her intuitive practice, stating, "I follow my own trajectory of my imagination ... sometimes I feel like I'm fitting a brief which then ... interrupts a kind of natural flow of ideas" (164). Here, site specificity is once again rejected for its rigidity—in A8's case, even site *responsiveness* as a directive is disruptive to creativity (164).

6.2.2 Intervention

This subsection considers the perceived meaning of the term *intervention* and attempts to determine its relevance as a framework to practitioners. *Intervention* is commonly used to describe artistic installations, exhibitions, events, and works in historic house contexts. While most curators and artists interviewed demonstrated confidence in their definitions of art interventions, the two groups differed in their application of the term. Curators tended to

consider the whole programme an intervention, while most artists tried to understand how/if the framework applies to their individual practices. Some practitioners expressed confusion or dismay when presented with this term in interviews, suggesting the label is restrictive, outdated, or not applicable. This subsection will consider responses from each case study, placing those from curators alongside those from artists when asked how the notion of an intervention factors into their respective work. The discussion following this presents alternative language used throughout interview data by both curators and artists. These findings are then used to suggest relevant terminology for both sector use and scholarly consideration.

Hospitalfield

At Hospitalfield, interventions were resisted by curators as both a model and a term, while artists embraced the model as useful in some circumstances, although suggested alternative terminology. One artist conveyed that the term is both outdated and too imposing or permanent, preferring temporary strategies. Most artists shared an understanding of an intervention as an event or object that is disruptive (A3, 71), except A1, an illustrator who felt the term did not apply to her practice and did not comment on its meaning.

According to C1, Hospitalfield might curate interventions, but the organisation's intention is not "a cynical attempt to try and get more audience" (29). Here, interventions are perceived as a common ploy to attract visitors with little consideration for the needs of artists. Critical of what she sees as the spectacle-like quality of artists' interventions, C1 contended that organisations which use the model are "not interested in artists or artists' practice, they just have noticed that doing a bit of a crazy wacky thing, it gets more people in" (29). Furthermore, C1 and C2 argued that Hospitalfield has been a place for contemporary artists since the founding of the art school, and therefore artists do not intervene as much as they continue a tradition (28). According to C2, "the intention [of Hospitalfield] was for artists to be living and making work here, so I don't see that as an intervention if this was its original purpose" (28). To its curators, the displays at Hospitalfield are not considered static. C2 pointed out that the picture gallery, which might resemble a typical house museum period room to audiences, is better understood as an active gallery space: " ... when we rolled up the carpet for Christina Mackay's installation in the picture gallery, I wouldn't see that as an intervention because

we've moved around the fabric of the building, but that space is a gallery and that's its purpose" (28).

Regardless of how the picture gallery is perceived by the curators at Hospitalfield, artists and audiences will have their own ideas about the rooms of the house and may associate the historic furnishings with static period room displays. For instance, A4 explained how her collaborative commission acted as a critique of the guided tour offered in historic houses, noting how this freezes objects and architecture "like a relic isolated in time" (154). A4 interpreted this installation as an intervention or a "distortion" of how "people see the space and ... within what framework or context ... people look at things" (153). In this case, the artwork introduced visual and auditory distortions to intervene in the viewer's predicted experience of a stately home with a large historic collection. A4 claimed to achieve this by mixing in references in a "subversive" way, creating tension between contemporary culture and the historical setting (146).

Another artist, A2, indicated the disruptive potential of interventionist art: "[It] has a connotation of ... disruption which ... could be quite useful in some circumstances" (62). However, A2 also stated that interventions are "ephemeral" and "might not actually do that much to change the structure or how the place [host institution] works" (62). She clarified that temporary exhibitions can be "useful" and "valuable" with "long lasting" effects (A2, 62).

Conversely, artist A3 implied that *intervention* is an outdated term or trend:

> It's ... a weird thing that used to be quite fashionable to have the ... intervening art object, or an intervention project. I don't think you would call it that [anymore] (74).

Overall, A3 seemed wary of interventions on the basis that public sculpture "impose[s] your taste forever" on a particular "community and changing landscape", eventually coming to symbolise a moment which has passed and no longer makes sense (74). A3 further explained that this aspect of permanence is what makes something more intervention-like, saying "I think [permanent sculpture] for me almost feels more like an intervention because there's a permanence there ... or an intrusion" (A3, 74). A3 wavered on expressing what an intervention means, as temporary sculptures do not necessarily stop "something from happening" the way permanent sculpture imposes itself. A3 recognised that temporary sculpture like her own can "intrude on the landscape" but might not necessarily intervene (74). This primarily stems from

an issue with language—intervention is too limiting a word—as well as cultural shifts. A3 argued that intervention is an "outdated" mode of working, inferring that using the term now removes it from its original art historical context (74). A3 suggested the term "interludes" as an amendment to interventionist discourse, as it captures her preference for a temporary approach (74).

Interestingly, this resistance to permanence recalls both A2 and A5's resistance to the fixedness of site-specific models—it seems these artists seek more elastic language to lend their practices more speculative or gestural qualities, rather than assertive or imposing. In another part of the interview, A3 asked, "How do I make something really appear like ... a statement and a gesture, and talk about something ... How do you just ... fissure the landscape?" (A3, 71). The intentions expressed here are gestural and conversational, rather than literal—a suggestion rather than bold assertion. A2 also referred to her own site responsive approaches as gestural and A5 described site responsiveness as flexible and dialogic. In all three cases, the artists demonstrated a preference for subtle and open-ended approaches rather than rigid parameters. These findings point towards the more nuanced approaches discussed later in this chapter.

Mount Stuart

Like at Hospitalfield, the curators at Mount Stuart largely resisted *intervention* as a term but acknowledged instances of when the strategy has been used by commissioned artists. Both curators and artists interpreted interventions as disruptive to an environment or norm, and one curator notably casts interventions in a positive light. Both artists and curators appear to have seen the benefit of disruption, whether that takes the form of a playful change to the environment within the house or grounds, or an interruption to normal commissioning processes.

C4 had an "ambivalent attitude" towards the word *intervention*, which she qualified as "a bit wedgy ... sounds like you're driving a wedge into something", implying that interventions are forceful. C3 referred to *interventionist* as a label that, if used in an elastic way, is more acceptable (90). C3 supposed that the whole programme at Mount Stuart is an intervention, as it continues "a spirit of inquiry" by posing questions or probing, rather than being as "disrespectful" as an intervention might imply (117). C3 stated that some exhibitions have been "more interventionist", using the example of Moyna Flannigan's 2007 exhibition *A*

Footprint in the Hall as a "directly interventionist" work because it involved replacing paintings from the collection with her own work (117). An instance of a "maybe" intervention at Mount Stuart would be Steven Claydon's 2017 silver-plated cast pocket god, *Akua Ka'ai (Shrouded),* which the artist gifted to Mount Stuart, drawing attention to other collected objects (Gregor and Crichton Stuart, 2020). C3 interestingly termed as "mischievous" (89). This differs in tone from other definitions of interventions as disruptive or distorting. C3 described Clayton's exhibition as not disruptive as much as "a nice, gentle, mischievous, playful kind of intervention" (117). This uplifting language clashes with the forcefulness expressed in C4's definition of intervention.

A6 is an example of an artist who embraced the term *intervention* and understood their own practice as "interventionist" (50). A6 defined intervention with precision, claiming it is an outdoor artwork which "disrupts the regular functioning of a site or space into something slightly different" (49). The point that interventions should be outdoor artworks conveniently applies to A6's practice as a self-described public sculptor (50). In this definition, the key purpose of the artwork is to disrupt a constancy. Importantly, A6 insisted that such projects should be temporary. They interpreted an intervention as a temporary "glitch" that "draws attention to what was originally there and what could come afterwards" (50). According to A6, interventionism can be utilised as a tool to question fixed environments, hint at potential futures, and invigorate change. A6 saw this as a method to instil agency in public spaces—highlighting "what people are able to do with public space" (50). Although A6 found it pretentious to identify as an interventionist, they believe that a "majority of what [they] do is an intervention" (50).

Echoing claims that interventions disrupt static environments, A5 defined intervention as an issue of "consent", calling it a "juncture ... something that juts into [a] set process" (186). In this definition, A5 expanded her understanding of the static environment to include not just the visual realm, but processes or concepts. A5 argued that her collaborative work "disrupted ... the normal channels of ... commissioning models ... already established at Mount Stuart" by evading "usual conventions, and that includes the structural conventions of the commissioning itself" (187). For instance, A5's work required private rather than public funding and did not slot into a single artistic category of performance, poetry, or dance—by resisting the norm, the artwork demanded alternative treatment by the organisation. A5's final answer was that the

work was "probably not ... there to disrupt [the environment] but intervene in a soft way" so that other artists could "come in and perform" in an otherwise "highly regulated environment" with security guards, strict rules, and commissioning conventions (187).

Jupiter Artland

Regarding artists' interventions at Jupiter Artland, curator C6 contended that some of the artworks in the permanent collection are not interventions in that they "shift" or "change" the setting (202). Instead, C6 proposed that the "politics [of the artworks] are going into the landscape", which according to C6 is "more like world-making, rather than intervening" (202). C6 also described another way of working which is "definitely" more interventionist. She understood this approach as political in that it intervenes "in the structures and systems" (202). C6 maintained that the temporary commissions at Jupiter Artland better fit this definition of intervention, indicating "the music festival as perhaps the most successful intervention" (202). She portrayed this musical festival as enacting "a level of social contestation" by providing "quality access to outdoor spaces", especially to "groups that are more marginalised…from rural countryside leisure" (202).

A8 not only said that the Nemoralia Festival at Jupiter Artland is an example of a "daylong intervention within the context of Jupiter", but also that each individual artist's performance, including hers, was an intervention in the sculptural landscape (166-167). A8 described her performance at Jupiter Artland as not exactly "subversive but ... weird use of this space", explaining her choice to use "a little bit cheeky ... sexy" music (158; 160). A8 framed this performance as a provocation rather than an insurrection, implying that interventions can take either format (158). A7 also opts for the word "provocative" in the context of her project at Jupiter Artland, which openly questioned private landownership via an outdoor sculpture in visual dialogue with Bonnington House.

6.2.3 Summary

When discussing site-specific practices and/or artists' interventions, creative practitioners either expressed an explicit preference for alternative language or used different language to describe their own work. Limited by the historical connotations of both terms (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2), informants offered more precise language to get to the heart of their creative intentions.

Containing a list of alternative vocabulary, Table 5 exemplifies how practitioners reached beyond the limitations of the term *site-specific* to better describe their intentions—whether to qualify, broaden, or redefine the term altogether. While some artists referred to a particular commission or residency, others referred to their practice more generally. Notably, *site responsive* was preferred by creative practitioners across all three sites. Considered together, this vocabulary begins to describe something interactive (*responsive*; *dialogic*); communicative (*gestural*), processual (*process site*) and perceptive (*sensitive*). Interestingly, the term *site* was generally accepted by informants, although expansive in its perceived meaning, as discussed below. Some of these words appear again in the alternative strategies observed at each case study and identified later in this chapter.

Alternative language for site specificity

Alternative language	Citation	Location	In reference to commission/residency on site
site responsive	A2, 60	Hospitalfield	No
site responsive	A5, 178	Mount Stuart	Yes
site responsive	C6, 202	Jupiter Artland	Yes
site sensitive	A2, 60	Hospitalfield	No
gestural	A2, 62	Hospitalfield	No
dialogic	A5, 178-179	Mount Stuart	Yes
site suitable	A3, 68	Hospitalfield	Yes
process site	A4, 152	Hospitalfield	Yes

Table 5. Table summarising alternative language for site specificity, as used by interview participants.

As discussed in Chapter 2.4.2, Demos stated in 2003 that "site specific has eluded a clear definition since its origins over fifty years ago" (Demos *et al.,* 2003, 98). These interpretations of site-specific art practice, now over seventy years since its origins, continue to elude a clear definition—many informants asked questions such as "What is the site?" or "Where does the site start or end?". Informants discussed their own artwork in relation to historical narratives, a

place, a region, an environment, and a point in time, without concretely defining these contexts as the site. Further, when artists were asked if their site-specific artwork could exist somewhere outside its original context, their answers were inconsistent and range from no to maybe. This finding echoes the same contradiction inherited from early definitions of site-specific art practice and critiqued by Kwon: that site specific artwork can be moved "under the right circumstances" (Hapgood, 1990, 120), however, "to remove the work is to destroy the work'" (Kwon, 1997, 38). Despite these uncertainties, the pervasiveness of language like *site responsive*, *site sensitive*, and *site suitable* indicates a shared understanding of a framework resembling site specificity but semantically amended to suit the individual practices discussed. While many curators and artists distanced their practice from art historical trends of site specificity, they also acknowledged that their work responds to, gestures towards, or engages in a dialogue with the site.

In the context of artists' interventions, artists and curators also reached beyond the limitations of the term *intervention* to better describe their intentions, with some claiming that the interventionist framework is outdated and/or imposing. This preferred language—whether to qualify or redefine the term altogether—is presented below in Table 6. Considered together, this vocabulary describes something temporary (*glitch* or *interlude*), jarring (*fissure*; *slice*; *glitch*; *distortion*; *juncture*; *provocative*; *unexpected*), playful (*mischievous* or *weird*), critical (*critique* or *questioning*), and political (*world-making*). This alternative language suggests a shared understanding of the term, with some interviewees referencing its historical use as a mode of institutional critique or political action (Robins, 2013; Marstine, 2017, 163). Overall, both artists and curators acknowledged instances where interventions can still be a useful approach if the definition is looser or amended.

Alternative language for artists' interventions

Alternative language	Citation	Location	In reference to commission/residency on site
fissure	A3, 71	Hospitalfield	Yes
slice through	A3, 71	Hospitalfield	Yes
glitch	A6, 49	Mount Stuart	No
distortion	A4, 153	Hospitalfield	Yes
critique	A4, 153	Hospitalfield	Yes
juncture	A5, 186	Mount Stuart	Yes
subversive	A4, 146	Hospitalfield	Yes
interludes	A3, 75	Hospitalfield	Yes
provocative or provocation	A7, 93; C3, 117; A8, 158	Mount Stuart; Jupiter Artland	Yes; Yes
unexpected	A7, 102	Jupiter Artland	Yes
questioning	C3, 117	Mount Stuart	Yes
probing	C3, 117	Mount Stuart	Yes
mischievous	C3, 117; A8, 158	Mount Stuart; Jupiter Artland	Yes; Yes
weird	A8, 160	Jupiter Artland	Yes
world-making	C3, 202	Jupiter Artland	Yes

Table 6. Table summarising alternative language for artists' interventions, as used by interview participants.

The key remaining question is: are interventions ephemeral or permanent? Informants disagreed on this point, with some perceiving an intervention as a temporary interruption and others insisting that interventions are too permanent and therefore intrusive. For instance, A6 expressed a clear understanding of an intervention as "something that doesn't last forever", particularly in the context of outdoor sculpture (49). Similarly, performance artist A2 felt that the concept of an intervention "has an idea of ... ephemerality ... you're not really changing the place" (62). Again, A8 pointed to her own timed performances as intervention-like, without the expectation that these works should be permanent. To the contrary, A3 interpreted interventions as permanent and "an intrusion" (74). This divergence in interpretation not

necessarily correlate with age or a particular wave of arts education. All three artists represent different experience levels, ranging from emerging (recent graduates) to more established (decades of practitioner experience). This lack of agreement over the nature of interventions as permanent or temporary—regardless of artistic medium—demands that artists rethink the relevance, connotations, and scope of the term.

A new field, contemporary art in heritage has yet to adequately apply findings from practitioner experiences in the literature, instead utilising the same terminology prevalent in art historical scholarship nearly thirty years ago (Foster, 1996; Kwon, 1997; Pearce, 1999; McShine, 1999). An updated lexicon, gleaned from interviews with artists and curators with recent experiences working in historic house settings, has potential to invigorate arts in heritage discourse; adding a practice-led dimension to written analyses of these artistic genres.

6.3 Thinking beyond common frameworks

Building upon the broadened definitions of site-specific and interventionist models presented above, as well as the preferred language put forward by practitioners interviewed, this section discusses how curators and artists conceive of their approaches and practices across all three case studies. These findings suggest that the organisations considered go beyond simply commissioning site-specific installations or staging artists' interventions in historic house settings. These organisations also foster and support more multifaceted, experimental, and process-based modes of creativity, exemplifying how contemporary art in heritage practices exceed common frameworks described in the literature.

This section departs from the case-specific structure employed in previous analysis chapters and is organised primarily by research method. Findings from interviews, ethnographic fieldnotes, and curatorial fieldnotes are analysed separately, offering a range of participant perspectives, then ethnographic observations, and lastly my own insights as the researcher. This alternative structure intends to lend more transparency to how the data was collected and layered to form evidence, introducing necessary context for the fieldnotes. Moreover, the departure from the case-by-case structure brings together the voices of curators and artists from different contexts for comparison, breaking up the narratives presented in previous chapter and uncovering new patterns in the findings.

6.3.1 Interview findings

This section places interview findings from curators and artists in dialogue. Using qualitative coding techniques, seven topics were identified in the interview data: 1) *participating in organisational ecologies*; 2) *multimodality and polyvocality*; 3) *collaboration*; 4) *temporary and ephemeral artworks*; 5) *public art commissions off-site*; 6) *process-based or emergent approaches*; and 7) *experimentation and risk.*

While artists did not explicitly comment on some of the approaches highlighted by curators—such as participating in organisational ecologies, multimodality, and polyvocality—they did emphasise the collaborative, ephemeral, process-based, or experimental nature of their individual practices.

Participating in organisational ecologies

Creating opportunities with other arts organisations in Scotland and internationally is crucial to Hospitalfield's approach (C1 and C2, 18). Both curators envisioned Hospitalfield as a player in a wider network of creative programming, rather than as an isolated project in a heritage house (C1 and C2, 18). C2 explained that this approach requires "being aware of the differing types of provision and ecology but also partnering up ... with each other on specific kinds of projects" (38). For example, C2 described a residency previously offered for artists from Ukraine in collaboration with Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, which consisted of "two weeks in Hospitalfield, two weeks in Edinburgh," lending a shift in context from rural to urban, "but also differing provisions" in terms of daily structure for residents (38).

The curators at Mount Stuart did not explicitly mention their collaboration with other arts bodies, but Mount Stuart does take international standards of excellence into account. C4 pointed out that part of Mount Stuart's mission is to "exhibit international artists of excellence", qualifying this by stating, "they can be Scottish but internationally known or they can be international" (89). Here, C4 suggested that Mount Stuart adheres to global standards of artistic merit, choosing to commission artists who have achieved critical acclaim beyond Scotland. This implies that Mount Stuart considers itself connected to other institutions and funding bodies upholding these standards of practice: their exhibitions add to a lineage of work deemed excellent by others. Whether and how Mount Stuart engages with these other organisations was not addressed in either the curator or artist interviews, but the ethnographic

fieldnotes show that Mount Stuart hosted residents from another organisation (Hospitalfield) for a site visit on at least one occasion (Fieldnotes, 6).

Curator C6 reluctantly explained that Jupiter Artland is "not at a government level recognised as part of the cultural ecology ... because we're privately funded and have only one funding source, which is the philanthropy of a single family" (203). However, C6 offered examples of partnerships between Jupiter Artland and creative organisations in Edinburgh, including the Edinburgh Art Festival and Edinburgh's Dance Base (203). C6 insisted that Jupiter Artland's strongest networks are with Scottish schools, colleges, and universities, as part of their free learning programme (203). C6 expressed frustration that the impact of this learning programme which aims to reach "every child in Scotland" is not "known or recognised enough" (203-205).

In one case, A5 explained that her residency at Cove Park (an artists' residency centre on the west coast of Scotland) was instrumental in developing her work for Mount Stuart—the opportunity provided crucial time and space for writing choreography with her collaborator. A5 clarified that this was arranged independently, rather than as part of a deliberate collaboration between organisations. However, this indicates one potential model for Mount Stuart, if it chooses to partner with other creative bodies or arrange collaborative residencies within Scotland.

Multimodality and polyvocality

C1 called Hospitalfield a "study centre" or "village hall" with more than "the one form of access ... the tour, the walk around" (18). As director of Hospitalfield, C1 attempted to layer in multiple points of entry for a range of users. She described a composite programme which incorporates a museum, a heritage house, a critical programme supporting artists, artists' residencies, and a horticultural programme.

C2 pointed out that this multimodal approach to programming promotes the intertwining of generations and interests. It creates "opportunities for paths to cross" and new social or creative connections to be made (C2, 19). On one hand, Hospitalfield acts as a site for everyday activities for "numerous communities" and as a "place for people to come and feel welcome" (C2, 19). On the other hand, it is a space for various communities of users to "learn from each other" (C2, 22) and try to critically "inform practice" (C1, 22). Additionally, C2 highlighted the polyvocality which emerges from this layering approach to programming—for

example, the mingling of one aspect of the programme with another might "open up" or activate new directions for users (24). C2 referred to A1's graphic novel, which emerged from months of working at the intersection between the Free Drawing School Residency and the horticulture programme (24).

Overall, Mount Stuart's arts programme appears more pared down in focus: two exhibitions per year and the annual emerging artists' residency. Like Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart offers a flow of programming beyond its house tour, such as "family activities ... screenings and artist talks" (C3, 123), as well as events led by special interest groups, horticulture apprenticeships, and school projects. However, the intermingling of these communities of users is unclear, and this multimodal approach was not stressed in curator interviews.

Collaboration

Many informants articulated an inclination towards working collaboratively with other creative partners—whether by receiving critical support during a group residency, or working directly with dancers, musicians, writers, technicians, or workshop participants. The collaborative approaches discussed took on a range of formats, from structured group residencies to participatory events, performances, and installations.

At Hospitalfield, the group residency is designed to offer artists increased feedback from both the organisation and the "many voices" of the cohort via "curatorial discussion" (C2, 37). C2 claimed that Hospitalfield provides a unique structure or "a rhythm to the residency which no other residencies in Scotland provides ... through the meals" (37). This routine of receiving communal meals from Hospitalfield's kitchen staff orientates artists to "create new rhythms ... to really focus in on their practice" and benefit from collective living (C2, 37; C1, 38).

Artist A2 primarily reported on the unpleasant social dynamics of her group (discussed in section 6.4.2) but did attest to the benefits of establishing a work routine structured around regular meals (60). Above all, A2 found that the residency gave her time to develop an existing collaboration, as well as experiment with working independently (63). Alternatively, A4 positively regarded the "sharing events" organised by other residents during her time at Hospitalfield, which she felt played a role in her later commission there. For this later project, A4 invited a friend into conversations with Hospitalfield's curators. This eventually grew into a collaborative installation for one of Hospitalfield's open weekends. A4 explained that

although she held differing views to her collaborator, they "found ... common ground to work with" in this setting (147).

Collaboration seems to be less emphasised by Mount Stuart—most of the commissions appear to be solo shows, and the residency consists of only one artist a year. A5 offered an exception to this format—she explained how collaboration was central to the development of her commission at Mount Stuart (170). Describing the emergence of this project as a "beautiful, symmetrical, collaborative, synced way of thinking together", A5 insisted that the work would "not exist" without the inspiration of her collaborator and their ensuing creative bond (170-172).

At Jupiter Artland, collaborations seem regular in a temporary capacity. A8 said she was convinced to develop work as part of a festival more so because of the prospect of collaborating with the other artists involved than because of her own interest in the place (157). A8 sometimes prefers to work by herself as "an expression of my own interior world through a drawing or a painting", but then "also get[s] quite lonely and isolated" and switches to working collaboratively. Recalling A2's approach to nurturing both collaborative and independent practices during her Hospitalfield residency, A8 generally likes "to have the two things in parallel" (165).

Temporary and ephemeral artworks

Informants, especially in the Mount Stuart dataset, demonstrated a preference for either temporary exhibitions or ephemeral outdoor installations, as opposed to building permanent collections.

Curators from Mount Stuart stressed that, except for the rare donation, most commissioned artworks are returned to artists, "so there's nothing commercial about it" (C4, 88; C3, 119). C3 indicated that Mount Stuart is funded by, among other bodies, the Scottish Arts Council and Creative Scotland, so it "can't be taking public money to turn something into ... a collection [for Mount Stuart]" (119). C3 noted this anti-collecting stance is distinct from practices at Jupiter Artland, where "they're very much collecting" (88).

These same curators described Mount Stuart's outdoor installations as temporary, ephemeral, or changing. For example, C4 defined Martin Boyce's practice as "dreamlike", elaborating that he did not "want to do anything in the house [or] ... near the house", which stands solidly

on the lawn (86). In a different interview, C3 stated that "Boyce's sculpture ... was never intended to be permanent and probably won't be" (119). C3 also evoked the ephemerality of Kate Whiteford's "Shadow of a Necklace" land work, which was meant to "vanish" but sometimes reappears given a difference in grass variety, becoming "a shadow of the shadow, emerging depending on the morning regimen by gardeners" (119). In another example, "Anya Gallaccio's silver gilded tree is still here and still growing but changing" (C3, 119). These findings indicate a preference for a curatorial mode which nods to material impermanence. This notably contrasts with heritage sector efforts to freeze material loss and perpetuate official narratives, exemplifying how curators at Mount Stuart move away from such conventions.

C3 also commented on the constant animation and reanimation of Mount Stuart through its temporary exhibitions:

> The criticism of any museum is that you go and worship at the altar of something that you're told is great. I think by inviting artists ... you're constantly animating what is here, and posing the questions that need to be asked at these times (C3, 117).

In this way, the programme itself is understood as a practice which embraces changes made by artists to remain critical and relevant.

Artists from both Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland described similar ephemeral qualities in their temporary outdoor works. A3 positively regarded unexpected changes in her work throughout its display outside Hospitalfield's walled garden: grass, animals, and insects proliferating inside the sculptures (72). Embracing these changes, A3 stated "you have to let [the work] have a life of its own afterwards" (72). A7 explained that rapid change is essential to the meaning of the work—particularly the rapid appearance and disappearance of the sculpture while in a state of constant reassembly by participants (105). Intentionally temporary, the artwork would lose meaning as a permanent sculpture in the context of Jupiter Artland. In both cases, neither artwork remains—A3 described her own materials as packing down to nothing (73), and A7 claimed that her materials were recycled for agricultural use at Jupiter Artland (96).

Public art commissions off-site

Although this study heavily focuses on the historic house as a setting for art practices, findings show that each contemporary art programme extends its reach by staging artworks beyond the site, whether within the same town or in other locales. Not only do these commissions intend to overcome social barriers between the organisations and the locals living nearby (see Chapter 5)–they also intend to reach new audiences further afield.

A prime example of an off-site commission by Hospitalfield is the New Scriptorium (2022), the temporary bothy structure built for the grounds of Arbroath Abbey by artist Bobby Niven (Figure 19). While Arbroath Abbey was historically linked to the site of Hospitalfield, which in the Middle Ages served as a hospice for pilgrims, the two locations sit about 1.5 miles apart in differently populated areas of Arbroath. Arbroath Abbey was chosen as the setting for the free public workshop carried out as part of this PhD project (see Chapter 3) aiming to explore ongoing links between the creative programme at Hospitalfield, the history of the abbey as a knowledge centre, and current residents of Arbroath.



Figure 19. View of the New Scriptorium at Arbroath Abbey during a public event with the Scriptorium Town Writers in residence. Dooley, O. 2022.

At Mount Stuart, the emerging artist residency deliberately focuses on engagement with the Bute locals—whether through formal outreach events, school projects, or conversations. For example, A6 recounted spending most of their time on residency in dialogue with locals in Rothesay (49). Again, the motivation here is to forge more meaningful relationships between Mount Stuart and the rest of the island (A6, 123).

At Jupiter Artland, C6 described the Jupiter+ programme (in collaboration with artist Rachel Maclean) as "a new model that was really responsive to the audience that we wanted to reach, which was teenagers" (206). This project not only aimed to reach teenagers across Scotland,

siting temporary exhibitions in Perth and Ayr, but also to involve them as part of a commissioning board, which C6 characterises as a vocational placement (206).

Process-based or emergent approaches

Both curators and artists demonstrated a strong preference for process-based or emergent methods when possible. Artist A5 defines emergent as about "the process rather than ... the fruits of that process" (193-194). Curators focused on providing time, space, and freedom to artists to develop and discuss their ideas, while artists recounted how their ideas take hold in these hospitable settings through conversations with curators and other collaborators over time.

Hospitalfield's curators claimed to prioritise the evolution or percolation of ideas, often inviting artists back more than once (C2, 36). C2 repeatedly mentioned this approach of "letting things emerge", which she called "incredibly freeing" for artists in residence (36). This also means facilitating a "basis for development and for artists to experiment with work" (C2, 36). She elaborated on this open-ended approach here:

> What we're doing is ... creating a framework for an artist to come into, but we're not really prescribing that much. We're allowing a lot to happen within that and a lot to evolve (C2, 37).

Similarly, C1 used metaphorical language to describe this evolution or emergence of work over time: "They're still working on things ... it's a seeding ... It's a ... fertile capsule that can feed into practice for a long time in the future" (38). Both C1 and C2 explained that by offering time and space to residents, artists have an unusual opportunity to discuss and "develop their work and experiment", all while not having to "deliver an outcome" (37).

Interdisciplinary resident A2 testified to the usefulness of this non-directive approach or "hands-off" approach, using the time she spent during her residency at Hospitalfield to develop multiple projects at once, work that eventually fed into a publication and ongoing collaborations (54). A2 explained, "I didn't want loads of input, I think I just needed time and space" (60).

A1 similarly attested to the value of her residency at Hospitalfield, which had no set outcome from the start. A1 described the process as "a very loose idea" but entirely left to her own design (129). In general, A1 characterised her approach to drawing as organic—emerging

from a setting and her curiosity about the place—which she was able to explore over a year at Hospitalfield, three days a week (129). A1 described how this open-ended approach led to the publication of her first graphic novel:

> I started off with the intention of just drawing everything. And I didn't know what I was going to produce at the end of that ... so I was really overjoyed to get a commission and be allowed to work out what I wanted to do as I went on (A1, 131).

In some cases, such as commissions, artists were expected to deliver an outcome, however loose. Two years after a residency, the director of Hospitalfield approached A4 to propose a commission, which grew into a collaborative work and exhibition. A4 provided a useful description of an emergent and discursive process developing this commission with another artist:

> The approach was to ... locate something within the room, and then also just do ... writing specific to that room to generate the ideas and then ... we honed those into ... one thing and made it more specific. Then it became a song or text that was performed (A4, 143).

In this account, the artist recalled the curators being "really open with ... suggestions" despite the expectation to exhibit work from the outset (A4, 145).

A3, commissioned to make an outdoor sculpture at Hospitalfield, similarly found that the brief had no "constraint[s]" (77). A3 explained, "I was able to extend and really push my practice forward in a way that I'm really pleased about" (77). Rather than striving to create "the best advanced contemporary art ... show", the non-gallery setting at Hospitalfield encouraged her to "step back" and determine "the right answer ... at this time" (78).

Mount Stuart curators similarly claimed that they "don't restrict", giving freedom to invited artists to respond to a "vast space" (83). C3 claimed this is conducive to self-reflexivity within the programme, stating that Mount Stuart is "very interested" in artists "probing and questioning because it makes for [a] continuing dialogue" (C3, 90).

Sometimes, a commission develops by chance, emerging beyond existing structures. A5 recounted aspects of her commission emerging coincidentally, first in a chance meeting with her collaborator, and then again in a chance conversation with a Mount Stuart curator at an event:

> We were in the middle of ... having this idea ... and [the curator] ... appeared in front of us ... we were ... so enthused, and in the moment with the idea ... we shared [it] (174).

Once A5 and her collaborator received their commission, she explained that "there were never any discussions about heritage", so the curators "never expected [them] to attend to ... that" (180). A5 defined her practice as flexible and open. A5 stated that her interest in Mount Stuart arose from pre-existing research and personal experiences, which opened her imagination up when interacting with the setting, explaining that some artists are "more sensitised to these spaces already" (195). A5 suggested that some artists might turn down projects based in historic houses because "it's not within [one's] imaginative firmament" (195). For this reason, a project might be less likely to emerge if the interest is not already present.

A5 also explained the openness of her own practice, which avoids classification—she moves between categories such as writer, artist, poet, and ceramicist (192). By disrupting these boundaries, she found that she can "fully open up to process" and let "somebody ... more skilled ... contextualise it" and decide whether it belongs in a gallery or as part of a series (A5, 192-194). A5 described this mode of working as "flexible, open, reflexive, responsive" rather than "consolidated" or "repetitive" (194). A5 carried out archival research without a set goal in mind, responding to the whole body of a collection of material "on a basic level", rather than "focused research which can sometimes close down true creative exploration" (176-179). For her collaborative project at Mount Stuart, the two artists avoided classifying what they were looking for, instead intuitively exploring archival material provided to them by specialists (A5, 176-179).

At Jupiter Artland, C6 described commissions emerging from many years of dialogue, commenting that some projects took ten years to develop (200). She mentioned working with artist Rachel Maclean for up to five years on *upside mimi ɹuɹɯ ʍop*, which took the form of a permanent installation at Jupiter Artland and continues to take new forms in other places in Scotland on a temporary basis (C6, 201).

A7 described the openness experienced when developing her performance commission for Jupiter Artland: "It really did feel like do what you want ... they really went with the idea [even though] ... it was a bit ... provocative" (97). A7 explained that her idea was "bubbling away for ages" before receiving the commission. Upon walking around the site, she finally felt that it was "the right place to do the work" (93).

Experimentation and risk

Most of the evidence for experimental approaches initially emerged from interviews with artists who have worked at Hospitalfield and Jupiter Artland. These findings are also supported in interviews with curators.

Starting with artists who have worked with Hospitalfield, A3 shared:

> I think it's really important that places like Hospitalfield ... are taking risks on people who haven't necessarily got the experience, as it serves as a basis for further opportunities (A3, 68).

In this case, we were discussing the topic of securing other heritage-related commissions, which A3 felt were less likely before starting out with her commission at Hospitalfield.

Illustrator A1 also pointed to Hospitalfield's year-long Drawing School Residency as an opportunity for making mistakes:

> It really ... pushed me up ... ten levels into what I can achieve, and that it's worth spending the time making mistakes. I suppose that's what Hospitalfield allowed me to do as well because I had a year, I kind of had time to make mistakes ... and know that I can work through them and get to the right answer eventually (A1, 137).

From a curatorial perspective, C2 verified that her role in hosting and supporting artists on residency is to "facilitate [the] basis for development and for artists to experiment with work" by providing time and space, especially without the expectation of producing an output (37).

Artists A7 and A8 similarly described their experiences at Jupiter Artland as chances for risk-taking and mistake-making. A7 explained that the curators at Jupiter Artland took a leap of faith in commissioning her performance/temporary sculpture work, as it was ambitious in scale. She claimed that Jupiter Artland took "a risk" working with her as "a young artist" (A7, 97). Likewise, A8 framed her performance at Jupiter Artland as an "experiment" and explained that, in retrospect, she made mistakes. For example, A8 claimed she feels "problematic" about the track that she sang over, as her collaborator (not present at the event) had produced the music. A8 "felt like it excluded the other partner in the collaboration" and would do it differently upon reflection (159; 169). A8 also noted that this performance took place during a wider period of transition in her artistic career from more performance-based

work to more gallery-based work (169). This project perhaps served as a stepping stone in this career trajectory away from performance.

6.3.2 Findings from ethnographic fieldnotes

This section primarily considers my personal observations and experiences as a visiting ethnographic researcher at Hospitalfield, as compared with findings from informants. Most fieldnotes were recorded prior to the interview phase of this study. These findings consist of observations of Hospitalfield's artists in residence (on-site and off-site) and my personal experiences as a routine participant in Hospitalfield's operations. Using qualitative coding techniques, four topics were identified in the fieldnotes: 1) *trust and self-led exploration*; 2) *experimentation*; 3) *social facilitation and knowledge exchange*; and 4) *structured group residencies.*

Also considered are observations and experiences recorded at Mount Stuart and Jupiter Artland. While these fieldnotes, especially those from Jupiter Artland, are less comprehensive in comparison to those taken at Hospitalfield over several months, they are included here to lend perspective to interview findings, however lightly.

Trust and self-led exploration

Aligned with the interview findings, the fieldnotes reflect a degree of trust and special access offered by Hospitalfield, as well as freedom to explore the space and one's research interests independently**.** It was noted that not only were the artists in residence working primarily in studios, but that they had also set up in the library. Many chose to spend time off-site, whether in town or on the coast. One artist chose to use architectural fragments from the collection to develop digital renderings and explore aspects of scale and perspective. The artists worked on existing and multiple projects at once, without the expectation to provide an output while in residency.

The fieldnotes also reflect my own experiences of feeling "trusted" (8) and privileged (2) at Hospitalfield, both in terms of having unchaperoned access to heritage rooms (namely the dining room) and the so-called "study room" (3-4), as well as to published books on exhibitions and curatorial methods collected for use by residents (2). Additionally, Hospitalfield staff entrusted me with decision-making power, specifically in leading the volunteer team. On one occasion, I relied on my object management skills to advise volunteers as we placed 19th century letters in plastic sleeves for conservation (8).

Regarding my research visits, I was granted the freedom to determine the frequency and structure of my fieldwork (Figure 20). Initially, the team suggested that I work with the collections but remained open to other directions as new ideas emerged (2). Subsequently, the director invited me to collaborate in a more direct way by leading a workshop at the New Scriptorium, on one hand, providing the overarching theme—literacy—and on the other hand, providing no formal contract or set of instructions or standards to follow (9). This lack of structure exemplifies how non-prescriptiveness can cause misunderstandings and dissatisfaction between collaborators. In this case, the lack of instruction and clarity of expectations led to feelings of disempowerment and intrusiveness on my part, especially without prior experience in the field. This push and pull between freedom to explore ideas and lack of structure is further discussed in the analysis of practice-based curatorial fieldnotes, later in this chapter.

Generously, Hospitalfield also invited me to join three cohorts of graduate residents on a field trip to Mount Stuart, where I freely participated in group activities, asked questions to practitioners associated with both organisations, and observed interactions between these two contexts (6). The fieldnotes reflect Mount Stuart's openness to hosting another organisation, as well as a willingness to admit a large group of emerging practitioners into the house on a semi-guided basis, prior to public hours. Most importantly, Mount Stuart trusted the graduate residents to view an unfinished art installation and speak with the commissioned artist in process, which I note engenders mutual respect between practitioners, as well as a chance to share experiences, ask questions, and stimulate conversation.

Additionally, staff at both Mount Stuart and Hospitalfield staff granted residents time to take a self-guided tour outdoors, wandering into the glasshouses and around the extensive grounds (6). The fieldnotes reflect on the immersive and multisensory quality of these exploratory and social experiences (6). I write about carrying firewood to the beach, warming cold hands around a bonfire, encountering a pod of seals, and comparing found objects from the beach (7). This rarity of this group experience, especially for recent graduates practicing outside of the island setting, is striking in retrospect.

Finally, the fieldnotes mention the many paths and non-linear layout of Jupiter Artland—granting a sense of "freedom to roam", with a map to fall back on. This observation considers the experience of visitors rather than practitioners, a perspective my Jupiter Artland fieldnotes

lacked. Overall, the freedom to explore spaces and ideas at Hospitalfield reflected in fieldnotes most resembles the process-based or emergent model discussed by curators and artists above.

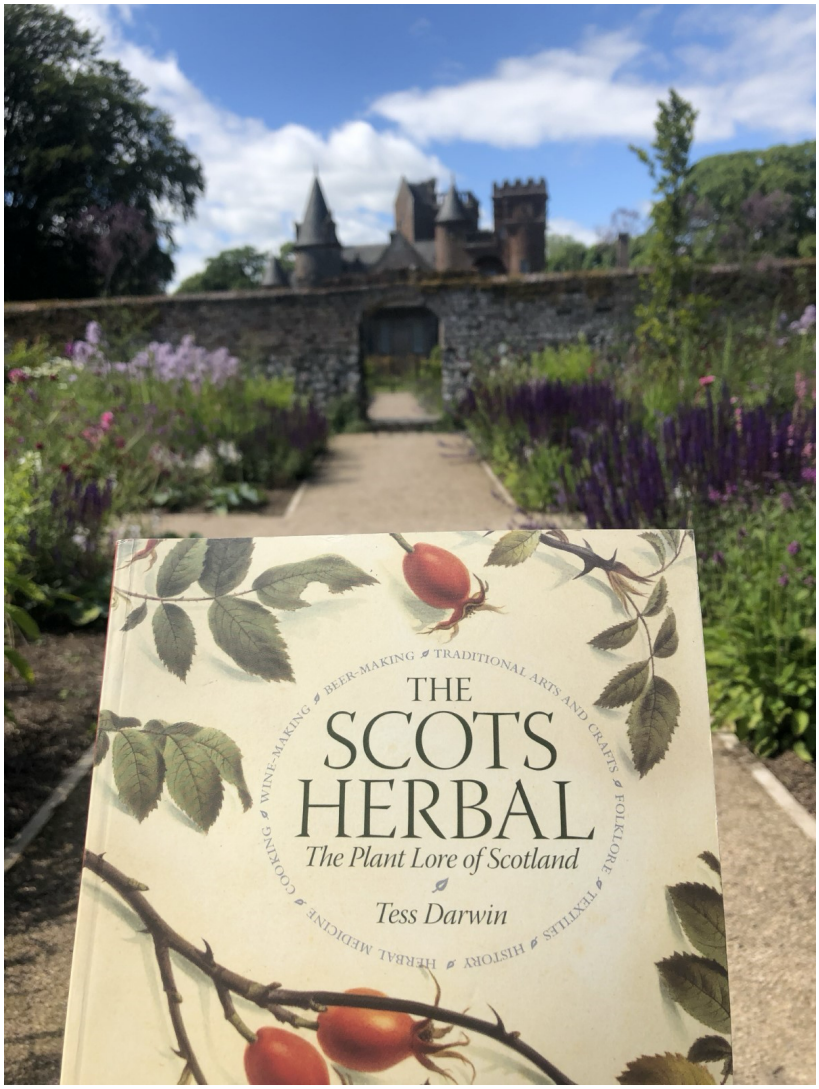


Figure 20. Conducting ethnographic and curatorial fieldwork in Hospitalfield's walled garden during public opening hours. Dooley, O. 2022.

Experimentation

Experimentation, particularly in the form of collaborative and multipurpose activities, underlies many of my experiences at Hospitalfield, from working with the collections volunteer team, to spontaneously joining programmed events.

In 2022, I took part in a learning workshop led by furniture designer Simon Worthington and artist Katie Schwab, which combined artists' talks with the practical task of moving large planks of wood milled from Hospitalfield's fallen trees after a series of storms. A blend of

skill-sharing (conversations between participants, most with a background in architecture and design), playfulness (building with natural materials), and physical labour (carrying the milled wood as a group), the workshop struck me as unusual in both its format and scope:

> It's an unconventional set-up that a researcher like me could suddenly join in and stand on either side of a long plank of wood, and lift it with a stranger, and trust each other to carry it to the other side of a field and not crush each other's fingers! It's a very human encounter that is surprisingly ... uncontrolled, and without the support or capacity or interest from someplace like Hospitalfield, it would be ... difficult to facilitate this (4).

Importantly, I identify ways in which the workshop served as a test site for both the organisation and the artists involved, with attention to the mutually beneficial nature of the project:

> This project doesn't [seem to] have any clear outcome, but Hospitalfield is willing to facilitate this trial run at a scale and in an outdoor location [which the designer is] not normally able to test. So, it's an opportunity for the artists to think big as much as it is beneficial to the organisation, to use these materials on-site (3).

Further, I point out the usefulness of applying experimental and collaborative models to solve problems as they arise—in this case, the fallen trees:

> The source of this experimental programming is really rooted in or mirrors artistic thinking or ... needs ... This is a creative ... way of dealing with something as normal as trees falling down in a storm ... You get this multi-purpose collaborative activity; it becomes just as much about learning, about artmaking, about the sustainable use of local materials as it does about handling [the problem of] fallen down trees (4).

Social facilitation and knowledge exchange

Personally, my research has benefited from the social facilitation embedded in Hospitalfield's residency programme, which brings recent arts graduates, artists from abroad, commissioned artists, collections volunteers, and researchers into orbit.

During one of the graduate residency programmes, I was granted "opportunities to meet the residents and see firsthand how Hospitalfield opens the house and studios for their stay" (3). This meant I had the opportunity to view work in progress, ask residents about their experiences of the site, and find common research interests between us.

As Hospitalfield trusts residents to use their unchaperoned access to the heritage rooms responsibly, spontaneous knowledge exchanges occurred between the artists, researchers, materials, and volunteers. My fieldnotes reflect some of my conversations with these residents. For example, I offered a tour of some of the heritage rooms, sharing my own knowledge about the cedar room and Hospitalfield's collections, while the artist explained her work on architectural fragments, inspired in part by the stonework of the house (4).

The scope for social connection expanded when Hospitalfield invited me to join three groups of graduate residents on an overnight field trip to Mount Stuart (Figure 21). Not only did I observe the residents bonding through this new collective experience, but I also noticed the artists exchange ideas and critically consider aspects of their own practices (7). For example, one artist noted how shocking her performances, informed by her own experiences in sex work, would seem to the average visitors seen at Mount Stuart that day, wondering, with humour, how the ostentatious house setting might add meaning (7).

The fieldtrip also engendered dialogue between art organisations, as facilitators from both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart led critical discussions—for example, questioning the distribution of opportunities for emerging artists, as well as openly discussing the differences in residencies offered by each. The facilitators also interrogated the grand settings of both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, starting a discussion around sources of wealth in these big estates, as well as acknowledging the social barriers presented (5). One artist had taken part in both Hospitalfield's graduate residency and Mount Stuart's emerging artist residency and had a chance to revisit and discuss her experiences working with the public of Bute (7).



Figure 21. Mount Stuart fieldtrip with Hospitalfield's graduate residents. Here, one graduate resident experimentally plays the organ in Mount Stuart's Great Hall (part of the historic fabric of the space), while another resident casually regards. Dooley, O. 2022.

Additionally, residents from Hospitalfield were invited to speak with artist Abbas Akhavan as he navigated the final stage of installing work in Mount Stuart's crypt (5). My fieldnotes describe the curious and respectful response of the residents upon viewing this work in progress and consulting an experienced practitioner: "This is a privilege to speak with the artist mid process and see his work unfinished—clearly something the artists can appreciate"

(6). Many residents asked questions regarding methods, medium, and materials, while a few reflected on the site-specific elements of the work and took notes (5-6).

Finally, a group walk to the beach, where we made a bonfire and witnessed seals posing in the sun, served as an unforgettable basis for social connection and conversation—my fieldnotes reflect a sharing of wonder and stories, as well as guidance from both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart mentors (7).

Structured group residencies

Building upon the social facilitation integral to Hospitalfield's group residency programme, my fieldnotes also point to the structure and hospitality provided by the house staff—accommodation, routine meals, and studio spaces.

In addition to boarding in the historic house and an adjacent dormitory building, residents are given access to both historic and contemporary spaces for working in and for domestic use (Figure 22). Housed and fed, artists then devise their own working routines around the built-in structures of the programme (3). I observed many graduate residents at work in the library and in the studios during the week, while others had ventured off-site (3). After a few conversations, I gathered that not all the artists were interested in exhibiting work in galleries, which one described as a hyper competitive pursuit; instead, many residents took up the chance to develop work alongside likeminded artists and collaborate in group dynamics (3).

Three cohorts of such graduate residents were hosted by Hospitalfield on an overnight field trip to Bute and Mount Stuart, provided with food, drink, accommodation, and social opportunities (5). In my fieldnotes, I observe the informality with which the artists behave socially, many knowing each other from art school, city living, or their residency group (6-7). I also note that some of the artists take the opportunity for granted: over-partying, being late for the bus, and even missing the house tour at Mount Stuart. I theorise that the fieldtrip format too closely mirrored that of a school trip, resulting in a disconnect between those leading the field trip (teachers) and those attending (students), instead of coming together as mutually invested participants (6-7). I personally experienced social anxiety in this setting, becoming aware that the constancy of the group dynamic also reminded me of school and its lack of options for individuals with different needs (6-7).



Figure 22. View of artists' shoes at the base of the grand stairs in Hospitalfield House, attesting to the domestic function of historic spaces. Dooley, O. 2022.

6.3.3 Findings from practice-based (curatorial) fieldnotes

This subsection reflects on my firsthand experiences engaging in curatorial thinking as part of my research methodology at Hospitalfield.

This practice-based approach centred on the co-development of a public workshop entitled "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" (See Appendix A for a descriptive timeline of its development and delivery). This two-hour workshop reconsidered traditions of folklore about nature, prompting around ten participants to design pages for a modern herbal (a book that describes the medicinal properties of plants) with reference to medieval imagery, local stories, and foraged plants for inspiration (Figures 23 and 24). As the workshop leader, I introduced the topics of medieval bookmaking and plant folklore in Scotland, supported by two artists

skilled in plant illustration and storytelling. Medieval-inspired quills, pigments, and calligraphy paper were provided for the second half of the workshop, during which each participant produced a page for a collectively imagined herbal, using creative prompts and reference materials, and discussing ideas amongst one another. The workshop took place in September 2022 outside the New Scriptorium, once the site of a medieval scriptorium (a room dedicated to the writing of manuscripts) historically associated with Hospitalfield.

By adopting this practice-based lens, I was able to experience the process of pitching, publicising, and leading a public event at Hospitalfield, gaining internal, practical insight into Hospitalfield's approaches to programming. This section offers an account of my personal involvement with Hospitalfield's experimental, collaborative, and multimodal approach to curating, not without challenges. Using qualitative coding techniques, three themes were identified in the fieldnotes: 1) *mediation and adaptability*; *2) curatorial structure and support*; and 3) *experiments and new directions.*



Figure 23. Participants engaging with reference material and foraged plants/fungi/seaweed as part of the workshop "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey". Dooley, O. 2022.



Figure 24. Participants engaging with reference material and foraged plants/fungi/seaweed as part of the workshop "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey". Dooley, O. 2022.

Mediation and adaptability

As a curatorial practitioner carrying out a workshop in collaboration with Hospitalfield, my role required mediation between the artists—primarily the first artist selected (Artist A), as well as one of the replacement artists (Artist B) when this first artist dropped out—and the organisation. Although Hospitalfield selected and corresponded with one of the replacement artists involved in facilitating the workshop (Artist C), it was crucial that I adequately framed both my original and adjusted expectations for the workshops to Artist C prior to the event. Beyond mere email correspondence, I met artist C on the day of the workshop, so this involved an introduction, an exchange of reference material, and a conversation including Artist B leading up to the arrival of the public.

During the promotion of the event by the organisation, I needed to step in on behalf of the practitioners involved to ensure that they were represented and credited accurately. Additionally, it was important that the ideas initially developed with Artist A and then adjusted late in the process to better accommodate the practices of Artists B and C, were accurately represented to the public, in ways that satisfied all parties involved. This was a curatorial balancing act to satisfy the host organisation (that acted as the overarching curatorial body), its funders and collaborating institutions, the original artist no longer involved in the project, and the final artists chosen to help facilitate.

This unfamiliar process required an adaptable approach—acting quickly in a crisis or when plans change at the last minute. Accordingly, I reshaped the workshop to "focus on illustrations and stories, dropping the theme of medicine for something more straightforward" (Fieldnotes, 11). In this way, I refined the workshop to suit my strengths, support the interests of the new artists involved, and create more intellectual entry points for the public.

Given that curatorial skills such as mediation require on the ground experience to develop, I experienced unexpected difficulties during this first project as a student-curator, resulting in tensions between the host organisation and Artist B. This will be analysed further in a later section on the challenges faced; the takeaway being that mediation is required from the earliest stages of project development to set flexible yet clear expectations and reduce the potential for misunderstandings.

Curatorial structure and support

Despite a sturdy theoretical background in curating from books and university courses, the practical application of curatorial thinking lacked structure or clear support systems. It quickly became apparent that oversights would be made, and reliance on a mentor would be crucial. In my fieldnotes, I express fear of making mistakes, distress over tense social relations between the host organisation and Artist B, and a strong desire for mentorship (14). Ultimately, I did not want to navigate these mistakes alone, relying on, my existing academic support system:

> I know I have a lot to process, so glad to be with my supervisor this evening to recount all of the details and figure out a way forward. It's not easy when interpersonal tensions get mixed up in curating, but according to [my supervisor] it's a common obstacle and thus a very realistic learning curve (14).

Referring to the curatorial experience of my mentor as a metric, I could begin to understand my own experiences not as mistakes, but as learning opportunities. In retrospect, I identified my need for more structure and clarity of expectations from the host organisation all along, which I now feel more empowered to request.

Experiments and new directions

The fundamental takeaway from this project lies in what comes next. What happens after the two hours? Though initially conceived as a contained, one-off event, the workshop turned out to be more of a test, setting in motion a flurry of alternative ideas and iterations.

The workshop was a trial of balancing the perceived needs of the host organisation, the artists involved, and the public, while also testing a style of facilitation which prioritised social connections and book design. As a researcher, this required the shedding of academic tendencies and the adoption of new leadership styles to better suit the public context. This entailed a lighter-touch approach which afforded participants plenty of time to speak with one another, develop common ground, ask questions, and find independence in their tasks (13).

Learning from mistakes (for example, not setting clearer expectations with the host organisation and participating artists), I have since collaborated with Artist B on an Edinburgh community exhibition about ethnomycology and folklore, as well as an ongoing foraging series incorporating medieval themes—both curated by myself and conceptually grown from this initial project at Hospitalfield. Artist B has also since produced and publicly exhibited

illustrations based on medieval herbals—complete with the borderwork, initials, and colours discussed during the workshop. Similarly, I have spoken with Artist C about developing potential projects in the future based around medicinal plant illustration, which is still an open door (14). Though over a year has passed since those two hours at Arbroath Abbey, connections between participants remain active and related projects continue to slowly emerge.

6.3.4 Summary

Most curators interviewed for this study claimed to integrate their programmes in wider creative networks, provide multiple entry points for different users, support collaborative initiatives, temporary formats, and off-site commissions, and assume experimental approaches to new projects. As active participants of these programmes, many artists expressed how their practices were adequately supported by each organisation, whether that meant working collaboratively, developing temporary exhibitions, pursuing off-site commissions, prioritising process over outputs, or taking risks. Findings from the ethnographic and curatorial practice-based fieldnotes, which documented my firsthand experiences as a participant observer at all three sites and a curatorial researcher at Hospitalfield, served to validate the other practitioners' claims. Both the ethnographic and curatorial fieldnotes attested to the experimental, collaborative, and adaptable approaches of Hospitalfield, adding a more descriptive layer of evidence to expand upon the statements of practitioners. The ethnographic findings also shed light on an organisational alliance between Mount Stuart and Hospitalfield, when the former organisation hosted Hospitalfield's graduate residents on a site visit, facilitating a unique mentorship opportunity for early career artists. This finding stands out as an exemplar for contemporary arts organisations seeking to forge mutually beneficial partnerships with others operating in similar cultural networks.

6.4 Benefits and Challenges

This final section gives an overview of the benefits and challenges of participating in the contemporary art programmes at Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland, highlighting artist experiences but also considering curatorial intentions. While Chapter 4 identified the various programming activities of each case study (e.g. residencies, festivals, commissions, etc.) according to organisational claims, this section places curators' and artists' claims in conversation to build a clearer picture of how users experience these programming activities.

This section also reflects upon the successes and drawbacks of my practice-based research, referring to fieldnotes; these findings often loosely overlap with other practitioner experiences, and are integrated as supplementary evidence to practitioners' claims. Notably, some challenges are reframed as learning experiences by artists/the researcher and not viewed as negative.

Artists reflected positively on six points: their access to resources (time, space, and funding), site visits, reception of care and structural support from curators, opportunities to develop new and lasting methodologies, opportunities to gain career experience and confidence in their practices, and personal meaning derived from their experiences with a particular programme. However, three key difficulties were acknowledged, with some artists finding that they did not have access to enough resources (time and funding) or required more curatorial support. Further, some artists faced challenges installing or preparing for their projects in a historic house setting, while others were negatively impacted by a group residency environment and/or felt that their expectations of participating in a particular programme were not met.

6.4.1. Benefits

Resources

The main benefits cited by both curators and artists include the time, space, and funding afforded to them to explore ideas or make new work. Curators from Hospitalfield repeatedly vouched for the studios, accommodation, and routine structure of the residencies, demonstrating the time and space afforded to artists. C3 pointed to the flat available to artists in residence at Mount Stuart, the immersive lead-in time for commissioned artists, and referred to the funding process as breathing life into projects (113). C6 indicated the "real genuine philanthropy" driving the commissioning and acquisition of artworks at Jupiter Artland (199), repeatedly expressing gratitude to the owner-directors for contributing their resources and hosting artists (208).

Regarding their residency at Mount Stuart, A6 named the resources offered, describing this as a rare opportunity: "It's very rare that you have the time, space, resources, funding, materials, budget to make whatever you want and really respond to a place" (41). Further, A6 mentioned not having to "cover ... heating bills" back home and getting to escape the "bleak" city during winter—which they consider a "bonus" experience (42).

For her project at Jupiter Artland, A7 mentioned having a wood sponsor and not feeling limited by, or even aware of, a budget (96). Additionally, materials and labour by technicians were provided (A7, 107). A7 also claimed she felt less pressure over deadlines, as opposed to working with public galleries (97). A7 attested that "this sort of lead in time, thinking time, that you can ... be in that space off-season ... was really good and ... vital to the work" (96).

At Hospitalfield, A4 also mentioned the advantage of having space away from the public to install, stating that "the whole place is just massive ... so we could set up ... in advance and try stuff out spatially" (150). The practice-based fieldnotes also show that I was granted ample time (from May to September 2022) to plan the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop at the New Scriptorium, along with a generous budget for at least one collaborator (9).

Site visits

In interviews from Mount Stuart, the site visit was frequently cited as an important moment for both curators and artists. These site visits include a conversation with the head of historic collections and archivists, and a tour with the curatorial team (C4, 85).

C4 maintained that the site visit invites "dialogue" through the collections, explaining that "the archives have provided a lot of inspiration and ... basis for ... exhibitions" (85). C5 also described the "artist's first site visit and their reaction" as both memorable and rewarding, explaining that Mount Stuart makes a "mark ... on people", serving as a basis for lasting relationships with artists (83).

In "terms of curatorial practice", C3 argued that an artist's first encounter with a site is a crucial moment:

> That's been really key time ... them finding out from us about what's here, what's on offer, what's possible ... it's also a time for us to get a sense of them, what they might be gravitating towards, which then we can hone down and point to particular aspects in their collections or their archives ... (C3, 85).

For C3, the site visit is a concentrated effort in tuning into an artist's needs, exchanging knowledge, and clearing a path for ideas to take root. For example, C3 described witnessing Martin Boyce's "light bulb moment", which centred on a story about a former tennis court (85-86). C3 saw such moments as the seed of the bond between curator and artist, explaining

that this is when they "start a new relationship" (85-86). C4 also recalled this moment with Boyce, explaining that her anecdote about the tennis court "sparked the germ of the concepts ... he would place his work around" (86).

The site visit is also highlighted in interviews from Jupiter Artland, particularly as a stage in the artistic process characterised by inspiration and enthusiasm. For example, A7 narrated her experience visiting Jupiter Artland, explaining that her encounter with the land and the house sparked an idea that was "bubbling away for years" (93). A7 said "I went around the site ... looking at the trees, looking at ... ancient land, and then, later on, researching ... ancient land claiming laws" (93). A7 explained she was particularly inspired by a small patch of "brown field", which she called a "footprint of a kind of past", in sight of the family house that is "inaccessible to the public" (93). These features of the site, combined with further research, led A7 to believe "this [was] the right place to do this work", and realise a longstanding idea.

A8 also described the site visit at Jupiter Artland as "very interesting"; especially in the context of the proposed project—a procession of "mischievous" performances with other artists, whose work she also expressed admiration for (157).

In interviews about Hospitalfield, site visits were mentioned less, perhaps because of the prevalence of artist residencies, which permit artists to encounter the house and collections more continuously. However, A4 explained that she and her collaborator "spent a lot of time walking around and looking at different things in the collections", and though discouraged from site-specific approaches by the curators, felt "possessed by the house" and decided on a site responsive project (151). Previously, A4 had carried out a residency and produced sound work unrelated to the history of the site. It was this later visit and collaboration which seeded an interest in this alternative direction.

The practice-based fieldnotes describe my regular research visits to Hospitalfield, sometimes multiple times a month, engaging with the archives, volunteers, garden, and public events. Most notably, I was invited to the New Scriptorium at Arbroath Abbey to attend an outdoor event with the Angus Writers' Circle in July 2022, over two months in advance of the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop. This was significant for assessing if the temporary bothy structure was wheelchair accessible, and if amenities, such as outdoor seating or food/drinks, would be provided (Fieldnotes, 11). This firsthand knowledge of the site was invaluable on the day of the workshop in September, especially informing the practical

decision to host the workshop outside the bothy, with picnic tables and rugs for seating (Fieldnotes, 12).

Care and structural support

The benefits of curatorial care—in terms of mentorship, hospitality, and residency structures—were most clearly cited in interviews from Hospitalfield. While at Hospitalfield, A2 noted feeling the benefits of the residency programme's hospitality and structure:

> There was an incredibly luxurious side to it in the sense that meals were cooked and prepared for you three times a day ... there was this ... very generous, hospitable side (A2, 60).

Echoing C2's claims that Hospitalfield's residency programme offers a rhythm for artists to "focus in on their practice" (37), A2 attested to the unprecedented consistency that the availability of regular meals nurtured in her practice:

> I ... developed this daily practice that I've never quite had enough ... consistent consecutive ... days of studio time on my own ... to ... develop ... I would go to the shared studio space complex and write ... and then in the afternoons, I had access to [the music room] that I would do movement in ... It meant I could divide up my days ... and that was helpful to have ... reflection time and then practice ... time (A2, 53- 55).

A2 described this residency as "foundational" because four weeks of structure allowed her to develop solo research for the first time (63). For A2, this was a memorable shift away from mainly collaborative work:

> [It] really changed how I thought about my practice and how I've continued to figure out what practice is for me (A2, 53).

A1 also described having a healthy routine while a resident at Hospitalfield, dividing her time between planning, teaching, and solo practice (130). Other types of curatorial care noted include the provision of practical support for sculptural commissions, such as planning and installation (A3, 66). Regarding Hospitalfield's group residency format, A4 described the "sharing events that were ... organised by some of the artists that were there" as beneficial for sounding out work with the curatorial team present (139).

These interview findings from Hospitalfield resonate with my practice-based fieldnotes, which repeatedly describe the hospitality provided by Hospitalfield. This includes the provision of meals for myself and the co-facilitators of the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop (Fieldnotes, 6; 10; 12), mentorship from curators (Fieldnotes, 3; 7), and access to books for research (Figure 20; Fieldnotes, 3), such as *The Scots Herbal: The Plant Lore of Scotland* by Tess Darwin (1996). As discussed in Section 6.3.3, I was granted the opportunity to invite an artist to collaborate with (Artist A), and when that artist dropped out shortly before the event day, Hospitalfield found a replacement artist (Artist C) and permitted me to select a second collaborator (Artist B). Without this organisational support, the event would have likely been delayed or cancelled.

Regarding Jupiter Artland, Curator C6 repeatedly acknowledged the hospitality offered by the owner-directors, who run the programme "without any public support…entirely from the family's own resource" (199). C6 explained that the family's house plays a major role in hosting the artists and the curatorial team, stating that they "are always in and out of their house" (209). C6 expressed gratitude for the hospitality of the directors, who "give so much of themselves to allow this to happen", from funding the projects to feeding and hosting the artists during installation periods (209). Neither of the artists interviewed about Jupiter Artland mentioned the house, probably because their work did not fall under the major commissions category, but both noted receiving support from the curatorial team.

Developing new and lasting methodologies

Every artist interviewed about Hospitalfield attested to developing new and lasting methodologies while on residency or carrying out a commission.

A2 claimed that her residency at Hospitalfield, which provided time and space for development, laid the groundwork for developing a new methodology:

> I ... developed a methodology that I call very loosely taking the temperature of the body, which is kind of just ... a light form of checking in ... with where I'm at physically, mentally, emotionally through improvisational practice (A2, 53).

She went on to define this as both valuable and lasting in her movement-based practice:

> It was very valuable to articulate that for the first time ... [it] has really continued to be quite a key element of how I have continued to work, and work with others (A2, 53).

During the interview, A2 agreed that the method was "born" in the context of the residency (60). A2 said this was made possible through "having this period of four weeks in this very specific setting, with a very large space that I could access ... every day" (A2, 60). Reflecting on her practice since this residency, A2 stated that she "still love[s] and value[s] and spend[s] a lot of time" using this approach (63).

My own practice-based fieldnotes contain similar claims, framing the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop as an initial lesson in balancing of light-touch facilitation (introduction to context, materials and methods), social connection (sharing ideas), and independent development (experimenting with materials). As A2 found value in articulating a new artistic methodology for the first time at Hospitalfield, incorporating this into her practice long-term, I learned from the chance to devise and lead a public workshop for the first time, improving upon my approaches since (Fieldnotes, 13-14). Moreover, this experience lent valuable, firsthand insight into my curatorial research about arts in heritage programming.

A3 expressed a very similar sentiment, claiming that the approaches she developed during the time of her commission at Hospitalfield are fundamental to her practice now:

> I do think, some of the methodology, the methods I came up with during that time, are ... core to my practice (A3, 79-80).

A1 similarly mentioned that the "way" she works, balancing imagery and text, is "all a development of the work I did at Hospitalfield" (137). A1 explained that this format is a continuous thread in her work opportunities at other historic sites (134). A1 still refers to her old drawings of the house and the gardens when making work, saying "it's really important" to her process even now (135). A4 also claimed that she still uses the same site-specific approaches of layering voice samples and field recordings in her current songs, explaining that "the work has continued" but she has "been working in slightly different contexts" (156).

At Jupiter Artland, A7 attested to developing new methodologies, claiming her experience "introduced [her] to ... ways of modular ... fabricating and thinking" by giving her the confidence to work at a large scale (109). Curator C6 also mentioned the "freedom" she was granted to develop new projects at Jupiter Artland, explaining how she built her own role as Head of Exhibitions and Learning Programmes to better suit the directors' vision and the longevity of the programme. She cited her involvement in developing a collaborative

curatorial model with artist Rachel Maclean and a youth council, which led to the realisation of "a major public art commission in another town" (206).

Further opportunities and confidence

Many of the artists insisted that their experiences boosted their professional confidence, led to further career opportunities, or directly contributed to the development of new projects.

A few of the artists referred to the value of working for an organisation that has an established reputation for working with big name artists (A6, 46). Regarding both her residency and graphic novel commission, A1 explained the personal value of participating in Hospitalfield's history of supporting artists:

> The fact that I was part of that history [at Hospitalfield] is incredible ... I'm one of the artists that have worked there in the past (131).

A7 assigned similar personal value to her experiences at Jupiter Artland:

> It was really special ... to do something at scale outdoors in a location where so many other artists have shown, are showing or have shown before (A7, 97).

A7 claimed that her 2014 project at Jupiter Artland, which she notes has a great reputation and "a name ... for itself", gave her the confidence "to apply for bigger commissions" as a younger artist (109). A7 also explained that the ideas and techniques from building sculptures for her commission fed into a solo exhibition in the same year, as well as seeded new research ideas about agency in city spaces (104). A7 claimed that she learned "a lot from fabricating at such [large] scale", so "moving to something smaller ... felt much more ... doable" (105).

Other artists pointed to how their experiences lent them unprecedented confidence. For example, A1 claimed that her book commission at Hospitalfield "really ... pushed [her] up a level, like ten levels into what [she] can achieve" (137). A1 referred to the Free Drawing School residency as "the complete turning point" in her career and stated that her recent projects come "directly" from her Hospitalfield residency regarding both topic and methodology (137).

From a curatorial perspective, artists are granted a chance to bond with other creatives through these experiences (C3, 84). C4 described the whole experience of working at Mount Stuart "as a bonding experience" with other artists "because ... they've experienced some of the same

issues" (84). A2 stated that her residency at Hospitalfield opened conversations with potential collaborators and led to new professional connections that have endured to the present day (53). A4 felt her Hospitalfield residency "generated a lot", explaining she used the research on surround sound to inform a show at CCA and began "to make music and maybe work more in ... a like performance context" (140).

A3 viewed her commission at Hospitalfield as successful in that it opened the door to apply for otherwise exclusive heritage projects:

> It's a catch-22 with [arts and] heritage projects ... If you haven't done one you aren't ever going to get one because you have to do a successful one ... And the more you've done, the more likely ... you are to get them. They [are] like a self-fulfilling prophecy (A3, 68).

A3 usually works in white cube gallery spaces, but Hospitalfield offered a chance to exhibit in an "art space ... within the grounds of a stately home with a more heritage leaning aspect" (75). A3 interpreted this as an unprecedented chance to experiment with outdoor sculpture visually associated with a historic house (75).

A3 also elaborated on how working with historic references deepened her practice. A3 explains that working in response to history "allows ... moments of connectivity", which brings artists deeper into a topic, while at the same time pushing the artist in a fresh direction: "There's things ... that you uncover ... that somehow allow people the way into ... histories they wouldn't necessarily [know]" (69). Simultaneously, this process furthered A3's practice-based PhD research, which required an output (65).

While I did not have the budget or time to produce a zine as part of the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop as first proposed, the seeds were planted for future projects, with scope for variation on theme and format. My practice-based fieldnotes note that many attendees voiced positive reviews, explaining the event was a valuable chance to forge new social bonds, develop personal interests, and share stories and skills (Fieldnotes, 13). At the end of the workshop, participants gladly displayed their illustrated pages, and these have since been uploaded to a group Facebook page—a platform where participants can remain in contact and continue conversations about foraging, pigments, and bookmaking. Further, Artist C

provided testimony regarding the relevance of the exhibition to her own work, as well as enhancing her knowledge of Hospitalfield's medieval links to Arbroath Abbey:

> [It] was really ... relevant to what I've been learning about medicinal plants ... [and] interesting to learn about ... plant lore. So, I think it enhanced my experience of being at Hospitalfield (Artist C, 136-7).

This positive feedback lent me the confidence to continue facilitating public workshops about plant folklore in my local circles, including at the Granton Community Hub, ArtWalk Porty, and Collective in Edinburgh.

Personal meaning

One curator and a few artists spoke of the personal meaning of their respective projects, inclusive of the testimonies discussed in the section above on care and structural support. Curator C6 spoke of the personal value gained from working with Jupiter Artland, stating she "was given an awful lot of freedom in developing that programme" and "learned so much for it" (207). Artist A7 spoke on the personal life impact of her project at Jupiter Artland, explaining that it was "personally" and "emotionally" valuable, stating that it was a "personal achievement" and "triumph" that she was able to share with her "nearest and dearest" family who all attended one of the performances (110). Conversely, A8 found that she does not always keep her performance with Jupiter Artland on her website, but that it is at least on her CV to demonstrate her versatility. Ultimately, she sees it as "one of the many places that I've performed", listing other performances from the same year at, for example, the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival (A8, 168).

6.4.2 Challenges

Resources

Cited by artists as some of the main benefits of carrying out residencies and commissions in historic houses, time and funding were also cited as limiting factors.

A3 repeatedly referred to the "small" budget for her commission at Hospitalfield, which determined the scale of her sculptural contribution and quality of the work (75). A3 also reflected on the challenge of making something with "a real visual impact" within a small budget (65). For example, A3 recalled not having the budget to hand dye fabric as originally intended, opting instead for more affordable printed scaffolding mesh (67). A3's comment

resonates with my practice-based-field notes, which reflected on the obstacles of delivering the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop with an unclear materials budget; the responsibility to provide workshop materials fell to me (Fieldnotes, 11). This proved challenging, especially given the nearly two-hour journey on public transportation to Hospitalfield.

With similar concerns of budget, A8 explained that she had other shows around the same time as her performance at Jupiter Artland, which meant she had to think about budgeting and planned to reuse her costume in another exhibition in Birmingham (159). While this does not necessarily imply that Jupiter Artland offered a small budget, it shows that this artist felt pressed to save resources to sustain multiple opportunities.

Additionally, many artists reflected on the time pressures of their residencies and commissions, once again limiting the quality of their work. A4 insisted her collaborative installation at Hospitalfield was an "incomplete work" due to time and labour limitations, explaining the staff were helpful with installation but it was "a really unfathomable and unyielding thing ... when you're responding to the weight of something like that kind of space" (149). A4 then mused that this is a "true representation" of how difficult site-specific approaches are, especially given a time limit (149).

Due to the time constraint of their residency, A6 reported that they "wanted to squeeze everything out of it" and so felt "a lot of ... self-inflicted pressure", even though the residency required no formal outcomes (41). For A6, a three-month residency was not ideal, especially for socially engaged practice, stating "you have to be in a place for at least six months in order to really form solid relationships with a community," criticising shorter residencies for being "unethical" (41). However, with a personal goal to immerse themself as much as possible, they still managed to go "turbo mode" to meet locals via Facebook, posters, and over cups of tea (A6, 41). They explained: "I wanted to make objects ... to reflect people ... and for there to be time for the process of them to be created ... [so] I had to fast track [the] ... engagement side" (A6, 41).

Compounding time and budget constraints, some artists attested to travel difficulties and expenses, also reflected in my fieldnotes reflecting on the long journeys to and from each site. A6 explained that during their winter residency at Mount Stuart, getting out to communities around the island was "tricky", especially due to the limited public bus services during

winter—they even commented on spending "a portion of the materials budget on taxis" (40). A8 also recalled the public buses to Jupiter Artland as a "pain", implying the site is difficult to reach without a taxi or car (163).

Installation, rehearsal, and preparation

There were challenges regarding the installation, visual display of artworks, and preparation for events in historic house settings for artists and curators alike. C3 explained Mount Stuart is not a white cube, so it is challenging to compete with the overwhelming visual detail present in the interior: "Mount Stuart isn't some sort of austere Georgian kind of place with lots of space. It's very Gothic Victorian ... every inch ... has something" (121). C3 went on to say that "remarkably" artists do overcome this challenge, and "it's not necessarily something to be fought against" (121).

According to A3, outdoor sculpture commissions at historic houses like Hospitalfield pose massive difficulties, because unlike a blank gallery space, "what you're working within is something that is also already very aesthetically lovely ... you have to think about weather conditions, the wind ... you're much freer in a gallery context to make something" (66). This is something A3 also framed as a learning experience; a chance to experiment and grow as an artist (77).

A7 also testified to the challenges of weather in outdoor works, which had to "withstand being outside and to keep being moved around"—it was a wet summer at Jupiter Artland and "the black [of her wooden sculptures] got so dirty so quickly" (96). Like A3, A7 saw this as a learning experience saying, "with anything on that scale ... until you've done it, you're like alright, I'll do this differently next time" (96). A8 described her outdoor performance, also at Jupiter Artland, as a "positive experience", with the main challenge being a feeling of vulnerability and exposure to the elements while waiting for a timed performance to begin, saying "there's a vulnerability of ... standing in a stone sculpture outside, waiting for people to arrive", but that she "quite enjoyed that" (163).

A5 explained that working in the Marble Hall at Mount Stuart was a "compromise at every stage" because the space was used for public tours on a daily basis: "Even during the run of performances ... we couldn't use the space because it was open to the public during the day so there was no time for dress rehearsals" (189). This is an example that reflects more on the conflicting commitments of the host organisation (to remain open to the public as part of its

programme, but also to support visual artists in their practices) than it does on challenges posed by the historic house environment.

Analogous to A5's experiences at Mount Stuart, my practice-based fieldnotes describe Hospitalfield's limited capacity to offer practical support on the day of the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop due to a coinciding residency programme (12). Again, this reflects a conflict of commitments, as well as the demands placed on a small staff team. While lunch and transportation from Hospitalfield to Arbroath Abbey were provided, the attention of the host organisation was diffused between our needs and those of the residents, resulting in a rearrangement of plans. This was exacerbated by unclear communication (i.e., unspecified project parameters and meeting times before the workshop) and the high-pressure context of the workshop as part of this PhD research (12).

Unmet expectations and working with others

Some artists felt as though their expectations of working with a particular organisation were not adequately met. For example, A8 noted that although she felt cared for, especially by the external curator, she did not meet the founders/landowners of Jupiter Artland for her 2016 performance, nor the one she did for Jupiter Rising in 2018, which she described as "kind of weird" (161). It left a lot of questions unanswered about the place, the source of its wealth, and the motivations behind its commissioning scheme (A8, 160-161).

Curators from Hospitalfield maintained that the group residencies provide community, structure, and a trusting environment to work within—however, the findings show that group residencies are not supportive for every artist. A2 explained that her group "wasn't ... very harmonious" (54) and did not "gel" (55), which meant the "sessions were ... fraught" and artists "had very diverging desires of how to engage with this group entity" (54). A2 repeatedly referred to the experience as like "school", which she implies was undesirable in some instances (55). This sentiment echoes my fieldnotes, which also dwell on social discordance and compares the social environment to school (6). A2 described a lack of enthusiasm amongst her peers, which was a "disruptive element" to her residency experience (60). A2 explained that this social friction has discouraged her to apply for other group residency opportunities, stating that she since feels "more aware of the capacity for a group dynamic to affect" individual working patterns, although she still chooses to work collaboratively in her practice (63). Pressure and social tension in these settings can also

intimidate or discourage artists from continuing their art practice. A4 explained that due to "tensions that came up in that work" between her and the organisation led her to be less active in the "art world", finding refuge in "music and live performance context" (155).

On the other hand, solo residencies can be isolating and result in loneliness—especially for older artists, as C1 pointed out as justification for Hospitalfield's group residency structure (38). A6 reported that their solo residency at Mount Stuart was "spooky" and "quite hard", as they were mostly living alone for three months—though they fondly reflected on friendships they had made with kitchen staff and other locals of the island (40).

Akin to A2 and A4's experiences of pressure at Hospitalfield, social tensions experienced as part of planning the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop are detailed in my practice-based fieldnotes. Faced with uncertainty upon Artist A suddenly leaving the project due to extenuating circumstances, I lacked the practical experience and time to clearly identify my concerns and new expectations following this change, as well as the foresight to manage the expectations of the host organisation (Fieldnotes, 13). Ultimately, differences arose between the host organisation and Artist B, requiring immediate mediation and conflict resolution skills (Fieldnotes, 13). Best accepted as a learning opportunity, these circumstances led me to recognise the gravity of setting expectations from the onset of a project, especially if new collaborations are involved. This includes planning introductions and site visits, explicitly discussing the goals and policies of the host organisation, voicing concerns, and developing trust between practitioners involved.

6.4.3 Summary

This last analysis section centres the individual experiences of artists working at Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland, juxtaposed with curatorial claims and supplemented by my own experiences as a curatorial researcher at Hospitalfield. While the findings provide practical feedback for each of these three programmes, qualifying the benefits and challenges of carrying out commissions and/or participating in residency programmes at each of these sites, their significance also lies in their transferability to other arts in heritage programmes. Many artists interviewed for this research highlighted the value of the resources, site visits and curatorial care offered by these types of programmes on both professional and personal levels, with some claiming that their experiences supported the development of new creative methodologies and led to further career opportunities. Other artists indicated areas for

improvement within these types of programmes, confirming that their practices were limited by small budgets, the period rooms, insufficient space, stretched staff teams, and social tensions with curators or other artists. Moreover, these findings begin to address the lack of artists' voices in assessments of arts in heritage programmes, calling into question organisational and curatorial value claims.

6.4.4 Practical recommendations

Based on the case-specific findings of this doctoral research, these six recommendations can be regarded as a toolbox for curators and other practitioners to use as needed. It is not prescriptive checklist, but rather a pool of empirical knowledge gathered via ethnographic and practice-based approaches and synthesised into practical suggestions.

- **Prioritise the comfort of artists as they work on site, especially in the design of artists' residencies and site visits.** Findings from all three case studies suggest that artists experience social discomfort due to the imposing nature of grand historic house settings, and that this could be better acknowledged by curators during site visits. This social discomfort can be mitigated by ensuring that the invited artist meets the curatorial staff and feels welcomed.

  Group artists' residency formats can also cause social tensions (as experienced at Hospitalfield), while solo residency formats can result in loneliness (as experienced at Mount Stuart). One solution is to offer a mix of residency formats. Alternatively, it is possible to incorporate hours for independent study in group residences or implement a biweekly critique group or social engagement workshop for artists working alone.

  Additionally, conservation requirements in historic houses can lead to the physical discomfort for artists. For example, a room kept at a low temperature can worsen pain conditions. Artists also feel restricted by historic house interiors and often prefer spaces where they can move and make without obstacles or distractions. One solution is to provide a separate studio space, as at Hospitalfield, where artists can comfortably work.

- **Empower artists to feel trusted and responsible for conservation of heritage.** The curatorial team from Hospitalfield take this approach, inviting artists in residence to

live and work in the historic rooms, rather than intimidated or limited by them. While interview findings from both Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart confirmed ongoing tensions between conservation aims and artists' practices, Hospitalfield's active involvement of artists in the conservation process offers one strategy for reconciling the concept of heritage zones with contemporary use.

- **Move away from site-specific residency and commissioning models.** Findings from Hospitalfield suggest that empowering artists to choose whether to work site-specifically or not, rather than prescribing a response-based approach, fosters experimental and collaborative modes of working and contributes to more varied arts programme. It is likely that artists find the concept of site-specificity too rigid or outdated and prefer to develop their own language and responses to site, directly or indirectly. One solution is to programme artists' events, residencies, and exhibitions at off-site locations, which all three organisations considered for this study have trialled—Hospitalfield with its programming at Arbroath Abbey, Mount Stuart with its socially-engaged artists' residency extending into Rothesay, and Jupiter Artland with its Jupiter+ programme. Findings from Jupiter Artland most acutely challenge the notion that works commissioned on-site must remain bound to one location, expanding notions of site-specificity.

- **Consider inviting artists to return for multiple residencies, commissions, workshops, or events.** Findings from Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart suggest that this can engender longer-term projects, grow communities, and deepen engagements with place. As the curators from Hospitalfield point out, site-responsive modes of making require longer timeframes to unfold.

- **Initiate healthy routines in hosting artists' residencies, with regular meals and mentorship sessions.** Findings from Hospitalfield show that this contributed to a healthy working routine structured around communal mealtimes.

- **Choose to work collaboratively within existing cultural networks or forge new connections.** For example, if a certain type of artists' residency is not possible on site or certain equipment is not available, partnering with other artist residency spaces or workshops might offer a solution. In Scotland, this might include Cove Park in Argyll, Bothy Project (multiple locations), or Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop (which has a history of collaboration with Hospitalfield).

6.5 Conclusion

By examining the approaches curators take, as well as the preferred methods and needs of artists, we can veer away from pigeonholing these programmes by using restrictive labels like *site-specific* and *intervention* to describe curatorial strategies. The findings show that most curators and artists preferred to amend the definitions of these terms using different language, moving away from the art historical connotations to describe their work. This alternative language has been collated into Tables 5 and 6 for reference and reflects a shared interest in evading serialised formats, characterised by some as boring or exploitative, and emphasising individual practice. Remarkably, both curators and artists demonstrated their empowerment as agents of change in redefining these established models. Further, they challenged such black-and-white categorisation by conceptualising their projects as complex processes informed by multiple frameworks and interests.

Practitioner perspectives were amplified in this chapter; the empirical evidence presented suggests a multiplicity of more dynamic approaches to curating contemporary art in historic house settings. Some leading examples emerged, many of which sit alongside or expand upon site-specific responses or interventionist approaches. For example, findings from Hospitalfield point towards strong participation in wider creative networks, and portray multimodal, collaborative, and experimental curatorial approaches in a positive light. Artists also benefitted from the structured group residencies, which have been said to allow time and space for new methodologies to develop. Although Mount Stuart curators seem to adhere to the common framework of site responsiveness for most commissions, informants also pointed to emergent approaches and instances of adaptability. One artist explained how her collaborative project transcended the existing commissioning model, demonstrating the flexibility of Mount Stuart's otherwise consistent programme. The strongest evidence from Jupiter Artland indicates ways in which site-specific works can be brought off-site and still retain meaning,

challenging the notion that they must be bound to one location. These findings also point to areas for improvement for each programme, revealing how each can learn from the other to address these oversights. While practitioners portrayed Hospitalfield as a leader in diversifying curatorial approaches, supporting artistic development, and accommodating numerous artists per year, some also faced challenges due to funding, time, and labour limitations. Further, pressure and social tension discouraged at least one artist in this context (A4), echoing the curatorial fieldnotes. In the Mount Stuart data set, we see a chance for more variation in what artists are invited to do on site, and an opportunity to partner with other artist residency programmes in Scotland, such as Cove Park. This format could offer a degree of critical distance from the immersive context of working on the Isle of Bute, similar to Hospitalfield's partnership with Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, which fluctuated between rural and urban contexts. Meanwhile, findings from Jupiter Artland point to the absence of a consistent residency programme. Overall, this study reveals a potential for nurturing a healthier organisational ecology in Scotland (Elving et al., 2019; Holden, 2015), not only by fostering more knowledge exchange between these geographically related organisations, but also by bringing other types of contemporary art entities into the conversation to fully support artists in their individual projects and practices in general.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter brings together the research questions, aims, context, methodology, and key findings in a final discussion, connecting and validating the research project's contributions with more recent scholarship on the intersection of arts and heritage. It also addresses the academic validity of the methods and findings, acknowledges limitations, and indicates areas for further research.

7.1 Overview

The research presented in this thesis explores experiences of and curatorial approaches to contemporary art in heritage practice in Scotland, with particular attention to three contemporary art programmes based in historic house settings: Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland, selected for their comparability as charities based in rural locations. It shifts scholarly attention away from audience perspectives and the major UK commissioning practices privileged in recent studies (Cass *et al*., 2014-17; Burton *et al*., 2017-2019; Cass *et al.*, 2020), and towards a wider diversity of creative practitioner perspectives and alternative curatorial strategies. Unlike recent scholarship suggests, contemporary art in heritage programmes facilitates more than site-specific or temporary commissions, offering a range of artists' residencies (e.g., group, solo, emerging, and interdisciplinary residencies), festivals, workshops, events, permanent commissions, and learning opportunities, which engage with heritage to varying degrees and through a plurality of creative practices. Additionally, they support practices beyond site-specific sculpture and installation art, including the work of illustrators, applied artists, creative writers, performers, and musicians. Leveraging the subjective position of the researcher to draw out complexities within each case study, key differences appeared between not only organisational and practitioner perspectives, but also curator and artist perspectives. In making visible the dynamic, collaborative, and experimental practices of artists and curators working at the intersection of art and heritage, these case-specific findings not only contribute to critical theoretical frameworks but also inform practical recommendations for the organisations and creative practitioners involved in this research and adjacent arts in heritage practitioners.

7.2 Research questions and aims revisited

At the outset of this doctoral research, there was a significant lack of published scholarship platforming the experiences of art curators or artists, as opposed to those of audiences, in examinations of contemporary art in heritage practices. With few studies to refer to, this research opted for an exploratory approach with broad research aims, which were to 1) gain insight into the nuances of developing contemporary art programmes and artworks in historic house settings; 2) reassess the relevance of heritage engagement in creative practices enacted at sites deemed historically important; and 3) indicate new directions for thinking about and programming contemporary art within heritage settings, based on practitioner testimonies.

Moving between organisational perspectives and the perspectives of individual curators, artists, and the researcher, the following questions were explored:

RQ 1: [Addressed in Chapter 4] How do contemporary art programmes based within historic house settings represent and define heritage? In what ways do contemporary art practices intersect with this perceived heritage?

RQ 2: [Addressed in Chapter 5] Based on the perceptions and experiences of contemporary art practitioners working within historic house settings, in what capacity does heritage play a role (if any) in the curatorial/artistic process?

RQ 3: [Addressed in Chapter 6] How do common curatorial strategies (such as site-specificity or intervention) factor into curatorial and artistic practices within historic house contexts? How can contemporary art programmes in heritage contexts exceed or challenge these common frameworks? What are the perceived practitioner benefits/challenges of these programmes?

RQ 1 and RQ 2 addressed how contemporary art programmes and practitioner experiences are shaped by heritage, shifting the dominant arts in heritage discourse away from assessing heritage experiences and towards assessing art experiences. Instead of examining how contemporary art intersects with heritage (Black and Farley, 2020), this line of inquiry considered how (or if) the concept of heritage intersects with contemporary art practices, placing practitioner perspectives at the forefront. RQ 3 investigated how curators can rethink common programming strategies, foregrounding the needs of contemporary artists engaged with arts in heritage practice. It linked the findings of this research with practical applications,

offering recommendations for improving or developing contemporary art in heritage programming in the future.

7.3 Research context and methods revisited

The literature review (Chapter 2) provided a starting point for this empirical research, establishing both the research context and gaps or oversights within the current scholarship. Highlighting a need for more creative practitioner perspectives and curatorial methodologies in arts and heritage studies, it also served as a basis for refining the research aims and questions discussed above.

This research emerged from a critical turn across the arts and humanities, most closely relating to theoretical shifts in the academic fields of heritage studies, museology, and curatorial studies. Applying the critical reconceptualisation of heritage as more-than-material, this thesis highlights the complex range of human experientiality and the respective social roles of heritage, institutions, curators, and artists according to individual perspectives. Linking these critical fields, it brings the findings of curatorial studies in closer conversation with critical heritage and museology. While recent arts in heritage research makes a strong case for the interpretive potential of art interventions in heritage settings (Cass *et al.*, 2020), it largely overlooks the impact of such programming on creative practitioners. It raises questions regarding how commissioned artists interact with heritage sites, conceptualise heritage, or relate such commissions to their wider practices or careers. Additionally, few curatorial approaches are scrutinised in arts in heritage literature, with site-specific commissions receiving the most academic attention. This has the effect of marginalising other types of arts in heritage programming, such as artist's residencies (Elving *et al.*, 2019) or longer term or recurring projects (Breen, 2020), as well as practices beyond sculpture and installation art, including the work of illustrators (Greenberg, 2021), applied artists (Leach Pottery, 2024), creative writers (Renton, 2023), and musicians (Halsway Manor, 2025) engaged with heritage settings.

This thesis therefore inhabits a vast new research area concerned with untangling "complex meshwork[s] of perceived power hierarchies, institutional intent, different understandings of the artistic processes, and different expectations of participant and/or audience engagement" (Farley and Pollock, 2022, 250). Within this shifting arena of power dynamics and perceptions, it is unclear how heritage is conceptualised by participants working within arts in

heritage contexts. As Farley and Pollock (2022) indicate, “the framing of this practice needs to move from its largely instrumental and audience-orientated narrative, toward a more critical understanding of the practice itself” (256).

To address the paucity of alternative creative perspectives in arts in heritage research, the research methodology (Chapter 3) valued participant subjectivity as a source of knowledge. It sets an example for other arts in heritage research by centring curator and artist voices, including in this case that of the researcher. The research approaches chosen for this study were tailored to operate in synthesis, blending curatorial practice-based and reflexive ethnographic research methods, housed within a case study framework. Data collection methods, such as desk research, participant observation, fieldnotes, and semi-structured interviews, were employed to juxtapose institutional claims and practitioner perceptions of each contemporary art in heritage setting. Convenience sampling and comparable case selection were effective methods for establishing a pool of informants (including programme directors, curatorial staff members, artists in residence, sculptors, installation artists, dancers/movement/performance artists, and illustrators) and research contexts to explore. Data analysis techniques such as close text readings, thematic coding, and descriptive narrative proved useful for determining the relevance of heritage at each site and codifying terminologies used by art practitioners to describe their experiences and modes of working. This methodology promoted critical reflection on the researcher’s positionality, gaining perspective from organisational documentation, curatorial thinking, participatory fieldwork, and the multifaceted claims of informants.

7.4 Key findings revisited

This thesis is comprised of three analysis chapters (Chapters 4-6), each answering one of the three research questions discussed in Section 7.2.

Chapter 4 explored the intersection of contemporary art and heritage from an organisational perspective, examining public documents published by or associated with Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, and Jupiter Artland to determine if and how the concept of heritage is conveyed within each programme. Close textual analyses of organisational missions, staff structures, marketing materials, and other descriptions of public programming, with supporting quantitative analysis of financial records, suggested that heritage is a pervasive concept in programming at Mount Stuart, a strong foundation for programming at Hospitalfield, and an

aesthetic backdrop to programming at Jupiter Artland, where few links to heritage are sustained (see Section 4.2). Notably, heritage is acknowledged by all three organisations within public documents but seems to play significantly less of a role within contemporary art programming Jupiter Artland (see Section 4.2.3). The first two sets of organisational documents bear striking similarities in defining heritage, attaching value claims to the historic house, collections, grounds, and surrounding natural/cultural landscapes. Conversely, Jupiter Artland's documentation emphasises the reputation of its contemporary sculpture park and the rawness of the natural landscape over establishing any visual or narrative connections to the histories of the estate. The organisational documents interrogated here evidence a vast range of heritage descriptions, at once underlining the presence of material heritage, alluding to historic narratives, and containing subjective value claims about the historic sites (see Table 1). It is apparent that each organisation eludes a consistent or straightforward definition of heritage, presenting a multifaceted and evolving impression of the role of heritage within each programme. These findings resonate with and respond to the critical heritage discourse analysed in Chapter 2, which postulates that heritage is a complex process or experience, shifting between material and immaterial dimensions (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2012; Waterton and Watson, 2013).

Building on Chapter 4, Chapter 5 examines testimony from semi-structured interview data with artists and curators to assess the relevance of heritage within each programme based on practitioner experiences. Rigorous analytical techniques were employed here, combining coding, close text readings, and comparative analysis to identify a range of fourteen themes in the curator dataset and twelve themes in the artist dataset. Overall, findings from this set of interviews suggest that heritage plays a tangible and active role in curation and art production at Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, with most practitioners claiming to regularly engage with heritage on material or immaterial levels. The findings also reveal that at Jupiter Artland heritage is an unknown or irrelevant factor, playing little to no role in the contemporary art programming and practice on site.

These qualitative findings in Chapter 5 illustrated that analyses of practitioner experiences expand upon organisational perspectives on how heritage intersects with contemporary art practices. Most of the interview data affirmed institutional stances, particularly resonating with the value of built heritage, the prevalence of historical narratives in programming at

Hospitalfield and Mount Stuart, and the entanglement of cultural and natural landscapes in heritage descriptions across all three sites. Informants demonstrated extremely subjective understandings of how heritage pertains to their practices, ranging from uncertain to deeply personal descriptions of heritage. As in the organisational documents examined in Chapter 4, practitioners grappled to pinpoint a definition of heritage, again contributing to critical heritage conversations. This slippage of clear definition correlates to the model of heritage as a complex social process put forward in critical heritage literature. The interview data expressed the depths of personal connections to place, especially at Mount Stuart (see Sections 5.2.10 and 5.3.8), and revealed that artists prefer having access to neutral spaces while working at Hospitalfield or Mount Stuart (see Sections 5.2.3 and 5.3.3). Additionally, interviews offered crucial insight into how artistic projects and/or programmes were developed in response to the historic setting (see Sections 5.2.5, 5.2.6 and 5.3.5), in response to intangible aspects of the past (stories, hauntings, imagination) (see Sections 5.2.8 and 5.3.7), in response to the rural context of the site (see Section 5.2.14 and 5.3.12), or in response to recent exhibition histories (see Sections 5.2.11 and 5.3.10). Differences between artist and curator perspectives lent useful insight into challenging aspects of each contemporary art programme, such as tension between conservation and/or collections care requirements and artists' needs (see Section 5.3.1), physical barriers to artistic practice presented by the historic house environment, or resistance to the heritage of a particular site (see Section 5.3.9), offering a starting point for the practical recommendations compiled in Section 6.4.4. The qualitative findings highlighted the complexities of programming contemporary art in historic house settings, including curatorial acceptance of or resistance to house museum conventions (see Sections 5.2.4 and 5.2.9). Even if heritage is acknowledged by an organisation, it might not consistently factor into or drive its programme (see Sections 5.2.12 and 5.3.11). This suggests a divergence between the organisational aims (to attract audiences/appeal to funders with historical narratives) and curatorial aims (to support artists, pursue personal research interests, or build art collections).

Finally, Chapter 6 explored common strategies for curating contemporary art in historic house settings and exemplified how practitioners based in Scotland are thinking beyond these common strategies. Section 6.2 considered how artists and curators respond to the concepts of *site specificity* and *intervention,* terms commonly used in the existing literature (Cass, 2015; 2019; Park, 2020; Huber, 2020; Williams, 2020; Ashton, 2020), determining the inconsistency of terminology used regarding arts in heritage practices. The findings show that most

practitioners preferred to amend the definitions of site-specificity and intervention by using different language, moving away from such art historical conventions to describe their work (see Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2). This alternative language, collated into two indexes (Tables 5 and 6), reflects a shared interest in evading these "magic bullet"-style commissioning strategies (Freshwater, 2011; Black and Farley, 2020), characterised by some as boring or exploitative, and emphasising individual practice. Remarkably, both curators and artists demonstrated their empowerment as agents of change in redefining these established models. They also complicated the relevance of these generic labels altogether by conceptualising their projects as complex processes informed by multiple frameworks and interests.

Chapter 6 also demonstrated how curators and artists think beyond these common frameworks, fostering and supporting more nuanced, experimental, and process-based modes of creating (see Section 6.3). Some leading examples emerge, many of which sit alongside or expand upon site-specific responses or interventionist approaches. For example, findings from Hospitalfield point towards strong participation in wider creative networks, and portray multimodal, collaborative, and experimental curatorial approaches in a positive light. Artists also benefitted from the structured group residencies at Hospitalfield, which have been said to allow time and space for new methodologies to develop. Although Mount Stuart curators seem to adhere to the common framework of site responsiveness for most commissions, informants also pointed to emergent approaches and instances of adaptability. The strongest evidence from Jupiter Artland indicates ways in which site-specific works can be brought off-site and still retain meaning, challenging the notion that site-specific works are bound to one location.

Lastly, Chapter 6 elucidated the benefits and challenges identified by practitioners (including the researcher) in each setting (see Section 7.6), pointing to areas for improvement for each programme (see Section 6.5), and emphasising a potential for nurturing healthier organisational ecologies (Elving *et al.*, 2019). While practitioners portrayed Hospitalfield as a leader in diversifying curatorial approaches, supporting artistic development, and accommodating numerous artists per year, the artist interviews and fieldnotes indicated that some also faced challenges due to funding, time, and labour limitations. Further, pressure and social tension discouraged at least one artist in this context, echoing the researcher's curatorial fieldnotes. In the Mount Stuart dataset, we see a chance for more variation in what artists are invited to do on site (6.4.2), and an opportunity to partner with other artist residency

programmes in Scotland, such as Cove Park. Meanwhile, findings from Jupiter Artland point to the absence of a consistent residency programme. These areas in need of development are expanded upon in Section 6.4.4. Pertinently, the next section places these case-specific findings in conversation with research published since this project began.

7.5 Findings in conversation with recent research: contribution of findings

Since this research project began in 2020, newly published scholarship resonates with, validates, and provides a broader basis for recognising its contribution and evaluating its design and results. Most notably, Farley and Pollock published an article in 2022 summarising their efforts to map the motivations, claims, and complexities of contemporary artists' participation in the UK heritage sector. Undertaken as part of Mapping Contemporary Art in the Heritage Experience (Burton *et al*., 2017-2019), one of the first major study analysing the UK arts and heritage sector, Farley and Pollock's article (2022) helps contextualise the scope, methods, and findings of this doctoral research with similar aims.

Similar to the present study, Farley and Pollock's work (2022) shifts scholarly focus away from audiences and towards practitioner experiences of contemporary art in heritage. However, their purposeful approach to sampling does not centre on including a multiplicity of practitioners' voices, but rather aims to capture predefined project types, site types, and major commissioning projects (Farley and Pollock, 2022). Three project types are prioritised, including temporary commissions, exhibitions of existing work, and residencies (Farley and Pollock, 2022). This narrower approach pigeonholes modes of artistic practice before the research unfolds. Further, it sidelines examples of artistic engagement neglected in the arts in heritage debate, such as one-off events, and leaves little room for blurring boundaries between artistic modes. For example, some informants at Hospitalfield reflected on their engagement with the site across multiple artists' residencies, which in some cases also led to the development of temporary commissions or one-off workshops.

While Farley and Pollock (2022) addressed a wider number and range of cultural heritage sites in their study, they also indicate that, according to the MCAHE survey, historic house museums are "a key location" for arts in heritage practice (Farley and Pollock, 2022). This reaffirms the contribution of this thesis, which focuses squarely on historic country houses,

maximising the comparability of new data within a compact, four-year project. Such properties embody a variety of forms and narratives worth untangling in an assessment of heritage engagement (Young, 2017).

Regarding research methods, Farley and Pollock (2022) integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches, building on MCAHE's existing database and supplementing with document analysis and semi-structured interviews with art curators and programme managers. Similarly, the qualitative approach of this doctoral research hinged on the firsthand testimonies of participants in the sector, but it crucially differed in that it platformed artist and researcher perspectives as well as those of curators. Applying a strong emphasis on practitioner experiences instigated a productive dialogue, uncovering different, subjective experiences of contemporary art in heritage. For example, comparative analysis of artist and curator perspectives has also proven useful for questioning the institutional value claims, which are often upheld by those in institutional roles.

Despite key differences in focus and approach, Farley and Pollock's 2022 article resonates with and reaffirms the findings of this research. For example, Farley and Pollock (2022) identify "four facets of artists' engagements with heritage", which includes "designed landscapes", "object collections", "architecture and built heritage", and "narratives of people and place", moving between tangible and intangible dimensions of experience (2022). These categories roughly correspond to the institutional conceptualisations of heritage presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis (Table 1), which shows how heritage is interpreted in the institutional documentation of all three programmes, including different dimensions of importance (national, local, international, and personal), experience (tangible and intangible), and subjective value claims. Aligned with Farley and Pollock's conclusions, Table 1 explicitly lists landscape, built heritage (encompassing architecture and collections), and narratives as key factors in conceptualisations of heritage at each site. Similarly, Chapter 5 explores the complexity of how heritage at each site was experienced by practitioners, ranging from material engagement to themes of place, landscape, and intangibility. However, this doctoral research covers a wider range of themes, including the possibility that heritage is unknown/irrelevant to artists practicing within heritage settings.

Usefully, Farley and Pollock (2022) remind readers that "the framing of this activity needs to move from its largely instrumental and audience-orientated narrative, toward a more critical

understanding of the practice itself" (256). This argument validates the platforming of practitioners' voices in the research that is presented here, which contributes new perspectives to the arts in heritage debate and in turn informs practical recommendations for organisational use based on critical feedback. The practitioner experiences explored in this doctoral research assume the same "sensory, emotional, imaginative, and critical" positions that Farley and Pollock (2022) assign to visitor engagement (256). Table 7 provides a few examples of practitioner engagement according to these types.

Farley and Pollock's types of visitor engagement via contemporary art in heritage	Examples of practitioner engagement via contemporary art in heritage practices (in this thesis)
Sensory engagement	*From Chapter 6* According to C1, musicians have acted in a much more site-specific way at Hospitalfield, some "writing an EP all about ... Hospitalfield" (26). "Like the atmosphere and reverb and the instruments ... there's certain things that you have heard that you can't find or access in many other places, so that ... enables that site specificity" (C2, 27).
Emotional engagement	*From Chapter 6* A6 reported that their solo residency at Mount Stuart was "spooky" and "quite hard", as they were mostly living alone for three months—though they fondly reflected on friendships they had made with kitchen staff and other locals of the island (40). A7 claimed she has a sense of the natural landscape at Jupiter Artland, saying "It ... feels a bit nostalgic, like the woods near where I grew up ... I have a fondness for it" (108).
Imaginative engagement	*From Chapter 5* While developing a commission at Hospitalfield, A4 claimed her and her collaborator felt "possessed by the house or something" (151).
Critical engagement	*From Chapter 5* A2 found that historic house settings are by nature socially charged, both for artists with "the upstairs downstairs element" (57) and for residents of the town too (59). In A2's experience, UK heritage sites "are often associated with spaces that belong to the upper classes", which leaves a residue of exclusion in the physical spaces (61).

Table 7. Examples of practitioner engagement via contemporary art in heritage practices, sorted by "sensory, emotional, imaginative, and critical" modes of engagement (Farley and Pollock, 2022, 256).

These examples show how practitioner perspectives can expand our knowledge of contemporary art-in-heritage programmes, validating, disconfirming, or elaborating upon the types of organisational value claims and audience perspectives dominating the arts in heritage debate. Divergences in understandings of the meaning, roles, and importance of heritage between artists and curators (highlighted in Chapter 5) make apparent what artists believe is valuable or challenging within each programme. In general, artists better identified how heritage settings can inhibit artistic practices by posing social and physical barriers. These effects were long-lasting for some of the artists interviewed, making them less likely to choose

commissions and residencies in small heritage organisations again. This empirical knowledge complicates curatorial claims to, for example, nurture artists' practices long-term. This thesis usefully indicates precise areas for improvement within each programme and helps build transferrable recommendations for similar/new programmes (provided in Section 6.4.4).

These findings also resonate with Farley and Pollock's critique that there is a lack of critical language for contemporary art in heritage practice (Farley and Pollock, 2022). Farley and Pollock (2022) not only maintain that art critics have neglected to adequately study projects based in heritage contexts, but they also extend this observation to heritage visitors, staff, and volunteers, whom they note experience difficulties "finding a language in which to reflect on their contemporary art encounters" (255). The interview findings presented in this thesis further evidence this claim in relation to practitioners. While informants demonstrated a robust capacity to discuss their individual practices, the data lacked evidence of a strong unifying language to frame the contemporary art in heritage approach. Established terms such as *site-specific* or *intervention* were either reluctantly tolerated or challenged in preference of alternative language, such as *site-responsive*, *site-sensitive*, or *site suitable* (see Table 5 for more examples), as well as *fissure*, *distortion*, *critique*, *juncture*, or *interlude* (see Table 6 for more examples). While a few informants agreed on alternative terms, each practitioner demonstrated a more individualised understanding of their work in this context. Farley and Pollock (2022) surmise that "a lack of established professional contacts between heritage organisations, their marketing departments and arts media" might be one cause for this dearth in critical language, especially for rural locations outwith the interest of city-based art critics (255). Hospitalfield's concerted efforts to participate in wider cultural ecologies, particularly by connecting with art schools and other organisations in Dundee, Glasgow, and Edinburgh (see Section 4.2.1 and 6.3), might be a leading example for paving the way to more critical framings of the contemporary art in heritage approach in the UK.

Finally, my findings extend Farley and Pollock's assertion that heritage organisations are participating in a shift away from static displays and towards "becoming living cultural resources with real contemporary relevance" (Farley and Pollock, 2022, 256). This observed shift echoes the wider critical shifts across academic discourse away from object-based display practices and towards process-based ways of conceptualising museum, heritage, and curatorial practices (see Section 2.2). For example, participants in Hospitalfield's programme shared an

interest in using the period rooms or handling object collections during artist residencies, while adhering to general conservation recommendations such as temperature-controlled rooms. This recalls Mårdh's observation that "human usage had become more important, and curators had to find new ways to fill the historic houses with life" (Mårdh, 2015, 26). Echoing a wider disciplinary turn towards user-focused and processual models of heritage, this position uncovers the potential for heritage spaces to become "key sites" of cultural action (Butler and Lehrer, 2016) and treats heritage as a dynamic and social experience (Waterton and Watson, 2013; Harrison, 2012; Smith, 2006) (as discussed in Section 2.2.1).

Overall, Farley and Pollock's study (2022) offers a basis for critical comparison, validating the immersive, exploratory approaches of this doctoral research and resonating with many key findings. While its strength rests in its synthesis of complex processes such as heritage engagement into discrete categories, the strength of this research derives from its close text readings and amplified focus on three programmes, exploring the nuanced and sometimes contradictory nature of practitioners' engagement with heritage.

7.6 Closing thoughts

Based on findings of this doctoral research, practical recommendations were made at the end of Chapter 6 for not only participants, but also other potential stakeholders in the Scottish cultural sector. Independent curators, contemporary arts organisations, and other bodies based in historic house settings have been identified as direct beneficiaries of this research. These include but are not limited to National Trust for Scotland properties looking to expand their programmes, such as the Georgian House or Gladstone's Land in Edinburgh, or less central locations such as Kellie Castle in Fife. Other beneficiaries might include artists' residency programmes based in historic houses such as Boath House (near Nairn), Colstoun Artist Residency (East Lothian), or Linkshouse (Orkney). These recommendations are also transferrable to other arts in heritage programming in the UK (such as the folk arts programme at Halsworth Manor, West Somerset), or abroad (such as Bror Hjorths Hus in Uppsala, Sweden, an historic artist's home that also exhibits contemporary art).

Many challenges identified in this research remain unsolved on theoretical and practical levels. Firstly, the tension between conservation demands and contemporary use of heritage buildings is pressing. How can practitioners conserve built heritage while still using it, given each site's unique conservation needs and missions? While this research offers the general

solution to involve artists in the conservation process, more curatorial experimentation is necessary to identify transferrable strategies. Secondly, the social and physical barriers presented by heritage settings, and entangled with institutional power structures, remains understudied. How can sites such as historic houses be rendered more accessible and hospitable, not only to audiences, but also to artists expected to work in these often imposing, distracting, or limiting environments? It is crucial to reframe these "prohibitively grand" spaces (A2, 55) for a diversity of practitioners. Further research is necessary to identify how these residencies and commissions can be more inclusive and accessible to practitioners' needs—physically, socially, and emotionally. Finally, the prevalence of site-specific curating in arts in heritage remains understudied, despite criticism by practitioners (Farley and Pollock, 2022). How can historic houses continue to employ site specific models without limiting artists in their development or practice? Interview findings from this study show that site-specificity is sometimes helpful, but artists prefer more dialectic, sensitive, and gestural approaches. Further practice-based (and practice-led) research is necessary to critically update this language around site-specificity, and artists' interventions generally.

While this doctoral project could not fully pursue these lines of inquiry, it does demonstrate the merits of employing "curatorial thinking...in doing and writing" (Muller and Langill, 2021) as an approach to arts in heritage research, a new field which currently draws more heavily from heritage studies and museology than from curatorial studies. Learning from curatorial practice and theory, this approach not only encourages trials and experiments in research but also fosters knowledge exchanges between on the ground practitioners and scholars. Led by practitioner experiences, this research established a foundation for further exploring the variety and nuances of arts in heritage practices taking place in historic houses and, aligned with contemporaneous research (Farley and Pollock, 2022), it calls for more critical attention to artists.

This thesis offers a broad starting point for heritage bodies looking to collaborate with creative practitioners for the first time, early-career curators entering contemporary art in heritage practice, existing arts in heritage programmes, or experienced curators seeking new directions based on empirical feedback. The findings together with the practical recommendations pave the way for more artist-centred rather than audience-centred approaches to programming, less

prescriptive modes of heritage engagement, more dynamic curatorial strategies, and healthier cultural ecologies.

Appendix A: Descriptive timeline of workshop development

This descriptive timeline refers to meetings, emails, creative conversations, text messages, and shared documents leading up to the "Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey" workshop in September 2022.

- 12 May 2022: Lucy Byatt, Hospitalfield's director, invited me to produce a workshop about medieval bookmaking for the New Scriptorium, a temporary structure and residency space designed by Bobby Niven and erected on the grounds of Arbroath Abbey. This was an exciting prospect, as I had participated in early plans for this project in 2019 as a research consultant. During this conversation with Byatt, I suggested a collaboration with Glasgow-based artist Áine Rowe, with whom I had already been discussing ideas around Scottish archaeology and ecology. We agreed that I would develop a proposal over the next month and discuss possibilities in late June.

- 18 May 2022: I met with Rowe for a walk at Glasgow Botanic Gardens to discuss our potential collaboration in the context of the New Scriptorium. Our conversations gravitated towards common plant names as we followed the River Kelvin and Rowe's recent experiments with herbal medicine. Rowe seemed enthusiastic to learn more about Arbroath Abbey, particularly regarding archaeological finds from the site.

- 21 May 2022: I emailed Rowe with a list of resources about Arbroath Abbey. I included links to information about the Tironesian monks who lived at the Abbey when the Declaration of Arbroath was signed over 700 years ago. I also included book titles, such as Laura Darling's graphic book *In the Garden at Hospitalfield*, which links the history of Hospitalfield House with the Abbey. I sent guidelines for the workshop in a shared document to determine the format of the project (should it be a musical/story-based experience, workshop, publication/zine, collaborative output?), keeping a local audience in mind. Here, I suggested themes (storytelling, literacy as power, creative collaboration, medieval margins as sites for creativity, and

fragmentation/decay as sites for invention/renewal) and visual references (manicules, scribal tools, and examples of 14th century script) to draw upon.

- 13 June 2022: Rowe and I corresponded via email and text message to negotiate our relationship within the collaboration. It was decided that I would handle the logistics of the event, providing context for audiences, and Rowe would devise and lead the creative activities.

- 27 June 2022: I emailed Cicely Farrer (Hospitalfield's Programme and Communications Manager) a proposal for a workshop about medieval herbals, combined with the sharing of folk medicine recipes and journaling activities, thinking of Arbroath Abbey as a destination for intellectual pilgrimages. We also pitched making a co-created zine out of materials produced during the workshop.

- 7 July 2022: I undertook research at Hospitalfield, reading the Scots Herbal in Hospitalfield's newly restored garden. I wrote fieldnotes about the historical tension between folk traditions (unwritten, unofficial) and church traditions (written, official), a theme I planned to fold into the workshop proposal. A quotation from my fieldnotes: "I think it would be interesting to connect with locals on this matter—get a sense of what local folk know about plants—and incorporate that into an illustrated and written format."

- 14 July 2022: Farrer invited me to attend an event at the New Scriptorium with the Angus Writers' Circle, which took place outside the small bothy amongst the apple trees. This was a chance to envision our upcoming workshop from an accessibility perspective. I noted that we might need to provide additional seating and refreshments.

- 17 August 2022: Farrer and I met via Zoom to discuss the timeline, attendee numbers, and artist budget.

- 29 August 2022: Farrer sent me the promotional material to edit. It was then launched on Hospitalfield's website under the title "Short Sharp Stories: Writing a Plant Lore for Arbroath Abbey", with the following description: "A book making and illustration

workshop inspired by Medieval folklore and plant medicine led by art historian [Oona] Dooley and artist Áine Rowe".

- 16 September 2022: Due to extenuating circumstances, Rowe dropped out of the workshop plans, a week prior to the planned delivery. Rowe confirmed over text that they would be happy for the event to go ahead using the core ideas we developed together.

- 16-17 September 2022: I corresponded with Farrer and Byatt to devise a new plan. I suggested that I involve my regular collaborator Hana Koen, who has experience running foraging workshops and a qualification in botanical illustration. Byatt recommended that we bring Laura Darling into the project, given her previous experience illustrating a history of Hospitalfield and running the Free Drawing School programme as an artist in residence from 2019-2020. Having agreed, I reframed the proposal to focus on storytelling, illustration, and foraging for local plants rather than herbal medicines, while still retaining the core theme of bookmaking. Farrer and I revised the promotional material, keeping the title. I also sent Farrer a longer description of the themes the workshop, which she edited and promoted:

  Bridging the gap between miracles and magic, this workshop in The New Scriptorium reconsiders traditions of plant lore alongside the history of the medieval abbey, inviting a previously mistrusted custom into the inner sanctum. Indeed, it was in these very monastic settings where official herbals were copied and illustrated, and pilgrims travelled to receive hospice care and remedies from the physic garden.

  Posing the question 'what would a modern herbal produced by local people look like?', [Oona], Laura and Hana will lead the group in the co-creation of a small book or zine, using a reimagined assortment of scribal tools, pigments, and materials. Participants will draw on medieval imagination, local folklores, and foraged plants for inspiration, working together as scribes and illuminators to fill the pages with personal anecdotes and botanical marginalia.

- 19 September 2022: I send Farrer and Lucy a 2-hour event plan with an outline of a 10-minute introduction, 10-minute discussion, 35-minute discussion of medieval and folkloric frameworks, 10-minute break looking at books and other reference material, 5-minute regroup to discuss initial bookmaking plans, 40-minute break-out into groups as each participant designs their own page, and finally a 10-15 minute conclusion and mini-exhibition of the work produced.

- 20-22 September 2022: I remained in frequent correspondence via email and text with Darling and Koen to negotiate how they would like to contribute to the workshop. It became clear that I would need to take on more of a leadership role during the event than was initially imagined, introducing the practices of each artist and making the audience aware of their skillsets. It was decided that each artist would then share visual examples of their work and offer support to participants during the creative activity portion of the workshop. We planned to bring books, plants, and other reference materials. I acquired materials for 8-15 participants, such as calligraphy paper, inks in medieval-inspired pigments, and handmade goose feather quills.

- 23 September 2022: I prepared the questions for the workshop participants to consider, such as “Will your page include text, images, or both?” and “Will your herbal contain only plants? What about fungi, lichen, moss, seaweed? Animals or minerals? People or scenes?”.

- 24 September 2022: The day of the workshop involved travelling to Hospitalfield with all the materials, as well as some on-site preparations. Prior to the workshop, I introduced Koen to Hospitalfield and foraged plant, seaweed, and fungi with her, which would then be used as reference materials during the workshop. We then both met with Darling for rehearsal. Farrer was unavailable to work with us, so Byatt drove us to Arbroath Abbey to set up for and run the event. The workshop took place that afternoon, roughly following the event plan; I introduced the medieval themes for around 40 minutes, allowing 15 minutes for discussion. Then Koen shared her botanical illustrations, while Darling shared drawings from her current book project about the history of the potato. Participants planned their pages with support from Koen and Darling, consulting one another to each create 1-2 pages for the plant lore

book. Prompted by reference materials and the questions provided, they experimented with combining words and drawings, using medieval framing and calligraphy techniques. The exhibition ended with a showcase of the work produced.

Appendix B: Sample interview questions

B.1 For curators and staff

- How did you come to work with/at [Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland]?
- Is your work here site specific? An intervention?
- What would you say your role encompasses?
- What would you say is your mission?
- What is special about curating at [Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland]?
- Do you consider [Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland] a cultural heritage site? How do you define cultural heritage?
- How different is curating within a historic house setting as opposed to an art gallery or museum?
- What are the benefits of curating contemporary art in this context? Are there any risks?
- Who do you curate for?
- How do you choose which artists to work with?
- In what ways do you communicate with the artists you work with? How often?
- How connected with your audiences do you feel?
- How much do your practices here relate to other practices in Scotland? In the UK?
- How much do you personally feel connected to the past of [Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland?
- How much does your practice engage with the past [of Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland]?
- From your experiences, how would you describe your sense of this place [of Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland]?
- What programmes are permanent fixtures [of Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland]?

B.2 For artists

- Could you explain how this project developed?
- Was your project site specific? An intervention?

- Do you consider [Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland] a cultural heritage site? How do you define cultural heritage?
- How different is practicing or exhibiting within a historic house setting as opposed to an art gallery or museum?
- What are the benefits of practicing or exhibiting contemporary art within this context? Are there any risks?
- Where do you place your experiences in relation to your wider career?
- Who do you make art for?
- How do you usually choose which organisations or galleries to work with?
- In what ways do you communicate with the curators you work with? How often?
- How much do your practices here relate to other practices in Scotland? In the UK?
- How much do you personally feel connected to the past of [Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland]?
- How much does your practice engage with the past of [Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland]?
- From your experiences, how would you describe your sense of this place [of Hospitalfield, Mount Stuart, Jupiter Artland]?

Appendix C: Criteria for selecting interviewees

C.1 Curators and staff

Sample should represent a spectrum of involvement in and knowledge of the contemporary arts programming of that site.

- Can they impart knowledge about the visual/contemporary arts programme at the site in question as part of the staff team?
- Do they have a creative role in carrying out or planning the visual/contemporary arts programme?
- Do they nurture a creative/curatorial practice within and beyond the role?
- Can they critically reflect on curatorial intentions/missions and strategies in place (past or present) in reference to personal experiences?
- Can they offer insider perspectives on perceived heritage/experiences of place and collections at that site? Can they speak to the past of that site?
- Can they critically reflect on past collaborations with artists?

C.2 Artists

Sample should reflect a spectrum of involvement in the contemporary arts programming of that site: a mix of participants in commissions, residencies, events, exhibitions, or emerging artists schemes. It should also reflect 1) artists that do and do not consider their practice site-specific in general; and 2) artists that do and do not overtly consider themes such as heritage or sense of place as key issues in their art practice.

- Do they nurture a creative practice within and beyond their involvement at the site?
- Are they based in Scotland (or the UK)?
- Did they spend immersive time on site preparing for/carrying out their work?
- Can they offer insider perspectives on perceived heritage/experiences of place and/or collections at that site?

Appendix D: Consent form

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA

University of Glasgow, College of Arts Research Ethics Committee

I understand that Oona Dooley is collecting data in the form of:

A. Completed questionnaire

B. Audio or audio-visual recorded interview (individual or part of a group)

C. Written observation (in journal on protected OneDrive)

D. Visual observation (as video or photographic records)

E. Written analysis of unfinished or finished artwork

for use in a doctoral research project at the University of Glasgow.

1. Please read and tick ALL THE BOXES below to indicate your agreement:

- ❑ I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ❑ I voluntarily agree to take part in this research project.
- ❑ I understand that I may withdraw at any time without consequence.
- ❑ The procedures regarding confidentiality (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data) have been clearly explained to me.
- ❑ I agree for the data collected by the researcher and/or produced by me during the research activities to be used to inform the project's findings and publicity.
- ❑ I understand that my data is of long-term value for academic research and will be retained in secure storage of the university for a period of minimum ten years, starting 2023 under the conditions of anonymity I define below.

2. Condition of anonymity - please choose ONLY ONE as appropriate:

- ❑ I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study as well as video, photo or audio records will be used in reports, presentations and other outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.

OR

- ❑ I want to stay anonymous in this project and ask you to use an alternative name for me. I understand that I may still be recognised.
  (write alternative name here) _____

3. <u>Re-Use of research data - please choose ONLY ONE as appropriate:</u>

- ❑ I consent that my data can be made publicly available on trusted research data repositories for other people to re-use under the conditions of anonymity I defined above.

OR

- ❑ I consent that an anonymised version of my data can be made publicly available on trusted research data repositories for other people to re-use.

OR

- ❑ I do not give consent to sharing any version of my data on publicly accessible repositories.

<u>I agree to take part in this research project</u>:

Participant name and signature: _____

Date:_____

Oona (Christie) Dooley (researcher): xxxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk

Dr Sarah Cook (research supervisor): Sarah.cook@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr James Simpson (Ethics Officer): arts-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

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Appendix E: Interview list (2023-2024)

Informant	Name	Case study	Informant role/type of experience	Interview Date
C1	Lucy Byatt	Hospitalfield	Director	09/08/2023
C2	Cicely Farrer	Hospitalfield	Head of Exhibitions and Learning Programmes	09/08/2023
C3	Morven Gregor	Mount Stuart	Curator of Contemporary Visual Arts / Learning Curator	23/03/2023
C4	Sophie Crichton Stuart	Mount Stuart	Chair of the Mount Stuart Trust / Founder of Contemporary Visual Arts	23/03/2023
C5	Donna Chisholm	Mount Stuart	Head of Visitor Operations	23/03/2023
C6	Claire Feeley	Jupiter Artland	Head of Exhibitions and Learning Programmes	24/01/2024
A1	Laura Darling	Hospitalfield	The Free Drawing School artist in residence / Commission (graphic novel)	17/07/2023
A2	Anonymous	Hospitalfield	Graduate Programme (performance art practice)	22/07/2023
A3	Anonymous	Hospitalfield	Commission (outdoor sculpture)	25/09/2023
A4	Anonymous	Hospitalfield	Artist in residence/ Collaborative commission (indoor installation)	21/07/2023
A5	Anonymous	Mount Stuart	Collaborative commission (live performance)	22/11/2023
A6	Maya Rose Edwards	Mount Stuart	Emerging Artist Residency (sculpture/socially engaged practice)	04/08/2023
A7	Tessa Lynch	Jupiter Artland	Commission (outdoor sculpture/live performance/participatory art)	06/02/2023
A8	Susie Green	Jupiter Artland	Commissioned artist at festival (outdoor live performance)	10/10/2023

Table 8: Detailed list of interview participants (named or anonymous).

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