ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTEBOOKS

Vol. 26, Issue 3, pp. 17-39, ISSN 2232-3716.
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4603742

Between-ness: Art and piety in religious heritage space

Clare Haynes

University of East Anglia, c.haynes@uea.ac.uk

Abstract

This essay explores an exhibition series that was put on by HERILIGION UK in the redundant (closed) church of St Peter Hungate, Norwich as part of its research outputs. It describes the site and project-specific works of art that were commissioned by the UK team working with their heritage partners at Hungate. It suggests that each work intervened in the space, re-ordering it and offering visitors a new sense of place, that was, nevertheless, intimately bound up with the building's religious past. The essay concludes that contemporary art has the potential to mediate between religious and heritage, secular and sacred, past and present in ways that are sympathetic to that past but transformative. Indeed it proposes that the artists offered visitors access to a new sacred.

KEYWORDS: heritage, art, church, secular, sacred

Introduction

> *The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. (Tuan 1977, p. 6)*

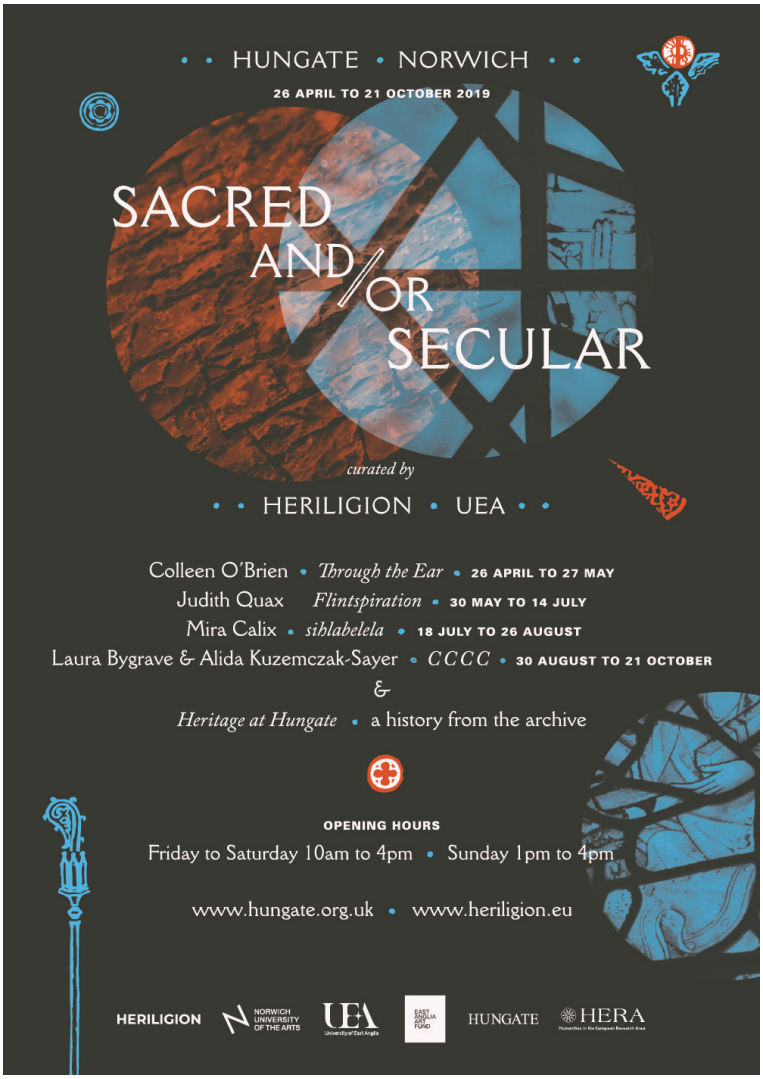

Image 1: *Alida Kuzemczak-Sayer, Sacred and/or Secular, poster (©HERILIGION, 2019)*

In 2019, HERILIGION researchers based at the University of East Anglia, UK organized an exhibition series, *Sacred and/or Secular*, in the redundant church of St Peter Hungate, Norwich (Image 1).[1] Hungate has a fascinating history: it has not been used as a place of worship since 1933, when it became the first Church of England building to be handed

[1] The HERILIGION consortium (*The Heritagization of Religion and Sacralization of Heritage in Contemporary Europe*) was financially supported by the HERA, NCN, AHRC, FCT, DASTI, NWO within the HERA program *Uses of the Past* (2016-2019). The project received funding from the European Commission through Horizon 2020 under grant agreement No 649307. The consortium consisted of five national research teams based in Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, the United Kingdom. This paper discusses one of the research strands of the British team based at the University of East Anglia.

over to a secular authority for use as a museum of ecclesiastical art. Since 2007 it has been run as a heritage centre for the appreciation of medieval art (Hungate Medieval Art – HMA) (Haynes, forthcoming). The four shows of *Sacred and/or Secular* each ran for a few weeks, three of them were made by artists responding to the history and heritage of the church. The fourth exhibition, of photographs taken of a church heritage festival held in 2017, will not be considered here. It did raise interesting questions about churches and their management as heritage assets, which are unfortunately beyond the scope of this essay.[2] Of the three exhibitions to be examined, two were sound installations and the third featured work by two visual artists. Each offered visitors, trustees and volunteers the opportunity to reflect on the heritage of the church, as well as to engage with it and the space in new ways. This essay will focus on how these works were made, and what they proposed to their audience. Although there is a growing critical literature on the place of contemporary art in heritage practice this tends to focus on secular sites (Cass et al., 2020; Vest Hansen et al., 2019). This essay engages with the specificities of religious heritage, and more particularly those of closed churches (i.e. no longer used for religious worship), as heritage spaces with particular entailments. It concludes that contemporary art has the potential to mediate between the religious and heritage, secular and sacred, and to create new relations between the past and present.

Curation as a heritage and research practice

The primary aims of *Sacred and/or Secular* were to extend the reach of the research project, and to facilitate an alternative form of engagement with it. There was a small, conventional exhibition narrating a heritage history of the church, based on the author's research which consisted of printed boards of photographs and text, which were displayed in the two transepts, along with display cases containing historical printed materials. The exhibition told the history of Hungate's closure as a church, and its life as a museum, and it explored the co-existence of the sacred and secular at Hungate from the nineteenth century to the present. The contemporary art shows were intended to go further, and to work differently. As heritage interpretation expert, Carol Parr, argued

> … public art has the power to relate to a wide audience by removing the obstacles of traditional learning techniques and opening doors to a range of learning

[2] The exhibition *Flintspiration* celebrated a festival organised by the Norwich Historic Churches Trust, the landlord of 18 redundant churches in the City, including St Peter Hungate. Participants included other heritage bodies and open churches in the city that encourage public engagement with their heritage. The photographs recorded the variety of heritage activities that take place in Norwich's many repurposed and open churches, including a circus school, medieval dance troupe, children's education and so on.

> styles. It can engage with our emotions, encourage us to become more aware of our surroundings and even change our attitudes. (Schofield, 2007, p. 113)

It was in this spirit that artists were invited to make work that responded to the research being undertaken by HERILIGION, and the work on Hungate in particular.[3] No constraints were placed on what the artists might do, nor the content of their work but the expectation was clearly articulated in the call for proposals that it would be made in some kind of relation or response to the building, its history and HERILIGION's research questions (HERILIGION, n.d.). The jury (consisting of two trustees of HMA, one a heritage professional, the other a senior lecturer at Norwich University of the Arts, and the two UEA HERILIGION researchers) selected three of the proposals that they received. The criteria were aesthetic, intellectual, and practical. These three seemed to be the most promising, in terms of the artists' responses to HERILIGION's work and Hungate's complex history, as well as the practical issues of working in a heritage building (for example, nothing can be hung from the walls). A process of facilitation began. This took the form of site visits, guided visits to local archives as well as more informal sharing of ideas, readings and the HERILIGION research. Working in partnership with HMA, the author also undertook supervision of the exhibition installations with the artists, and organised an opening for each show, together with a lecture series, a workshop and a screening, which provided other intersections. In addition, she was sometimes present when Hungate was open to the public to act as an invigilator for the exhibitions and as a guide to the church. Beyond the hoped for outcomes, an unexpected enrichment of the research resulted too.

In planning their interventions for Hungate, the artists engaged with the church primarily as space, and considered place in rather different ways from the art & socio-historical perspective of the author, or the heritage management practices of HMA. As John Schofield, an archaeologist and cultural heritage professional, reported from his experience of working with artists:

> [they] are often the most successful in making public, and encouraging dialogue on, those intimate experiences and evaluations of place that are increasingly relevant to heritage management practice, and to managing the historic environment. (Schofield, 2007, p. 105)

Even though the works were intimately connected with Hungate's past and present, informed by the archives and appreciation of the building's long history, the artists' ap-

[3] These invitations were in the first instance to a number of artists' groups in the city, who chose artists to submit proposals. HERILIGION is grateful to NUA, LOWER GREEN and SAVORR for their cooperation.

proach was one that was largely free from chronology and narrative. Instead, as will be shown, they presented the past in action and affect, obscuring its pastness and complicating context. In collaborating with them, the author was offered the opportunity to experience the subject of her research quite differently, and thus to think differently about it. For example, the concept of the secular sacred became more certainly germane, and useful to an understanding of heritage value, both official and individual, and to religious heritage practice, more generally (see below). In addition, the possibility was raised that more elusive, fluid, non-linear narratives and chronologies might serve to support the visitor's experience of space and place more effectively than the traditional heritage facts-based 'walk through time'. Furthermore, of course, Hungate itself changed as a result of this activity, which is to say that the perceptions of trustees, volunteers and visitors, as well as researchers, were all changed to some extent as new layers of association were laid down, and new connections made.

Hungate as space and place

Before turning to consider the artists' work, it will be helpful to say something about Hungate as space and place. The church is situated in the middle of Norwich's city centre, a very dense heritage landscape of cathedral, castle and 31 remaining medieval churches, historic streetscapes, as well as a vibrant contemporary cultural scene. Until the end of the seventeenth century Norwich was England's second city, a place of textile manufacture and a trading hub, a bridge to the Continent. Now its economy is dominated by financial services. While it is sometimes characterised as parochial, the city has a long history of artistic production, political radicalism, and innovation. UNESCO City of Literature in 2012, Norwich has a reputation as an incubator for the arts, particularly through the famous creative writing MA programme at the University of East Anglia, and Norwich University of the Arts, which trains artists in the fine, graphic and media arts. In heritage matters too, the City has a distinctive history. For example, the Norwich Historic Churches Trust (NHTC), founded in 1973, was among the first organisations in the UK to take on the care of redundant churches from the Church of England, finding alternative uses for them to prevent them from being demolished (NHCT, n.d.). Indeed, Hungate is now in the care of the NHCT, leased to the charitable trust Hungate Medieval Art (Hungate, n.d.), which encourages public engagement with the region's rich medieval heritage. Other uses that the NHCT have found for the 18 churches in their care include warehouses, an antiques centre, offices and a circus school.

Turning to consider Hungate itself: a small, late medieval, cruciform building, the church sits in a small, picturesque churchyard (Image 2). Its high heritage value is based on its age, architecture, historic associations, as well as its contribution to the historic townscape. Much repaired after the iconoclasm of Britain's long Reformation and some neglect, little of its medieval furniture or ornament survive.

Image 2: *St Peter Hungate, postcard (private collection, Anon., c. 1910)*

It is largely an empty interior, with a few medieval benches lent from another church, and the usual heritage equipment of display boards and stands and so on. A significant angel roof still covers the nave and transepts, and there are fragments of very fine stained glass surviving in some of the windows, sufficient hint, perhaps, for the well-informed visitor to project an image of the church's probable rich interior in the late fifteenth century. What dominates most visitor experiences, however, is the light that fills the open space of the nave and chancel.

The church is modest in size but the windows are very large, and mostly filled with clear glass. The white-washed interior is thus a vessel filled with natural light or dark, and it is in almost continuous flux. This unceasing, mediated change is not unmeaning, not without its affects. One dark night, for example, while screening a film, a storm blew up that beat rain against the windows of the chancel where we sat, and the space be-

came extraordinarily present to us. As Yi-Fun Tuan said about the city, words that seem apposite in considering one of its constituent elements, the church: 'the traditional city symbolised, first, transcendental and man-made order as against the chaotic forces of terrestrial and infernal nature. Second, it stood for an ideal human community' (Tuan 1977, p. 173). There in that moment, watching the film, we were a community, sheltered by the building, extraordinarily aware of its size, shape, age and solidity as it became a drum beating away the storm.

Considering further the idea of "man-made order", Juhani Pallasmaa, the architect and theorist, has argued powerfully for architecture as a means for managing the metaphysics, the sublimity, of space and time. In a highly influential book on architecture and the senses, he contended 'architecture is our primary instrument in relating us to space and time, and giving these dimensions a human measure' (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 19). He proposed that buildings can allow us to place ourselves securely within the infinite and the eternal. It does this both by containing space, demarcating it for our use and experience, and by telling time both short (though light and sound) and long:

> … natural materials... allow our vision to penetrate their surfaces and enable us to become convinced of the veracity of matter … [They] express their age, as well as the story of their origins and their history of human use. All matter exists in the continuum of time; the patina of wear adds the enriching experience of time. (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 34)

The relevance of these understandings of urbanity and architecture to the experience of heritage buildings is underlined by the words of psychiatrist Gotthard Booth that Pallasma quotes: 'nothing gives man fuller satisfaction than participation in processes that supersede the span of individual life' (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 35). A similar observation, informed by a different strand of place-thinking, is made by Neil A. Silberman who suggests that 'heritage places' are spiritual places of 'personal communion,' of 'psychic intimacy with distant eras and vast expanses of human history' (Silberman, 2006, p. 32). Using these insights, a building such as Hungate can be seen to have a triple potential as a means of transcendence: as historic architecture, and through its uses for religious worship, and as heritage. Anecdotally, the experience of mediated light at Hungate is often found by visitors to be moving, and this experience was at the heart of two of the works that were made for *Sacred and/or Secular*.

Although suppressed to some extent by the absence of pulpit and communion table, the religious spatial hierarchy, defined initially by the cruciform shape, is also maintained by the nave, which runs from the west tower to the steps at the east, dividing it from the

elevated chancel. The font remains between the north and south doors at the west end of the church. Its position a traditional symbol of entry into the Christian life, while at the other end of the building, the place where the believer is understood to meet Christ in the sacrament of communion, the altar, is elevated. The space was, as one of the artists encouraged us to remember, designed to facilitate symbolic and actual movement.

As place, Hungate is valued highly. It is enmeshed in networks of significance and social relations that are local, national and international. For example, it is designated a Grade 1 listed building (the highest ranking in the UK system), held in national regard for its age, architecture and historical associations. It is also valued as one of the 31 medieval churches that survive in Norwich, which give the City its distinctive pattern and appearance, a group which is unrivalled in number in Northern Europe. Hungate is also the focus of a community of trustees and volunteers that work hard to sustain it. Thus, it is a place of fellowship, as well as heritage tourism (Haynes forthcoming). It is also the place where events of historical, local and individual significance took place. For example, among Hungate's parishioners during the Middle Ages were the Paston family, whose surviving correspondence is a hugely important source for medieval historians. Other events that constitute Hungate as place are more personal but in some ways shared. A number of visitors mentioned to the author that they had visited Hungate when they were a child, when it was still a museum, remembering fondly the experience of brass-rubbing, or the attraction to them of particular objects that were on display. Their present visits were thus a kind of pilgrimage, which had recollection, and perhaps reintegration as one of its goals.

The psycho/spiritual potential of visits is critical to our understanding. Two strands of work, which have emerged from cross-disciplinary engagement with religious studies are useful here. One strand regards pilgrimage and tourism. Scholars have expanded our sense of pilgrimage to include certain kinds of travel, which while not religious in themselves, may have religious destinations, or have psycho/spiritual goals for the traveler. Secular pilgrimage, both in terms of destination and motivation, is now recognised in the literature (Collins-Kreiner, 2016; Greenia, 2018; Marine-Roig, 2015). One impetus, which has particular resonance for heritage practice, is a search for the authentic – in the world, and in oneself (Jones, 2009; Østergaard & Refslund Christensen, 2010; Selberg, 2010). With specific reference to travel to religious places, Thomas S. Bremer offers the useful observation that

> … religious understandings of a site create one set of places, while touristic interpretations produce a different set of places. Certainly, this simultaneity of

> places offers and abundant opportunity for overlap and convergence […] Sacred for the religious, aestheticised and commodified for the tourists, these places contribute decisively to the social affiliations and personal identities of those who enter their precincts. (Bremer, 2006, p. 34)

Hungate, and sites like it which are no longer religious in function are valued highly for many different reasons, which can produce an array of converging and diverging responses, as we will see.

The second strand of scholarship relevant here also works with and expands on a concept developed in religious studies: the numinous. Recognising that heritage sites and museums are potential places for transcendental encounters, scholars have used Rudolf Otto's ideas, adapting them to a degree in the process. Cameron and Gatewood, who led the way, proposed that the numinous experience in heritage places consisted of 'deep engagement or transcendence; empathy; awe or reverence—an experience of being in the presence of something holy, or spiritual communion with something or someone' (summarised in Latham, 2016, p. 3). As Latham observes others have discussed 'deeply felt' experiences in museums, without using the terms numinous (ibid.). There are of course other kinds of responses to heritage that seem to engage ideas of the sacred. For example, Tuan recognised a kind of piety at work in the preservation of old buildings, a respect for forebears and their way of life, which visitors participate in (Tuan, 1997). In other work, a broader recognition of heritage as a mode of sacralisation (chiefly, of high cultural value and setting apart) has begun to yield insights, particularly in relation to the politics of heritage formation (Meyer & de Witte, 2013). In relation to the present study, the work of Kim Knott, a religious studies scholar, has been particularly helpful in clarifying the 'overlaps and convergence' that Bremer highlighted. Knott allows us to see that Bremer's distinction between 'sacred for the religious' and 'aestheticised for the tourist' might not be quite accurate. Knott argues convincingly that the sacred is not an 'exclusively religious category', and that things, which are not religious but which are highly valued, set apart and inviolable can be '*both* secular *and* sacred' (Knott 2013: 145, 160). In observing the work at Hungate and the responses generated, this insight offered a way of characterising the attitudes and values that were to be observed, such as inviolability, authenticity, attention, reverence, respect, commitment, and love, as not necessarily religious, or quasi-religious (even in some ironic or metaphorical way) but perhaps, entirely secular *and* sacred. Unshackling the sacred from Hungate's religious past meant that it became possible to begin to ask—is Hungate a sacred place now, and if so in what ways?

'Truth and beauty and goodness in new shapes before us'

The first work to be featured in the series was Colleen O'Brien's *Through the Ear*.[4] The artist, a final-year student at Norwich University of the Arts, works visually and with sound. What visitors saw when they entered the church were nine speakers, arranged around the nave and chancel, which were driven by Arduino boards. As they moved through the space, on their own or among others, the speakers were triggered by motion sensors, and each played a separate part of the polyphonic work that the artist had composed and recorded with a small group of singers. The music, unmistakably contemporary, nevertheless called on the sound world of Gregorian chant and used the traditional form of a canon, or round.

The words of the piece were drawn from Hungate's history. In 1933, St Peter Hungate became a museum of ecclesiastical art, run not by the Church but by the local authority, the City of Norwich. This conversion was highly significant in national terms because up to this moment, unless churches under threat of closure could be found a religious use, dilapidation was the only solution. Indeed Hungate had been threatened with demolition thirty years before but it had been preserved by the intervention of a national group of antiquarians working together with local people. By the late 1920s, it was clear that if Hungate was to survive, a different solution was needed, as alternative religious uses had been found to be unsustainable (Haynes, forthcoming). The Bishop of Norwich, with the City's mayor and museum staff, worked together to find a solution adapting an idea that had first been used in Paris after the French Revolution—to use a church as a museum. It was still regarded as a radical step for the Church of England in 1933, even though the museum's focus was to be ecclesiastical art. In his speech at the opening ceremony, the Bishop of Norwich, Bertram Pollock, set out his ideas for the potentialities of the church-museum:

> … there are three avenues … commonly speaking, which lead men and women to God … These three roads are the ways of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. We may look upon them as ultimate realities … These recognitions reach their highest as we contemplate the revelation of the Lord Christ Himself … And when in Him we see Goodness, Truth, and Beauty complete and unimpaired we bow our heads and adore … The contemplation of beautiful forms in nature and art quickens our appreciation of beauty, and our devotion to it; Goethe said one ought to behold one thing of beauty every day. So are we drawn to God, who is the source of beauty, and once again we are led upwards to worship.

[4] The artist recorded a video of one iteration of the piece (O'Brien, 2019).

> I do not then consider that this little gem of a church is being divorced from its original purpose when it is being constituted a repository of ecclesiastical art … We will … hope that in a new way it will do some of its former spiritual work. We will ask that it may be still a House of God, teaching the things of God through the eye if no longer through the ear. The ecclesiastical exhibits … can present truth and beauty and goodness in new shapes before us. We have retained the well-beloved church, with its charm of architecture and its wonderful glass … Here we say, if with a new tone in our voice, nevertheless continue to say to those who enter, 'Lift up your hearts'; we lift them to the Lord today. (Historic Norwich Ceremony, 1933)

Thus, for Pollock, Hungate was still a church, not just as a building type, but as a place of religious instruction and spiritual agency.

O'Brien's piece was intended to animate the spirit, through its recall of the Bishop's words and the use of the space, which she recognised as having spiritual potential. 'Goodness, Truth, and Beauty', 'Through the eye, Through the ear', 'Eyes of the soul look through wonderful glass. New shapes before us, cultivating goodness' and 'A gem of derelict worship, well-beloved charm. Divorced original purpose, replenished devotion' sounded out as a visitor passed, sometimes surprising them, raising awareness of their path through the building, as a journey through space and time. In the use of the Bishop's words, O'Brien might be thought to have been re-enacting, in some way, the speech, rehearsing his sentiments. However, that is not what happened. While the words acted as a bridge between the past and the present, authentically of Hungate, they were cut free from their context, freed for the visitor to interpret without reference to that history, if they chose. There was a leaflet explaining the source of the words, and the speech in full featured on one of the boards in the historical exhibition but visitors were free to overlook these things. Whether or not the visitor knew their history, or their ultimate derivation (in classical antiquity, in the Bible and from Goethe), the Bishop's words could be interpreted afresh, new meanings found in the artist's presentation of them.

Thus the piece intervened in the space, and heritage temporality, in two significant ways. Firstly, it offered visitors recognition of their presence, and in the encouragement to move, to make a "pilgrimage" through the church, filling the building's interior with sound. Hungate resounded. As Pallasmaa observed, sound is more intimate than sight: it "incorporates". 'I regard an object, but sound approaches me; the eye reaches, but the ear receives' (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 53). Thus sound develops a stronger sense of affinity,

and the visitor's experience of Hungate was made more intimate by it. Space became nearer place. Secondly, the piece also disregarded any of the usual devices of quarantining the past, as different from the present, whether by explanation, quotation marks, costume or typography, for example. It was simply present. This seems to have contributed to a number of visitors speaking of O'Brien's work as 'appropriate', as doing justice to the church. This sense of fitness arose from the visitors feeling that the music was consonant in its style and content with the building's past as a place of worship and the present 'church-ness' of its architecture. This was for them an authentic experience. One or two said that they found it spiritually moving (Hungate Visitors' Book, 2019). This will be considered further in the conclusion.

The second exhibition presented Mira Calix's piece s*ihlabelela* (2019a), the title means 'we sing' in Zulu, and was chosen by the artist to indicate both the communal nature of the piece and to recall the Nazareth Baptist church communities who sing in the open in Durban, South Africa, where the artist grew up (Calix, 2019b). The title and the milieu it originated in, while religious, are strikingly alien to the traditions of Anglican ritual that had been the practice at Hungate in its last years as a church. This nominal dis-placement signalled the ambition of Calix's work, which grew out of her engagement with the politics of community, as much as it did from Hungate's heritage.

Nevertheless Calix began with two aspects of that heritage. Firstly, as a sound artist she recognised the building as having unique acoustics, observing that it was in the medieval period that 'English composers first started to engage with architectural acoustics' (Calix, 2019b). Secondly, among the materials provided to the artist by the researcher was a 1965 local newspaper article entitled *Ghostly Music.* It reported the innovation of music at Hungate:

> … at various times during the day the sound of a choir singing early 15th century church music softly fills the building. Casual visitors could be forgiven for wondering if the building is haunted—for nothing is in evidence to account for the seemingly ghostly music. Actually it emanates from an extremely mundane source—a tape recorder out of sight at the back of the church… Certainly it brings a different atmosphere to the museum and is a reminder of the times when the building saw congregations instead of casual visitors. (1965)

Calix adopted the tape recorder from Hungate's past but gave it a quite new purpose. Instead of recordings of a medieval sound world, a simple permutation poem based on 'we sing' was recorded in a number of different ways. Eleven tape recorders placed on white plinths played short loops of different versions of the piece, together with a longer

20 min composition on a central plinth. All the recorders played simultaneously creating a dense texture of sound, which some visitors described as "cacophonous" (Image 3).

Image 3: *Hungate looking East at the time of Sihlabelela (©Ralph Salmon, 2019)*

Calix's work positioned the building and its past in a much more extensive spatial frame, which generated a new sense of Hungate as place. Firstly, every day that the exhibition was open, one tape was taken out and replaced by one that a volunteer had made. Volunteers were asked to take two tape recorders to a location of their choosing, to play the original 20 min composition, and record it playing in that place. Thus sihlabelela was taken out into the world, and brought back with an accompaniment of the sounds of somewhere else. Hungate was connected to new places in the minds and bodies of the volunteers, and the visitors who noticed the workings of the piece. In addition to the recordings of gatherings of volunteers made in Hungate, the artist made a call on social media for people to record themselves singing the poem, without prescribing either melody or tempo, and send an MP4 recording to her. Contributions came from people living far away and near and their voices were joined with the local volunteers. Hungate became a place where individual's voices were heard in relation with others, and a temporary community, real and virtual, was formed, centered on the building and the artist's work there. In addition, in the midst of its run at Hungate, Calix worked with

FBi Radio in Australia, who invited Gail Priest, a Sidney based artist to contribute to the piece, which they broadcast on their experimental sound show *Ears Have Ears* (Olsen & Di Maio, 2019).

In its new relative location, Hungate continued to attract its usual audience of tourists, passers-by and church architecture enthusiasts but as is common with its contemporary art exhibitions, a new group of visitors came too. Drawn by Calix's reputation, and entering the building for the first time, many came whose interests were focused much more on contemporary sound art than heritage. Hungate was their destination only because it was the site of the work. Its significance as place for them was entirely contingent on the piece. Indeed, it is possible to go further to argue that in one important sense the piece itself was not contingent on Hungate either, or put differently, sihlabelela did not have Hungate, the building or its past, at its central subject. This does not mean, however, that it was out of place.

At the center of Calix's work was an urgent contemporary problem: sihlabelela is 'about communing and collaborating' she stated. Discussing the MP4s that people sent to her she said:

> … receiving these little songs into my inbox has been delightful, the intimacy of hearing the vulnerability of the lone singing voice has brought me much joy and I so appreciate the faith and trust people have put not only in me, but in the artwork itself. The willingness to contribute and be part of this temporary community is particularly heartening in our current, very much divisive political climate. (Calix, 2019b)

Thus, it was community, not the building or Hungate's past that was at the heart of the piece. Although the title of the work had a religious source, there was nothing religious about the piece or its ambitions. Nevertheless, it is striking to observe how reminiscent of a congregation Calix's new community was, gathering together around the priest, lifting their voices together to the same end. Furthermore, while there were some negative reactions to the work, largely because people came expecting the church to be quiet, if not silent, there was also reverence. Approaches to the piece, the voices and to the building were unhurried and usually quiet, as people moved around, sometimes ear bent down to a tape recorder listening intently to a single voice, or looking up comprehending the whole. Hungate became as it had been, when it was a place of religious worship, a place of community, where contemporary issues and problems could be aired and solutions sought through collective action and fellowship. This is part of its heritage too.

In the final exhibition of the series, the two artists maintained the building's silence, intervening visually in the space instead. The exhibition *CCCC* was the result of collaboration between Laura Bygrave and Alida Kuzemczak-Sayer, who worked together in planning and researching the show. Each made their own work for it, Bygrave showing her pieces in the chancel and Kuzemczak-Sayer in the nave. The title of their exhibition is enigmatic, a quotation from a piece of medieval graffiti carved on a stone just outside the north door that was of early interest to them. In the end, it was the windows and the stained glass that became the main visual impetus for both artists' work. While each took a quite different approach, from the archival and visual research they did together, they developed a shared view of Hungate as 'a collage of history and meaning, a place of stories that are embedded in the building and hang in the air, and a place of spiritual residue and resonance' (Bygrave & Kuzemczak-Sayer, 2019).

Alida Kuzemczak-Sayer's response to Hungate as collage brought together representations of different parts of Hungate's past in a piece called *Diptych for Hungate*. The artist was particularly struck by the drama of the changing light in the building and how coloured pools of light appear on the floor when the sun hits the stained glass in the south transept and tower windows. She constructed a pair of wooden cases in reference to the ones used by museums to transport paintings, which formed the base of two works. Into the top of each was set a Perspex sheet, which diffused light from a source below, through a softly painted filter. These recalled the light boxes, which had been used in the past to display stained glass in Hungate. Lain on top was a shape made of mulberry paper, pleated and fanned, a little reminiscent of the angels' wings in the windows above. Drawn on these pleated forms were dark lines recalling the leading of the glass, as well as the worn graffito. *Diptych* was in her words a 're-action' that 'in its blurred and melded echo … reflects on Hungate as a mediation, an accumulating vessel of light, of time and of meaning' (Bygrave & Kuzemczak-Sayer, 2019). The work was not passive but active, engaged in constant play with the windows and the light that came through them. As the sun ran its course along the south side of the building each day, the light that filled the building changed and moved, telling time, revealing space, and *Diptych* responded. When the ambient light level was high, the echo was muted; when it was low the fanned shapes were more brightly coloured as the effects of the light filtered from beneath were more visible.

An evening opening revealed the work's full 're-action' to Hungate. Lit for the occasion by small battery-driven tealights, the building was still very dark and bright streetlights cast dramatic shadows of the south windows on to the north wall (Image 4).

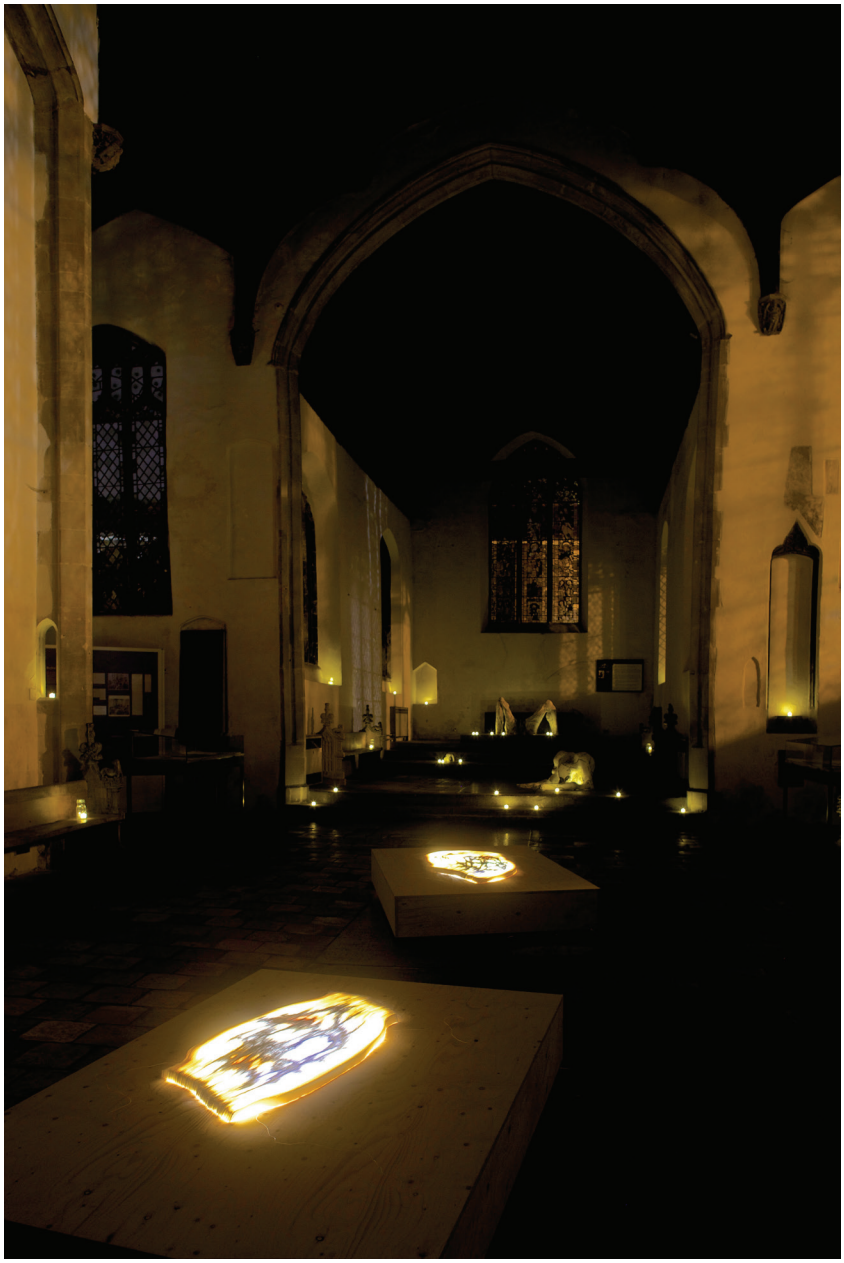

Image 4: *Hungate looking east at night during CCCC (©Philip Sayer, 2019)*

The physical space was reconfigured, shadow obscured the geometry of the building and the tealights guided visitors on paths through the building, whose way markers were not the usual architectural features of Hungate, which were cast into shadow but the artists' works. The lights also drew attention to what might be overlooked in the daytime, for example, window ledges and the complex textures of the quite ordinary surfaces of walls and floors. In the darkness, the two pieces glowed brightly, filled with strong colour from the filter beneath, and the paper folds took on the appearance of hair, or perhaps, feathers (Image 5). It was as if the light that had poured in through Hungate's large windows during the day had been caught, held and burnished in *Diptych*.

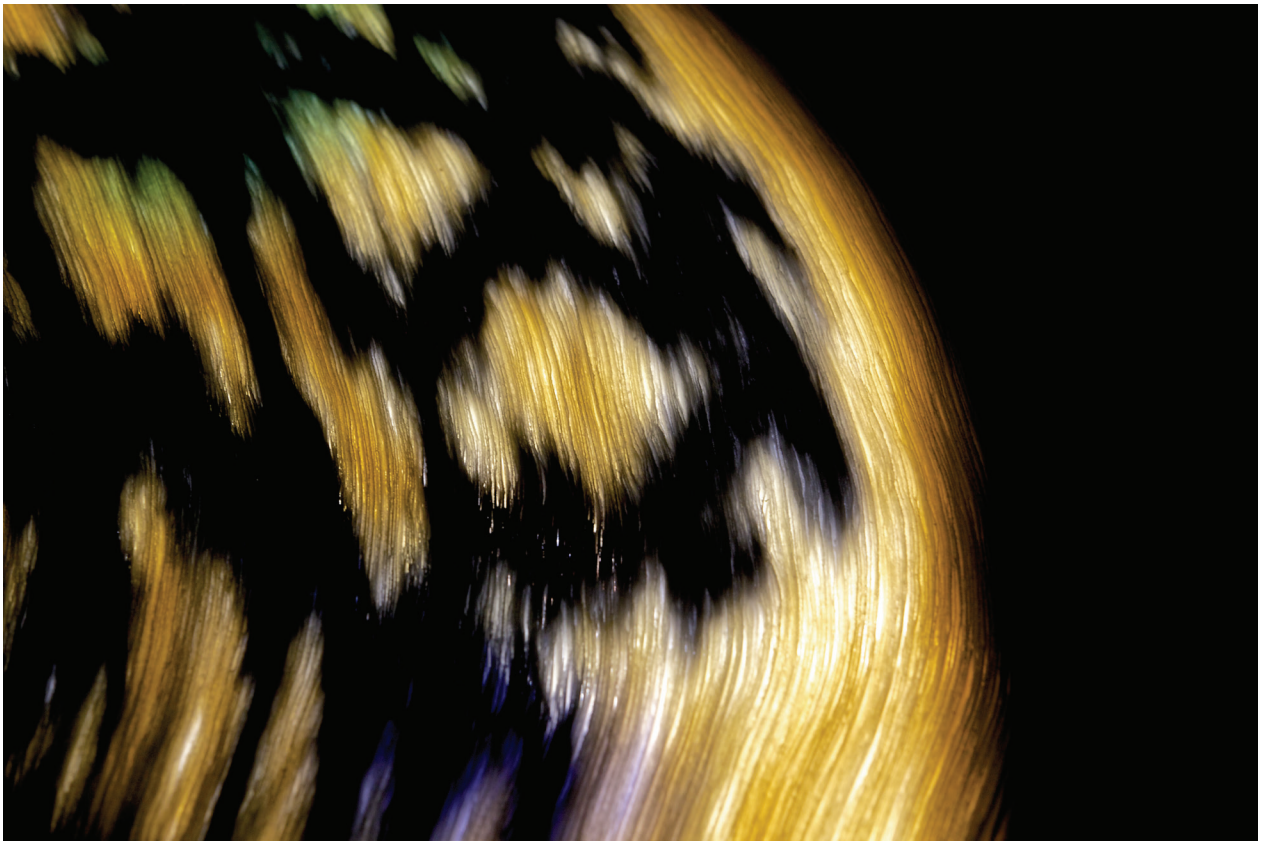

Image 5: *Alida Kuzemczak-Sayer, part of Diptych, (©Philip Sayer, 2019)*

In the allusions and gestures towards the building and its heritage, as church and museum, Kuzemczack-Sayer's work tendered Hungate an echo that was affirming and respectful. It was, in Tuan's formulation, an act of piety. At the centre of it was the building and its continuing power to reconcile us with the world, as Pallasmaa expresses it, to 'structure, understand and remember the shapeless flow of reality, and ultimately, to recognise and remember who we are' (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 76). *Diptych for Hungate* was not religious in any sense but in its new echo of Hungate it offered visitors a meditation on the deep human work that historic buildings do (Pallasmaa, 2017).

Laura Bygrave presented an untitled series of plaster figures in the chancel of the church. Again the starting point was the stained glass and in particular the panels of angels in the north transept. These medieval images are fragmentary and repaired with pieces of glass from elsewhere in the building. Bygrave's figures are fragmentary too and enigmatic in form. One figure placed centrally, where one could imagine the altar to have stood was challenging, even distasteful, to some visitors, particularly at first glance. To them it was quite inappropriate because it appeared to represent a pair of splayed legs (Image 6).

Image 6: Works by Laura Bygrave, CCCC (©Clare Haynes, 2019)

Observed more closely, it became clearer as shoulders, arms and a head, either being pulled up through the floor, or retreating below it (Image 7).

The slippage between these three potential interpretations was no accident. The sculptures certainly spoke to early medieval Christian traditions of representation, when grotesque figures, sometimes exposing their genitals, were placed both inside and outside churches, often on boundaries. To this observer at least, there were poignant echoes of Christ's passion, a play of ideas and associations of the suffering of Gethsemane and the crucifixion, and an individual's embodied struggle between good and evil, and the possibility of redemption.

Image 7: *Laura Bygrave, Figure at the east end, CCCC (©Philip Sayer, 2019)*

What intrigued the artist and provided the impetus for her work was the idea of angels as "creatures of beyond and in-between". This is represented at Hungate very directly by the position of the angels at the tops of the windows, high above the visitor's head and in that shallowest of boundaries, the window's depth. Like angels, windows are in between.

They are, in Pallasmaa's words, between 'the enclosed and open, interiority and exteriority, private and public, shadow and light' (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 51). Here the artist drew shapes and lines from the glass onto the figures, making them bear 'the marks…of a fragmented past' (Bygrave & Kuzemczak-Sayer, 2019). Each figure was in between: human and other, in flux, emerging or receding through the floor. This in-betweenness went further, as the artist began to see that the building was also metaphorically an angel, an in-between being, between purposes, as well as histories and memory, although still a church 'with weight and stillness,' one that was open to new ideas. The figures were 'sites of reflection—on the layered history of the building and … the resonances of even the smallest remnants of its past' (Bygrave & Kuzemczak-Sayer, 2019). Bygrave's fragmentary figures were richly metaphorical, elusive and yet compelling and generative. It could be argued that Bygrave's was the most subversive intervention in Hungate

as space, substituting place with inbetween-ness and facilitating the feeling of it, as visitors responded to the figures with their own bodies, recognising and feeling their fragmentary, ambiguous condition, marked by the past. Bygrave's piece offered a challenge to the visitor, unsettling the sense of place to provide glimpses of, in Tuan's words, 'the threat of space': how does one exist in the in-between?

In between: Religion and heritage, past and present, space and place

In their different ways, each of the works exhibited in *Sacred and/or Secular* was both a mediation of Hungate's heritage, as well as a provocation. By their interventions the artists reordered Hungate as space, and, despite the ephemeral, temporary nature of their works, they also held out the possibility for Hungate to be recognised as place, in time and space, in new ways.

Fundamental were the two deliberate slippages between the present and Hungate's past that each work pivoted upon. Firstly, in engaging with material aspects of the building's heritage, whether stained glass, tape recordings or museum furniture, they turned them towards the present, making them speak afresh. These new uses were allusive, elusive rather than firm in chronology, meaning or reference, and they opened up new pathways through Hungate's heritage without the need for narrative. They thus offered freedom of interpretation and response. Hungate as space was opened up, not only to visitors but also for the trustees and volunteers, long familiar with the building and its history, who were given the opportunity to see and appreciate it differently. The second slippage was between the building's religious past and its secular present. Built for the worship of God and for 70 years a museum of religious culture, Hungate is clearly still in some people's eyes a religious place, a place associated intimately with religious belief and practice. We noted visitor expectations of a sacred decorum, and how some works were considered more appropriate to Hungate's religious past than others. Nevertheless, religion had no role in these works: no religious ideas were explicitly acknowledged or denied; no practice was abjured but none were observed or re-enacted either. And yet, as we have seen, it is not difficult to recognise similarities between the presentation of the works and their reception and the building's religious purpose. Let's consider this a little further.

Art is an act of communication, a making to engender insight and affect that we recognise as a means of exploring what it means to be human. It is an ethical endeavour. As Pallasmaa puts it 'why is a poem written, a painting painted, and a piece of architecture conceived? Do they not all arise from faith in Humanity?' (2017, p. 35). Artists can thus

be seen as priests, who mediate between the present and the eternal, the material and the spiritual, and who endeavour to edify or provoke reflection on the profoundest realities. At Hungate, in gathering a community, in making the building resound with a choir of voices, encouraging reflection on the building as long-honoured space, acts of piety were performed, led by the artists. We could leave this idea as a useful metaphor and recognise the value of a sympathy between past and present uses in terms of audience expectations, as well as the different modes of engagement with heritage that the artists facilitated. However, is it possible to go further.

Hungate is a building of beauty, of solidity and permeability, a space of movement too as the light fills and passes, revealing and obscuring. It also bears the "patina of wear" that allows us to find and place ourselves in time and space. That it was once a parish church, and so remains associated with community, with life and death, with the spiritual and the eternal, adds to its charge. Hungate has been made inviolate for these reasons, which are entirely secular. However, in the responses of the artists, as well as the visitors, it was observed that as religious heritage space it is not stable, caught between its religious past and heritage present. For some, in the same way that Bishop Pollock argued for the museum, it is still a religious place. For others, it is a place of life-enhancing beauty with a venerable history, and for others still, a place where art can be encountered and new ideas, new visions for the present and the future can be generated in response to the past. These views may be held together but can be divergent, dissonant even, as we have seen, and space can become threatening. However, each response, I would suggest, has a sense of the sacred at its heart. Through the work of the artists, and trustees, Hungate became a place where each of these paths to the "ultimate realities" could be pursued (Historic Norwich Ceremony, 1933). It, and I would suggest, all redundant churches thus have the potential to be experienced simultaneously as religious, secular and sacred places.

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Povzetek

Prispevek raziskuje serijo razstav, ki jo je HERILIGION UK postavil v odvečni (zaprti) cerkvi sv. Petra Hungateja v Norwichu kot del svojih raziskovalnih dosežkov. Opisuje umetniško delo, specifično za spletno stran in projekt po naročilu britanske ekipe, ki sodeluje s svojimi partnerji za zaščito kulturne dediščine v Hungateu. Analiza kaže, da je vsako delo poseglo v prostor, ga preuredilo in obiskovalcem ponudilo nov občutek za kraj, ki pa je bil kljub temu tesno povezan s svojo versko preteklostjo. Esej ugotavlja, da lahko sodobna umetnost posreduje med religijo in dediščino, laično in sveto, preteklostjo in sedanjostjo na načine, ki so naklonjeni tej preteklosti, a preobražajo. Dejansko predlaga, da so umetniki obiskovalcem ponujali dostop do novega svetega.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: dediščina, umetnost, cerkev, posvetno, sveto

CORRESPONDENCE: CLARE HAYNES, Department of Art History and World Art Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom, NR4 7TJ, E-mail: c.haynes@uea.ac.uk.