

Soundwaves: Community Heritage Activism

This paper explores Soundwaves, an ongoing project that explores remixing oral histories as a form of community heritage activism. The first workshops were held at Porthmeor Studios St Ives, Cornwall as part of the AHRC Connected Communities Festival (2015) and involved community volunteers working with artists, oral historians and radio producers to create short sound pieces about, for instance, work and the environment in a rural community by the sea. Discussion focused on how oral histories and soundscapes might make the past available and relevant to contemporary audiences in compelling ways. How might these narratives relate to communities today? Have these stories purchase for community activists and could they help disseminate their concerns, getting wider audiences involved in their communities?

Soundwaves suggests how, often hard to access, oral histories might be used in creative, new and relevant ways. The material came from the Memory Bay archive: a Heritage Lottery funded project between Falmouth University, Tate St Ives, St Ives Archive, Leach Pottery and others, which recorded the creative community of St Ives; taxi drivers, shop girls and secretaries as well as artists and craftspeople, for instance. The project is currently being continued by Tate St Ives through their HLF Phase II Legacy project. This will create a sustainable ongoing resource that not only celebrates, but also creatively and critically engages with St Ives' heritage, employing it in new and socially relevant ways. Developing a means to connect communities from the past with those in the present through story, sound and voice, Soundwaves aims to enable alternative forms of place-making while highlighting current concerns and framing future actions.

Jeanie Sinclair is a sound artist and Assistant Learning Curator at Tate St Ives. Her PhD works with oral history and sound to explore the history of the creative community in St Ives.

Dr Fiona Hackney has led a number of AHRC funded projects within the Connected Communities strand and is now Professor of Fashion and Textile Cultures at Wolverhampton University.

Paper written by JS and FH, and will be a 20 minute presentation (delivered by FH) which includes a short film made by Jeanie Sinclair, so will require power point and link to film.