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Abstract

The Contemporary Durham Miners' Banner: A Unique Expression for Post-Industrial Communities?

The increasing display and exhibition of historic miners' banner acts as a catalyst in creating an appreciation of the value of these relics. New banners, commissioned by a community to replace their damaged or 'retired' historic banner, are being paraded at the Durham Miners' Gala, which enjoys greater attendance now than in the 1970s, when pits were still fully operational. Walter Benjamin proposes that a piece of art in its original and intended location possesses an 'aura', and therefore this study asks whether these new miners' banners can possibly possess the 'aura' of their historic counterparts. As 'living objects', Grayson Perry speaks of the banners paraded at the Durham Miners' Gala in spiritual terms and draws parallels with the parading of treasured artworks in Medieval Florence.

But how does a community represent its unique identity through the artwork of its banner? By interviewing artists within contemporary practices in Durham (North East England) and a fabric conservator with a speciality in banners, the historic and contemporary Durham Miners' banners have been explored in relation to their relevance for new communities.

Keywords: miners' banner; post-industrial; community; identity; representation

Context of Research

This paper is part of a broader program of study entitled: *'Social fabric: A study of community representation through contemporary banner-making in North East England'*, which seeks to explore the concept of 'identity' realised through material culture. The research started with the commission to design the New Saint Cuthbert's Banner (Figure 1). The original banner (12th-14th century), destroyed during the Reformation in the mid 1500s, was arguably the most significant ecclesiastical banner in the region. The Rites of Durham (Fowler 1903: 26) narrates battles where victories were believed to be 'afforded' by the mere existence of this sacred artefact. Registered charity 'The Northumbrian Association', commissioned a

contemporary replica (completed in 2012) and the banner now hangs in Durham Cathedral over the entrance to Saint Cuthbert's shrine, and is paraded at key events during the year.

In critiquing this practice-based research, the question around the 'worth' and 'value' of a contemporary banner became a personal research subject. Walter Benjamin proposes that a piece of art in its original/intended location has an 'aura' (Benjamin 1968: 220), which was arguably lost along with the original banner. In seeking to resolve this tension between original and facsimile, the research led to the rich subject area of the miners' banners of North East England. Although the last colliery closed in 1993, the ceremonial miners' banners remain vital artefacts in the pit villages stripped of their identity and purpose. Both historic and replica banners continue to be paraded at the annual Durham Miners' Gala, or 'Big Meeting' as it is affectionately known. In 2019, an estimated 200,000 people attended this unique spectacle (BBC 2019): attracting greater crowds now than when the pits were fully operational in the 1970s. Grayson Perry (2016), attending the Durham Miners' Gala describes the banners in spiritual terms as "*a stirring folk art requiem*" and draws parallels with the parading of treasured artworks in Medieval Florence stating "*I realised that something equally reverent was happening here.*"

Katy Bennett, writing about the ex-mining community of Wheatley Hill, Durham, argues that the residents of the village, faced with the loss of ritual and practice of pit life, "*engage in an emotionally mediated process of nostalgic reflection*" in order to unite past and present communities and regain a sense of collective identity (Bennett 2016: 189). According to Bennett, such nostalgic reflection can be developed not just from an individual's own memories, but from the memory of others (secondary memories) through the sharing of stories, photographs and other objects, such as miners' banners (Bennett 2016: 189-190, 192). Bennett references Fred Davis to propose nostalgia "*is a past given 'special qualities'*" (Davis 1979, 13), and made especially significant because of how it is juxtaposed with present feeling" (Bennett 2016: 190). She therefore cites the rich symbolic meaning of the banner imagery and its physical parade at the Durham Miners' Gala as being central to nostalgia; connecting residents to their coalmining heritage and providing a sense of continuity (Bennett 2016: 194-195).

A banner also enables communities to re-engage with the Durham Miners' Gala. To take part in the parade, a village requires an officially 'recognised' Durham Miners' Association banner. Research by Mellor, Stephenson and Wray explores the miners' banner as a medium in which to debate current definitions of identity in North East England. Post-mining communities are using their cultural and traditional heritage as a form of what the authors refer to as "*emotional regeneration*" (Stephenson and Wray 2005: 175). These economically challenged communities have raised up to £61,000 to fund both conservation and display of original banners, as well as pay for new ones. Many apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund, but also strengthen community spirit and encourage active participation through activities such as coffee mornings, bring and buy events, and Karaoke nights. They describe these activities as "*the threads, which weave a community together: pride, identity and a common goal*" (Mellor and Stephenson 2005: 347).

Miners' banners are fascinating but uncommon and complex artefacts. Seminal publications on historic trade union banners from Gorman (1986); Moyes (1974); and Emery (1998), amongst other published works, consider historic banners in terms of iconography and representation. They are described by Gwyn A. Williams (1986: 19) as "*the visual memory of a movement*" and by Wray (2009: 151) as "*functional works of art. They are, at one and the same time, both representational and iconic*". The multifaceted nature of both historic and contemporary trade union banners limits the scope of this paper. The broader research project will consider them in greater depth: to deconstruct them as textile semiotics; collective memory; change agent and conduit for emotional wellbeing. Therefore, this paper will focus on the historic tradition of banner design and consider how contemporary artists, when commissioned to design a banner, are seeking to make a translation which is relevant for 'new' post-industrial mining communities.

An Established Aesthetic

The most recognized form of the trade union banner began with the foremost manufacturer George Tutill (1817-1887), whose business thrived as the working classes strove towards emancipation. According to Gorman (1986: 48), Tutill's early years were spent as a travelling showman which directly influenced his banners' aesthetics: mirroring a Victorian obsession with ornamentation through Renaissance-style gilt scroll-work and foliage and referencing

the medieval origins of trade skills through the use of heraldic coats of arms. Tutill situated his workshops around the Huguenot-descended silk weavers of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green in London and installed the world's largest Jacquard loom in order to control both the size, pattern design and quality of his silk fabric (Gorman 1986: 51). As a result, the highly identifiable Tutill banner brand publicly declared symbols of substance and permanence to the mining communities around, as Williams states: "*a rich banner became a badge of success; there was considerable competition*" (1986: 17). His process began with raw silk, which was dyed, wound and warped and then woven in sections up to twelve feet wide. He offered his banners in both *woven* and *plain-woven* styles; *woven* referring to his unique Renaissance-style Jacquard pattern (Figure 4) and *plain-woven*, which referred to the unpatterned silk, which had scrolls painted in gold or silver (Figure 13). In a rationalised system akin to the sub-division of labour in Fordism, Tutill used specialist 'cornermen' and other artists trained in roundel portraiture, crowd scenes, industrial scenes, landscapes, figures, emblems, scrollwork and slogans (Gorman 1986: 51; Emery, 1998:17). In 1861, he took out a patent for his own fabric treatment that involved a three-stage process. Firstly, the silk was pre-treated with a thin solution of India rubber. Secondly, once dried, a second coat of the same solution was mixed with linseed oil and applied. Finally, the paint used for the artwork, was mixed with old or oxidised oil before application. This process resulted in a durable, pliant and stable finish on the silk, resulting in some of his banners surviving until the present day (Gorman 1986: 51,52; Emery, 1998: 6, 18).

Paula James (2014: 3) believes that both trade association imagery and that of fairgrounds shared a common provenance and "*aimed to invite the viewer into mythological and biblical scenes as players in a distant past.*" (Figure 2). She further proposes that working-class leaders who commissioned the artwork understood the power of classical figures beyond purely aesthetic reasons (2014: x): arguing they used the symbolism to enhance the stature of trades and their labourers. It is suggested by Barringer (2012) that the Pre-Raphaelite artists working at the same time took up Baudelaire's call to artists to take "The heroism of modern life" as their subject. As a result, there is a parallel to be seen here with Ford Maddox Brown (1821-1893) whose painting 'Work' (1852-1865) (Figure 3) depicts a politically radical social panorama exploring a variety of productive and unproductive labour subjects to focus gravitas to everyday city life. 'Work' gives the sunlit group of anonymous manual labourers heroic centre stage, whilst pushing other social types: the aristocrats, philosopher, holy man and orphans into the shady corners of the painting (ibid.). O'Neill (2015: 13) references

William Morris who embraced the democratic motivations behind Pre-Raphaelite art: that it was addressed to the public, rather than the art establishment, and that meaning in the paintings is built up “*through the assemblage of recognizable things... in the interpretation of things.*”

Although Emery (Tallentire 2014) calls the banners “battle-standards”, James (2018) offers a different view on their message by suggesting that although their imagery was to show strength and power, for many years: “*they were not confrontational, rather reassuring about sharing the culture of the ruling classes.*” The Trimdon Grange Colliery banner (Figure 4) is a good example of the typical ‘reassuring’ Symbolist art of trade union banners. It features Aesop’s ‘Bundle of Sticks’, which gives the clear message to the spectator: ‘Union Gives Strength’. Whilst the imagery itself could be reassuring, political situations such as the ‘treachery’ of Ramsey MacDonald and Philip Snowden in 1930 resulted in the portraits of MacDonald on various banners being used vicariously to express the miners’ anger. According to a former manager of Tutill’s:

The banners were not just returned, they were mutilated. I remember one banner from Durham which had MacDonald’s eyes cut out. We had to patch the banner before we could overpaint it with the face of local man. Another was returned with ‘traitor to labour’ daubed across MacDonald’s face. (Gorman 1986: 41)

As unique as a banner may be in the eyes of the community who own it, it was common for banners to use the same pictorial representations. The origin of this can be traced back to Tutill himself who understood the immense undertaking and investment for a community (from friendly societies, to churches, to unions) to purchase a banner, so he produced a pattern book of stock designs which were less expensive than custom images (Beamish catalogue no.6778). As a result, the New Brancepeth Lodge image can also be found on The Watford Branches Worker’s Union and also the banner of the Order of True Ivorites.

Ravenhill-Johnson (2014) in her book *The Art and Ideology of the Trade Union Emblem 1850-1925*, dedicates an entire chapter to many examples of direct and indirect copying. She cites the trade union iconography in a time where pastiches of sculptures, paintings, and architecture of the Renaissance were commonplace due to the lack of photographic access: artists faithfully reproduced portraiture from statues or existing paintings. Indeed, according to Gorman (1986: 52), Arts and Crafts artist Walter Crane (1845-1915) acknowledged the importance of an artist developing their own style directly from the techniques of both their

predecessors and contemporaries and made his artwork freely available in the name of socialism (Figure 5). His original oil painting 'Angel of Freedom' inspired many other illustrations, and in turn, were freely interpreted themselves into banner art. His 'Cartoon to celebrate May Day' (1903) (Ravenhill-Johnson plate 68) can be found on at least six different DMA banners (Figure 6).

New Banners: A Unique Expression of Identity?

This research began by questioning whether contemporary or replica banners lack what Benjamin (1968: 220) refers to as the 'aura' of an original piece of art. Do copies, regardless of having the best intentions, still constitute as *original*? Benjamin defines 'aura' by considering the object's history and ritual function, that is, its unique existence in a particular place. Winner (n.d.), as a psychologist, proposes that Benjamin is referring to essentialism: special objects (perhaps such as original trade union banners) that gain their identity from their lived history and innate being, something that cannot always be observed. She references psychologist Susan Gelman to propose that this is why perfect replicas of objects are rejected, that the essence of the artist is only contained in the original work. North East banner artists contest that it is actually the replica banners that hold more authenticity than the originals.

During the miners' strike (1984-5), many Lodge banners were taken to rallies and picket lines and were generally involved in action that resulted in their damage, or in some cases, complete destruction. In the aftermath of the strike, as the pits started to close and pit villages lost the ritual and practice of mining life, it was not just the banners that were irrevocably damaged but the community itself:

It was the closure of Burradon Social Club in 2014 which launched the recent (banner) campaign. The venue had housed the original banner, which was in a deplorable condition following years of neglect, and was the centre of our community gatherings. The torn fabric of the banner became a metaphor for the rupture to the fabric of our community following the loss of the social club. Seeing community spirit in disarray, the restoration of the banner was used to galvanise the community and prevent the decline of the spirit of the village. Chris Wray, Secretary of the Burradon and Camperdown Forum (Palasz 2016).

As a result of damage to their banners, communities are either retiring them to museums such as the People's History Museum in Manchester and Beamish Open Air Museum in County Durham, or are galvanized into action to restore, or make a new banner to re-engage their community around a central artefact. When Norman Emery calls the banners "*Graphic messages of hope*," (Tallentire 2014), he is referring to their call for social justice and struggle for working-class rights. Now perhaps, the banners are a message of hope for the community itself.

Historically, the banners are two-sided which usefully allows for two 'narratives': one side traditionally featured lodge officials, union leaders or national political figures (Figure 7) and the other, a pictorial representation of either biblical scenes, allegorical representations, or simply a relevant image from the mining community itself (Figure 8). Practitioners involved in supporting communities in the commissioning process for a new banner report that many banner committees, comprising of the older generation of ex-miners, just wanted 'the familiar'. Even when these communities are conscious that by replicating their banner it will be one of many similar artworks, they still choose the comforting, literal replication of their original artwork. Rendell (2015) states that on suggesting to committees that they may want something which represented the community now, she felt for them that it was like "*going into the unknown*":

They knew what they liked and they liked the original images – and they are powerful images aren't they? Really are fantastically powerful images – and I think the other thing about the original banners was the quality of the workmanship as well, the quality of the paint, the images that were portrayed, they were incredibly refined... sophisticated works of art really.

In unpublished interviews with County Durham artists and banner makers: Barrie Ormsby (2019), Johnny Foker (2019), and Emma Shankland (2015), they recount the differing experiences of commissions to design banners. Ormsby (2019) suggests that for some communities, the banner "*is a box of emotional investment*", functioning as a conduit for the community to be able to take part in the Durham Miners' Gala and that shape, form, colour and aesthetics are not always a priority. The artists all report how they encourage communities to consider a compromise of one replica side and one new side: they tell of the tremendous resistance and a very conservative approach of banner committees to change. Even once they agree to this approach, the communities reference the work of Delacroix as their inspiration. Shankland (2015) states:

I really, really try to steer people into creating something that is going to have meaning specifically for them. Because, as nice as Delacroix's painting is, how does that reference even County Durham, let alone their community? None whatsoever.

Initial research (Shankland 2015; Foker 2019; Ormsby 2019; Hall 2018) would point to some evidence that, for communities who have invested so much time, money and effort in producing a new banner, the unveiling has quite an emotional impact on both the artist and the community. In an unpublished interview with banner maker Ed Hall (2018), who also undertakes banner commissions for artist Jeremy Deller's exhibitions, he describes banner-bearing as "*a very British Phenomena*". Hall also reflects on his work being used over time in marches, meetings or local disputes and how emotion becomes imbued in contemporary objects: "*people and banners all come out, then in the end, they do have a spirituality, well beyond what they are*". Shankland from Durham Bannermakers reflects on how amazing the feeling is for her as an artist to produce artwork that has such an effect. Although she acknowledges that many people respond to art in that way, she highlights the difference between fine art and banner art through 'purpose': "*But these aren't considered fine art although what we do is exactly the same as a piece of fine art...but because its purpose is different and it doesn't sit in a frame, it is seen differently. It's ultimately folk art*" (2015).

Montagu (as cited in Bronner 2004: 11) differentiates art between the 'sight-orientated' (museums) and 'touch-orientated' (folk art) worlds, stating the latter invites interaction and social participation (2004: 11). In essence, folk art is designed to be used and handled to the point that it can be damaged or broken. Is it these touch-orientated experiences that accrue meaning and give the artefacts 'worth' and value to their communities? Poignantly, it is the fact that miners' banners have, for decades, been left on open display in social clubs and community halls, vulnerable to smoke and handling, that means they are now having to be retired from use.

If folk art is generally considered to be expressive of the cultural life of a community, then Bronner (2004: ix), gives a highly relevant description: "*It is art, architecture, food, clothing, and furnishing. But more so, it is the weave of these objects in the everyday lives of individuals and communities. It is the migration and settlement, custom and practice, production and consumption.*" The key concept of folk art here relates to an artefact that is relevant to a community's everyday life, reflecting their ritual and practice. This maps perfectly on to the trade union

banners, which are still woven into the very fabric of their communities, through parade, display and education.

It could be proposed that a banner functions in three ways: communication design by identifying their 'tribe' through colour and imagery; folk art by being an artefact relevant to the everyday lives of individuals and communities; and as a totem, becoming a fetish through ritual and practice. Referencing Benjamin, these objects gain an identity through this ritualizing: "*In other words, the unique value of the "authentic" work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value.*" (1968: 224). Shankland (2015), conversely, feels that new banners have a greater authenticity than their original counterparts: some communities at least are including one side of the banner that reflects their unique locale. By using imagery such as their school, inspirational residents, or their environment, and being robust enough to be paraded and ritualized in their village, these banners will be in their original and intended location.

The banners are 'working objects', and these folk artefacts are designed to be used and handled to the point they can be damaged. Far from being the individual journey of an artist, the banners are as a result of participatory activities: from the community fundraising and their design 'by committee', through to their use in community events. As such, Shankland (2015) is adamant that original banners have no place invisibly stored in museums. She feels that although there is some value in the banner being on permanent display in a community building, such as a library or working men's club, she sees it being a stronger catalyst for community spirit by being touched and experienced through street parties, parades and other activities. Shankland's choice of materials is even considered in terms of its dynamic use: taffeta shot silk is chosen so that it appears to move constantly and catch the light; and acrylics give a painterly luminosity, as well as longevity to a banner.

It is interesting to reference Jackson (1998: 92), who shifts the focus of meaning ascribed by the maker to the viewer's interpretation: "*the meanings associated with craft objects are as much to do with the way they are consumed as the way they have been produced*". The 'touch-orientated' and 'living objects' are topics for future research, but for now, it is interesting to draw on anecdotal observations from practitioners working with ex-mining communities. In an unpublished interview with fabric conservator Caroline Rendell (2015), she recounts how

when visiting an ex-mining community, she found a homemade banner that she describes simply as: two pieces of doweling with cotton stretched in-between; a hand-written legend; miners' strike lapel pins and badges; and a couple of muddy footprints. Rendell offers her opinion that the community valued this homemade banner over their official one: that it saw action in the strike inextricably tied memory and emotion to the point that it became a fetish for the village:

To see people's reactions to that [the banner] were really strong, this real strength of feeling, so it's an abstract way of channelling people's feelings. It's complicated. The more you think about it, the more complicated it is.

This narrative regarding the significance of an artefact's lived history is echoed by conservator Jenny Barsby (2015) from the People's History Museum in Manchester, who writes about a donated banner by York and District Trades Union Council:

The interesting thing about this banner is that it is adorned with 21 self adhesive stickers pertaining to different campaigns when the banner was used... When these stickers were made they were probably not expected to last long, but this ephemeral nature is part of the reason we value such items.

Whilst the broader research project focuses on contemporary miners' banners, it is important that continuing research understands the potential 'emotional value' of a (stored or displayed) historic banner for both the community that own it, and the spectator that views it. Baudrillard, in his book *The System of Objects* writes a useful and relevant section on *Marginal Objects: Antiques*. Baudrillard (2005: 77) proposes that historic artefacts are required to "answer to other kinds of demands such as witness, memory, nostalgia or escapism." He talks about the way in which antiques refer to the past and are assigned a "mythological character" (2005: 77) and whilst they no longer have a practical application, their role is now not just decorative, but to be signifier of time. He considers emotional values in old and new objects and how to create continuity: a subject relevant to this research in exploring whether emotional connections can be established between old banners and their new counterparts. Baudrillard speaks of 'nostalgic restoration' using an example of the modernisation of an old farmhouse: proposing that the architect needs to retain some of the original features to give it "symbolic foundations, reinvesting the whole edifice with value". He further states that modernity itself cannot invest something with value as its true being is still lacking "Rather as a church does not become a genuinely sacred place until a few bones or relics have been enshrined in it so this architect cannot feel at home ... until he can sense the

infinitesimal yet sublime presence within his brand-new walls of an old stone that bears witness to past generations.” (2005: 82).

Baudrillard argues that a taste for antiques is a process of narcissistic regression, a way of suppressing time, an “*imaginary mastery of birth and death*”. He proposes that there are two features of the mythology of an antique object: the nostalgia for origins and the need for authenticity (2005: 80). Authenticity, he argues, is an obsessive need, with certainty of the elements of origin, date, author and signature of the craftsman. Although not an antique in the traditional sense, Baudrillard’s description below gives some insight into why the York and District Trades Union Council banner with its ‘narrative’ of stickers potentially holds such charm:

The fascination of handicraft derives from an object's having passed through the hands of someone the marks of whose labour are still inscribed thereupon: we are fascinated by what has been created, and is therefore unique, because the moment of creation cannot be reproduced (2005: 81).

Benjamin proposes that an object’s authenticity is bound by the transmission of the origins and history which it has experienced. He argues that in reproducing something, this substantive duration ceases to matter and the new object loses its influence, which he refers to as ‘authority’ (Benjamin 1968: 221). Do new banners therefore lack the ‘mythology’ and ‘authority’ of their historic counterparts; if so, how will they hope to exert influence? In an unpublished interview with Jackie Callaghan (2019) from Kibblesworth Colliery Banner Society, she talks about how their old banner (their latter 1961 banner, rather than their former c.1873 and c.1934 banners), now retired to Red Hills (the headquarters of the Durham Miners’ Association), provides a strong sentiment reminiscent of the height of socialism. It features a convalescent home on the back, marking and celebrating the establishment of the National Health Service. However, Callaghan believes that the new 2018 banner (Figures 12 and 13), whilst having little opportunity so far to progress its ‘lived history’, will hold a different sort of attachment: by being actually sited prominently in the village, Callaghan is excited to bring children into the conversation around heritage, using the banner as a catalyst. She feels that by depicting actual members of Kibblesworth village, that it will ‘grow’ in the community through identifying with the men featured: whether by direct descentance or purely by association. According to Scott (2009: 72), this approach to create a distinct identity for both the new banner and community has also been adopted by the

Durham village of Bowburn: their most recent banner depicts their old banners at the Durham Miners' Gala, paraded by both historic and contemporary members of the community.

Some communities have no visual record of their original banner, so new imagery has been explored and debated by the community from necessity. However, whether direct copies, or a new aesthetic, all miners' banners still adopt the historic iconography of Renaissance-style decorative scrollwork as a frame and mainstay. Further exploration with artists and communities for choices around new and continued imagery is a subject for future study, but for now, it is interesting to question decision around iconography in terms of simulacra, pastiche, and bricolage.

Baudrillard, in critiquing postmodern culture talks about substituting the 'signs of the real' (pastiche, imitation, and copies), for the 'real'. He proposes that there are three order of simulacra, each moving further away from the 'real': from the touch, the smell, and the use value of that object (1994: 6-7). For the first order, the one relevant to discussions around banners, he argues that a simulacrum is a counterfeit, an illusion, a place marker for the real (which raises a debate on whether a new banner functions as a form of 'referred memory' to the old) and as such, this defines the point of authenticity:

When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a plethora of myths of origin and of signs of reality – a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity. Escalation of the true, of lived experience, resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared (1994: 6, 7).

Jameson uses the concepts of pastiche and simulacra to argue that the postmodernist aesthetic is ultimately the 'death of the subject' (1998: 5-6): defined as the end of the individual in an age of corporate capitalism. He argues that a constant cannibalising of the past means that artists and writers are unable to invent new styles as "*only a limited number of combinations are possible; the unique ones have been thought of already*". They are therefore condemned to reproduce 'dead styles', or as he puts it; "*the failure of the new, the imprisonment of the past*" (1998: 7). This critique suggests Tutill himself engaged in pastiche when reproducing the fairground aesthetic - a 'dead style' sampled from the Renaissance. However, there is a strong reason that contemporary miners' banners overtly sample

Tutill's styles; far from a shameless plundering of past aesthetics, by using the comforting and "powerful images" (Rendell 2015), it is uniting past cultures (Bennett 2016: 194-195). As the research develops, it is uncovering interesting findings in terms of decisions made by communities when defining their banner's artwork. This is discussed below in 'A Relevant New Aesthetic'.

If pastiche and simulacra refer to an identical copy for which no original has existed: something that has no referent in any reality except its own, then contemporary miners' banners are arguably more akin to the notion of 'bricolage'. Barnard uses Lévi-Strauss who proposes: "*Its present constructions are always made out of things which have already been used in the past: bricolage is the 'continual reconstruction from the same materials', materials which have always already being used in the past (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 21). Consequently, bricolage involves the continual recombination of elements*" (1996: 166-167).

Barnard proposes that bricolage (like retro) has motive in creating new meaning through materials and styles from the past, whereas pastiche is the pure cannibalisation of styles. Bricolage has a motive; it appears to be interested in creating new meanings. Barnard (1996: 168) references Derrida who says "*if one calls bricolage the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from the text of heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is bricolage.*"

In these respects, the sustained use of Tutill's established style could be seen as bricolage for continuity's sake: even if the communities chose to include new and more relevant imagery on their banners, the continued and sustained use of the traditional historic scrollwork frames no doubt complements the other references to their long industrial history.

A Relevant New Aesthetic?

Foker (2019) reports that as artists, they have to accept that banner commissions sometimes require them to "*paint in the past*", rather than translate the ideology of the trade unions into their own aesthetic. It is because of this that they particularly enjoy working with schools: that the exploration of colour, structure and subject material is freer (Figure 9). Having two

sides to a banner means they can still maintain a strong focus on heritage, but that they have the latitude to then explore the pupils' specific identity and community on the other side.

The artists report that replica banners are certainly not a general rule, and welcome communities joining them in debate around relevant and meaningful iconography for a new generation. Shankland (2015) reports that in painting the new Horden Lodge banner (2008), there had been a well-mannered dispute amongst the community as to which side of the banner had been 'the front': the replica side featuring the imagery of two miners shaking hands; or the 'new' side, with a contemporarily dressed 'new family' (Figure 10). Interestingly, in 2018, the community had another banner made which is much closer to their original 'traditional' banner, as they struggled to relate to this 'new family' (Figure 11).

Women's Representation on Banners

Historically, the banners of Tutill's day have had a masculine bias: from the weaving of the fabric, to the imagery featured on them, through to the parading of the final pennant, men have predominantly been at the core. Images of Tutill's manufacturing premises in Gorman (1986: 58- 62) do show a small proportion of women: one or two were artists, whilst the others seamstresses and fabrics finishers. This would not have been unusual in its day, given the percentage of women in work. As very few women were in political or trade union roles, the roundel portraits almost exclusively featured men (with the exception of Rosa Luxemburg on the Hatfield Main Colliery banner). Women did appear more regularly on the biblical or fable scenes on the reverse side of the banners: albeit they were limited to women as 'generic angels' (Figure 12), or to be representative of liberty, peace, friendship, love or truth. Other female figures have been used as wives and mothers, or as widows with orphans at the graveside of their husbands with a legend promising they will be supported.

Interestingly, although communities latterly have the artistic freedom to explore female inclusion in the imagery, some communities still insist on including mainly men. Callaghan (2019) reported that in commissioning their new Kibblesworth banner, they had insisted

that: *“The only woman we want on there is the angel and we don’t want her to look like anybody, we just want her to be herself...but we wanted it to be around the hard work (of the men), because they had the most horrendous working conditions... it’s so dangerous and this country’s been built on the back of miners and the coal... everything was done off the coal.”* Interestingly, the community refers to both old and new banners as ‘she’. Callaghan explains why: *“she - a mother figure - the mother in the home is the one who keeps the home together”*. Figure 12 shows the new banner, which features the old banner as a backdrop to a portrait of the old miners’ union leaders. Callaghan and the banner committee felt passionately that they as a community needed to ‘move on’, but that they had to acknowledge *“we’ve still got that pit community, still got that pit/mine community”*, and so they chose a banner design that was right ‘for now’.

The miners’ strike was to shift the role of women within communities. Women helped maintain the strike by organising support groups that facilitated free cafes, as well as being present on the picket line and appearing at political rallies to speak out. Women Against Pit Closures, became a political movement in itself which had central figures such as Anne Scargill, wife of Arthur Scargill at its core. Anne Scargill is now celebrated with other leading figures on the ‘Daughters of Mother Jones’ banner (Figure 14) to show their dedication to the Socialist cause. The women made both homemade and professional banners, which were marched alongside the predominantly male banners on the picket lines and rallies (Emery 1998: 118). Post-strike, these banners are still used at the ‘Big Meeting’. The new banners that were made to replace damaged or retired banners featured an altogether more inclusive approach, thanks to artists such as Emma Shankland, Ed Hall and Barrie Ormsby, who are introducing iconography for a more diverse nation. Artist Barrie Ormsby challenges gender roles on his Tursdale Mechanics banner (1985) which on one side features a central roundel depicting a man holding a baby, with a woman holding up her hand to deflect the baton blow from a mounted policeman (Figure 15).

The Women’s Banner Group (WBG), set up in 2018, is the first group whose banner was officially affiliated to the Durham Miners’ Association. The WBG invited twelve groups of women in differing communities across County Durham to design and make a patchwork which best represented them. The resulting banner was blessed in the Cathedral and is now used for women’s representation across the North East region (Figure 16). The WBG have

also completed fundraising to have a silk banner made by Durham Bannermakers, which features only inspirational women and the iconography which represents women's struggle for equality (Figure 17). The group reflect that women have always dutifully fought the fight in the mining community when necessary and now they are fighting to have women both past and present recognised for what they have achieved and are still to achieve.

Further Research

Chris Scott (2009: 74-75), writing about the creation of new identities in the Durham Coalfields, concludes his paper by suggesting that perhaps the period of mourning the pit closures has come to an end. He reflects that communities are starting to reject some of their heritage, such as pit buildings, in favour of embracing selected folk memory and practice, such as banners and memorials relevant for a new community.

One area of the research that will be critical in understanding emotion in historic banners will be that of 'touch'. Old banners are predominantly subject to museums' 'no touch' policies, but new banners, for the most part, are accessible. This may be fundamental in how a community forms their emotional attachment to the new artefact. Susan Stewart (in Kwint et al 1999: 32) speaks of the causality of physical handling: to touch means to have influence "*we are changed and so was the object.*" She also references Heidegger in "*arguing that the things we handle will always reciprocate the treatment we administer to them. When our gestures are caring, Heideggerean contends, they receive back a deeper disclosure of their ontological truth and the same results follows from gestural involvement with others.*" (in Kwint et al 1999: 32).

This paper began by making the claim that miners' banners are fascinating but uncommon objects. In order to unravel some of this complexity, the next stage of this research will use design provocations in order for post-industrial mining villages in North East England to draw on their own experiences of their banners to find a new voice and give new insights into how a banner can help shape collective identity.

It is assumed that memory must be fully explored in exploring this 'new voice', to try to distill and understand whether new banners are significant artefacts in their own right, or whether they are a form of 'referred memory' to the old. Kwint (1999: 1) argues that regardless of its subjective viewpoints, memory is not just pivotal to the past, but will give a truer understanding of causality and significance of events. Leslie (in Kwint et al 1999: 108) references Benjamin on memory who makes a metaphor appropriate to this research project, and says that "*those who wish to approach their buried past must be prepared to dig, unafraid to return repeatedly to the same matter, turning over the soil in the manner of an archaeologist*".

In considering the banner as a sign, it must, according to Baudrillard and Derrida (in Barnard 1996: 156), be considered within a network of other signs (called 'traces' by Derrida): that they mean nothing on their own. Baudrillard further suggests that it is difference that produces or generates meaning, not similarity. In this respect, the 'traces' of the parade, the brass bands, the spectators and the architecture of museums and communities must also be considered in terms of how banners generate meaning.

Since the last pit in the North East closed in 1993, the banners of the Durham Miners have found themselves displayed in exhibitions: the subject of retrospectives. However, in recent years, they have found a renewed purpose, evidenced by the number of commissions and heightened attendance at the Durham Miners' Gala. James talks about "*the persistent power of these artefacts in the cultural and ideological life of the working classes*" (2014: 189) and she and Ravenhill-Johnson call for those involved in progressive action to theorise regarding the labour movement's cultural expression and to shape an "appropriate aesthetic for the struggles of our time" (2014: 190). This project in part aims to do just that; by viewing the banner through a 'design lens', the research hopes to unpack the emotional triggers; to understand the relationship between a historic banner and its contemporary counterpart; and to understand an 'appropriate aesthetic' for a post-industrial community.

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Figure 1:

The New Saint Cuthbert's Banner (2012) commissioned by the Northumbrian Association and designed by Fiona Raeside-Elliott, being processed to Durham Cathedral.

Photo: Tony Griffith



Figure 2:
Trimdon Colliery Lodge replica banner by Durham Bannermakers (2016) with a painting of
the parable of the 'Good Samaritan'.
Photo: Emma Shankland.



Figure 3:

'Work' (1852-1865) Ford Madox Brown
Image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery



Figure 4:

Trimdon Grange Colliery replica banner by Durham Bannermakers (2013) with a painting of Aesop's 'Bundle of Sticks'. This style of banner was classed as woven by George Tutill: where the decoration surrounding the central artwork was woven in his unique Jacquard pattern.

Photo: Emma Shankland.



Figure 6:

Walter Crane's 'Cartoon to Celebrate May Day' artwork used on at least six different miners' lodge banners.

Photos: West Rainton History Society, Glyn Nelson, Fiona Raeside-Elliott, Durham Bannermakers.

The original illustration 'May Day' was published in *The Sun* (1903). Original Copy held in the People's History Museum, Manchester.



Figure 7:

Haswell Lodge replica side (front) by Durham Bannermakers (2016). One of Haswell's earlier banners (1893) is permanently displayed on a wall in Durham Cathedral.

Photo: Emma Shankland.



Figure 8:
Haswell Lodge new side (back) by Durham Bannermakers (2016).
Photo: Emma Shankland.



Figure 9:

Bowburn Junior School banner made in conjunction with Bearpark Artist Cooperative (2011).

Photo: Bearpark Artist Cooperative.



Figure 10:
Horden Lodge banner by Durham Bannermakers (c.2008).
Photo: Emma Shankland.



Figure 11:
Horden Lodge new banner by Durham Bannermakers (2018).
Photo: Ste Whiteoak.



Figure 12:
Kibblesworth Lodge new banner by Durham Bannermakers (2018).
Photo: Emma Shankland.



Figure 13:

Kibblesworth Lodge new banner by Durham Bannermakers (2018).

This style of Tutill banner used a plain-woven cloth; the scrollwork surrounding the central artwork was painted, not woven.

Photo: Emma Shankland.



Figure 14:

'Daughters of Mother Jones' contemporary banner by Durham Bannermakers (2017) photographed with Anne Scargill (right) who features on the banner.
Photo: Emma Shankland.



Figure 15:

Tursdale Mechanics banner (1985). The use of the black drape on a banner denotes the death of an important trade unionist or figurehead in its community.

Photo: Barrie Ormsby, Bearpark Artists Cooperative



Figure 16:
 Women's Banner Group Community banner (2018) at its inaugural Durham Miners' Gala in 2018.

Photo: Fiona Raeside-Elliott



Figure 17:
Women's Banner Group silk banner (2020).
Photo: Fiona Raeside-Elliott