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EDGE FM

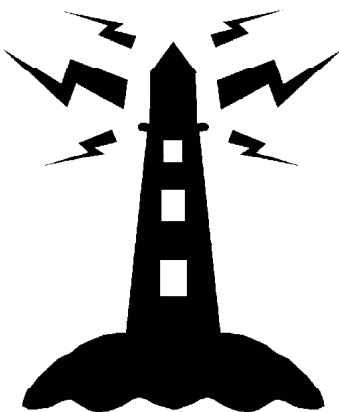
87.9 MHZ



Paul Carter
On the Edge Research

EDGE FM

87.9 MHZ



**KRISTOPHER BUCHANAN . PAUL CARTER . STUART CASSIE
JORDAN DEISZ . JOHN DOWNIE . GORDON FARQUHAR
RONNIE FARQUHAR . JOSH FINDLAY . JAMBO
SEAN MCAULAY . LAURA MCMILAN . RYAN MORRISON
STUART MUNRO . GINO NIRO . KIRSTY PRICE
MARK RITCHIE . KEIRAN SCOTT . IAIN WALKER
JORDAN WISEMAN**



Outside EDGE FM headquarters on the first day of recording



INTRODUCTION

Broch *another name for Fraserburgh*

A Brocher *Someone who comes from, or lives in Fraserburgh*

Edge FM transmitted an hour-long looped broadcast from the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses in Fraserburgh between 2 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Friday the 1st of August and Saturday the 2nd of August 2003. During these times anyone living in or around Fraserburgh who had read the advertisements in the Fraserburgh Herald, or seen the fly-posters in shop windows around the town centre and was interested enough to tune their radios to 87.9 MHz f.m. would have heard the familiar and yet unusual sound of Fraserburgh voices being carried on the airwaves. What may have struck listeners as unusual was not only that both interviewees and interviewers were identifiable as local and that the discussions concerned local issues, but that all the interviewers were under 17 years of age. What also may have been noted was the absence of music, the variable sound quality of the recordings, the intermittent hesitancy of the interviewers and the cut-and-paste editing of the recordings.

Edge FM may well have sounded like a pirate radio station, but it was fully licenced and was one of five projects developed as a part of the On the Edge research organisation which is based at Robert Gordon University. On the Edge is a long-term research programme looking at issues relating to the function and sustainability of visual art in rural environments. Its relationship with the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses began 2 years before Edge FM took to the air, during which time a steering group was gathered together and an artistic strategy to work with local young people within the museum complex was developed. By the spring of 2003 the artist Paul Carter had been brought on-board and a group of local young people had responded to advertisements and had become the core group of the Edge FM project.

The Edge FM project began with two central ideas. The first was that and the Museum of Lighthouses and Fraserburgh lighthouse itself were places of transmission - places where messages, ideas and knowledge were sent - and that the project should draw on this tradition. The second was that in becoming involved in the project the young Brochers should be handed as much power as possible over the nature of the project and the means by which the project developed. During discussions with the core group of young Brochers the idea of running a temporary radio station from the keeper's cottages at the lighthouse museum, and the idea of compiling a broadcast which tackled



Marconi Terrace. Named in memory of the experimental radio broadcasts made by Guglielmo Marconi in Fraserburgh in April 1904.

questions relating to being young and living in Fraserburgh were agreed upon. The core Edge FM group met every second weekend during July and August during which time the Edge FM headquarters were established in the keeper's cottages, a name was arrived at, a logo designed, banners painted, billboards distributed, and a radio licence was applied for, and granted. Recording began almost immediately, with the group going out on location with a mini-disk recorder and bringing other young Brochers along to the museum to be interviewed.

The interviewing strategies and the nature of the material collected changed and developed over the five weeks of recording as the number of young Brochers involved in the project grew. The interviewers became increasingly attuned to the issues which were being raised by interviewees and discussions developed which were carried through from week to week and between different social groups. The idea of tackling the question of what it means to be young and to come from Fraserburgh came from the young Brochers themselves, and was fuelled by a sense that there are many important questions specific to Fraserburgh which needed addressing within a framework of common issues which are of concern to young people throughout the country. A sense of being culturally informed by both global and local influences, and the problem of how to marry these two areas of influence



together was one which surfaced frequently. Many of the discussions centred around the question of whether embracing international cultural influences predetermined a physical move away from rural localities. Many interviewees expressed a desire to leave Fraserburgh in order to pursue their goals in an urban environment. Many others felt that the global cultures of which they are a part could be developed within the rural environment, and specifically Fraserburgh, and had a vision of Fraserburgh becoming a town rich in diverse international and local cultural influences.

As such Edge FM became a tool for the creation of a vision of the lives and surroundings of the people who were involved in the project. The chance to be recorded and to send messages to others was often used as an opportunity to complain. These complaints, largely about the lack of provision of facilities, were not isolated however, but formed part of a larger positive argument for a progressive vision of the town. Complaints about the lack of a 'decent skateboard park' for example, easily viewed as pushing a narrow and overly specific agenda, began to emerge as a part of a widely-held vision of Fraserburgh as centre for sporting excellence which drew on its natural resource of ideal surfing waves to build an extensive sustainable economic and cultural infrastructure which would do everything that town councils



The EDGE FM team on a guided tour of the museum.

dream of; get young people interested in sport, create a facility which attracted people from out with the town, and re-brand a town which, like so many others, has had its image tarnished by economic decline. Providing a simple tool for communication with a broad remit inevitably meant that a variety of different approaches were taken by both the interviewers and interviewees, but almost all used the chance to transmit as a corrective tool. Many chose to point out the qualities of their local culture which have been often overlooked by the national media bent on playing up drug problems, many chose to protest about what they saw as a lack of support by people who have power within the town and others to promote a positive vision of Fraserburgh in the future. Every voice operated with one of a number of different perceived audiences, with many perceiving the rest of the country as the audience, others seeing the town councillors and local establishment as the audience. As such the project became an attempted reclamation of the ownership of control over the vision of the town. The perceived audience was seen as having a vision of Fraserburgh, of the young Brochers home which required correction. As the process of correction gained momentum, through discussion, it developed into the creation of a new vision where the set of corrections became a cohesive agenda.



EDGE FM headquarters at the lighthouse keeper's cottages.



Radio has a long history as a tool of communication (an early part of that history was played out in a field in Fraserburgh in 19** when Marconi made some experimental transmissions out across the North Sea.) It has succeeded in never coming under full control of governments or becoming fully 'national' nature. There has always existed a localised and 'pirate' element within the wider culture of radio, which has enabled smaller groups to reach larger audiences and to voice their opinions. Its ephemeral, non-physical nature has made it difficult to police, and allowed it to be used in ways which are relevant to particular communities for particular periods. Being a tool its use can change, the messages it carries can change. Public art projects conversely have a history of being overly physical and have often left communities with unchanging, irrelevant legacies. Edge FM, as an art project, has a legacy in the continuing discussions and arguments about the culture of Fraserburgh and the position young Brochers have within that culture. In keeping with the tradition of creating a physical monument, a historical exhibit commemorating the project was installed within the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses. This positioned the young Brochers who ran Edge FM as a new chapter in the history of the town. What follows is a visual and transcribed record of the project.



Painting the EDGE FM banner.



Making placards for display around Fraserburgh inviting young Brochers to come to EDGE FM headquarters and make a recording.

What would you change
in Fraserburgh?

A couple of cinemas
would be nice

•

Do you think there's
good stuff for teenagers

•

There's nothing here
for teenagers

no, no

•

Everybody goes down the
beach drinking on a Friday
and Saturday night

•

Nah they've stopped doin'
that cause the police has been
crackin' doon on it

EDGE FM

87.9 MHZ



**CALLING ALL BROCHERS
YOUR RADIO STATION NEEDS YOU
HAVE YOUR SAY ON AIR
COME AND BE RECORDED
12-5PM ON SAT. 19+26TH JULY
AT THE KEEPERS COTTAGES,
THE LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM**

Placard (front)

YOUNG BROCHERS GET YOURSELF HEARD

A RADIO PROJECT IS TAKING PLACE AT THE LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM IN FRASERBURGH THIS JULY, SPECIFICALLY FOR YOUNG BROCHERS. YOUNG PEOPLE FROM FRASERBURGH ARE ENCOURAGED TO COME ALONG ON THE AFTERNOONS OF SATURDAY THE 19TH AND THE 26TH OF JULY TO MEET UP AT THE TRANSMISSION CENTRE (AT THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS COTTAGES) AND TO BE RECOEDED TALKING ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A YOUNG BROCHER. THE RECORDINGS WILL BE TRANSMITTED ON 87.9MHZF.M. BETWEEN 2P.M. AND 9 P.M. ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY THE 1ST AND 2ND OF AUGUST AND WILL BE ABLE TO BE PICKED UP ON EVERY RADIO IN THE FRASERBURGH AREA. THE RECOEDINGS CAN BE MADE ANONYMOUSLY AND CAN BE USED TO RAISE ISSUES THAT YOU FEEL ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

THERE IS TO BE A TRANSMISSION LAUNCH PARTY AT THE KEEPERS COTTAGES IN THE AFTERNOON OF SATURDAY THE 2ND OF AUGUST. EVERYONE IS WELCOME.

Placard (reverse)

Do you like Fraserburgh?

Yes, we enjoy Fraserburgh

What do you think is the
best place for tourists?

The beach

How long have you been
coming to Fraserburgh?

Oh for a long time now
What we actually love is
watching the surfers on their
boards here

•

Aye
there's not alot of surfin' in
the summer

•

We've been here in the
autumn and the spring
when the surf's great
Cause in Arbroath the young
ones can't do that
cause we've got the rocks
It's fantastic
We think it's great



Testing the recording equipment.



What would make
Fraserburgh better?

Less junkies

•

Less a' a bad name

What do you think
of Fraserburgh?

a fine town
alot of good qualities about it

Can you name a couple of
really good things?

Good people living here

How long have you been
in Fraserburgh?

Ten years

And where did you
used to live

South of Ireland



Recording on location at Fraserburgh F.C. football ground during a match against Brechin City F.C.



How would you
change Fraserburgh?

How would you change
Fraserburgh?
Something for young people to
do

A new skate park?

Something more than that

Like a cinema?

A cinema, yes
and a better swimming pool
Gala bingo down the road could
work with a cinema crowd
to make that cinema two nights
of the week or something

It's like
some parts a toon's really
minky
an' thats whit abdy look at
but they hannaе looked at the
good bits

In the city
the bladers hate the skaters
the skaters hate the bmxers
but in a place like this
abdy gets on
abdy stick t'gither
nabdy sees nabdy stuck





What we find is that people's
nay say willin' tae join clubs
especially the one I ken
about's
the bowlin'
They're more interested
in gettin' in a car an goin'
somewhere than they are in
bein' actively concerned with
any clubs
That's what we find

Fraserburgh's gone
down the burn
since I saw it last
I've been away
for forty years



Recording at EDGE FM headquarters.



Recording at EDGE FM headquarters.



You go somewhere
like Dundee
it's happened to me before
you say your from
Fraserburgh
It's meant to be a bad town
•
I say I'm fae Aberdeen

Union Street at Aberdeen
there's always roadworks
buildin's gettin' done
scaffoldin' there ken
ye cannae get moved half the time
When you come to the Broch..

•

There's too much folk in Aberdeen



Recording on location at the 'Granda Swings'.

SITE AND MEANS OF RESISTANCE: RADIO, IDEOLOGY AND FORM

Daniel Jewesbury

In 1916, the Irish Volunteers carried a transmitter on an up-turned table into the General Post Office to attempt to inform the outside world of their Rising in Dublin. It has been suggested that this represented one of the world's first radio broadcasts. (Farrell, p.1)

All media forms – newspapers, magazines, TV, films, the web, radio – are ideological carriers at two distinct levels. They carry an explicit 'message', which is 'ideological' in its content (what it does and does not tell you) as well as its context (who is telling it to you); and as *forms* they are imbued with specific ideological values. Different forms, that's to say, are made to carry different connotations about their inherent 'nature', their supposed formal 'qualities'. The internet (which is most often typified by the web) is characterised as open, fluid, democratic or even anarchic: innately liberatory, at any rate. Radio, as a form, is valorised in a variety of ways: from its birth as a mass medium in the 1920s, it has been variously seen as a tool for national unification or collective envisioning, as a particularly efficient outlet for propaganda, and as a cheap and accessible instrument of popular culture¹. Another set of ideological characterisations is that associated with the radio pirate, or the user of radio as a weapon of political resistance. In these terms, radio is valued not only because it is cheap and easily available, but also because it confers great power on the user: the power to amplify their voice one hundred, one thousand, one million times, to reach otherwise unreachable audiences, and to construct, from these disparate and diverse audiences, new groups of listeners. Listening becomes social activity, the listener is positioned as critical, as enabled; the listening group is thus transformed into an activist group, a group whose mere act of listening already constitutes an act of dissent, and what's more, of collective dissent. Previously unconnected individuals find a means for inventing a new *socius*.

The radio activist, then, is seen as combating ideology on two fronts: firstly by directly *contesting* the dominant social myths, and then by *constructing* an alternative public, an active listening constituency, in opposition to the social and political *forms* that the dominant culture occupies. Radio is transgressive, difficult to regulate and police; it is portrayed as a progressive form precisely because it has no tangible form. It is by nature anti-authoritarian, and yet, paradoxically, this is *because* it enables the dissemination of a single message by invisible means to vast numbers of people. For all these reasons, claims

made about the formal nature of radio often seem to foreshadow those made for the internet.

The social history of radio sees it navigate the transition from a purely military technology during the 1914-1918 War, to the first state monopolies, in which licences both for broadcast and for ownership of receiver sets were regulated by state bodies, to its use to construct a dominant, yet consensual, public cultural sphere, to the growth of radio as a means *and site* of resistance (itself a kind of symbolic return to the mythic ‘first broadcast’ from the Dublin GPO during the Easter Rising), and its continued use in the construction of many alternative conceptual and ideological spaces. Both the original, Reithian notion of radio as an educative and informative mass medium², and the alternative or pirate valorisation of radio, revolve around its perceived ability to unite previously disparate individuals, the former in a ‘nation’, the latter in a protest or pressure group, or an alternative or underground culture. Thus, whilst it often may seem that ‘alternative’ uses of radio (and, by extension, of the internet) are themselves inventing the *formal, ideological contexts* in which they produce their resistant message, we need to be wary of exaggerating the degree to which this is in fact the case. Resistance is often simply an annexe of domination.

This might not seem like a particularly promising starting point, but it’s important to temper some of the more exuberant claims made for alternative media, if only to arrive at a more realistic understanding of what we *can* achieve. Many projects have been deemed failures simply because their initial premises were too wildly ambitious; conversely, others have been able to exert quite disproportionate influence on events, when their rationale was apparently modest.

Radio, as I’ve said, is an essentially ‘public’ medium. It is a dynamic form which allows us not only to initiate conversations about the nature of the public sphere, but also to construct it anew. Crucially, it allows us to formulate a place for ourselves in ‘the public’. Radio is not just something placed *into* the public, in the manner of much public art, but something that actively forms the very notion of public – that communal thing which we all take part in producing or creating or debating or challenging.

For communities or individuals who feel that they are under-represented, or misrepresented, in the dominant media, radio offers a means to redress the balance, and in so doing to empower oneself, by ‘embedding’ oneself in social structures of one’s own making (bearing in mind, of course, the caveat above). The state control of broadcast licences continues to this day, and in the UK short-term Restricted Service Licences are prohibitively expensive³. These are the socio-economic conditions upon the (legal) use of radio, and they are by

no means peculiar to the UK. However, such is the 'nature' of this medium (and its associated technologies) that mere regulation simply cannot be effective or efficient. The most fundamental basis of any claim for radio as a site and means of resistance resides in the technology itself: any receiver is also a potential transmitter; a simple act of rewiring transforms the user into the producer. No other technology is either as cheap or as ubiquitous as radio; the internet reaches only a fraction of those with access to a telephone, upon which it is technologically dependent. While only one-fifth of the world has access to a telephone line, unruly, cacophonous radio waves penetrate even the remotest areas. Furthermore, the conglomeration of technologies necessary for use of the internet is replaced, in radio, with the simplest and most basic components. A radio transmitter broadcasting to an entire neighbourhood could cost no more than £20.

If radio is a site for the production and reproduction of the public sphere, it follows that it is also a medium for *artistic* production. The particular doubleness described above, with regard to radio's existence as 'both means and site' for social production, allows the artist to interrogate – and re-envision - the very nature of the 'public' in which they place their work. Radio can be seen as nothing more than the vehicle for soundworks that do not otherwise reference the social contexts of their production and dissemination, as a more or less unreflexive carrier, and many 'radio art' projects have operated along these lines, content simply to distribute the work more broadly; but the great potential of the medium, for artists interested in inhabiting and interrupting the public sphere, lies in the social contexts that radio, as a form, already shapes and constructs. If, as artists, we want to develop deeper models of social engagement in our practice, to envisage ways in which the *processes* of public practice (negotiation, collaboration, production) can be brought together with more satisfactory *forms*, then radio can be seen to offer some particularly appropriate methodologies. It's a common problem of public or 'contextual' art that the actual end product – the monument – bears no relation to the working processes developed to produce it, and may in fact have only very limited aesthetic or formal interest. Public art, for some reason, is sometimes excused the need to operate *as art* at all, that's to say, to have any pleasing or striking or troubling *aesthetic* concerns. Radio replaces the monument with the event, which 'takes shape' only in the mind of the listener, and thereafter in the social formations that they are able to form, or alter, or renew. The artist, meanwhile, can use radio to critique the very nature of their practice, and to suggest (or demand) new spheres of influence, and a model of practice based on active participation rather than social isolation or transcendence



Footnotes

- ¹ These are not hermetic categories, and it is clear that different usages operate to varying degrees under each of these rubrics (collective identification, propaganda and access to culture).
- ² The birth of radio as a mass medium and the birth of the Irish state are neatly coincident. Irish radio in its early days could be seen as driven by both dominant and resistant ideologies: the desire, as Joyce put it, to forge the consciousness of a race, to produce and reproduce it in cultural forms, and also to establish that consciousness in opposition to the dominant British culture and politics.
- ³ In the UK a short-term RSL (up to 28 days) costs between £28 and £80 per day, exclusive of any licences to play copyrighted music. In the Republic of Ireland, interestingly, a similar licence is much cheaper: €130 for up to 30 days.

Reference

David M. Farrell (1991) *Public broadcasting in a new state: the debate over the foundation of Irish radio, 1922-1926*, Manchester Papers in Politics 7/91 (Manchester: Department of Government, Victoria University of Manchester)

Daniel Jewesbury is an artist based in Belfast, and Research Associate in Digital Media at the Centre for Media Research in the University of Ulster.



The transmission equipment in the broadcasting room of EDGE FM headquarters.



On the Edge in discussion with Edge FM.

We need new ramps an' that

•

Aye, cause when Jamie's daein'
a hunner an' eighty
you can feel it rumblin'

•

A new half-pipe

•

New grun

•

Aye, when you drop your
board it makes a huge dent in
the grun

•

A shelter

•

A vendin' machine

•

Na

•

Na

•

Na

Do you live in
Fraserburgh?

Aye

Are you a teenager?

Aye

What do you like
about Fraserburgh?

The shops an' the beach an' stuff

What do you do
down the beach?

Surf

Would you like to move
out of Fraserburgh?

Aye

Where would you
move to?

Spain



Assembling the antenna in the garden to the rear of the broadcasting room.



Erecting the antenna prior to the first test transmission.

Naybdy got to go
to t in the park
so they put up tents
in James Ramsay
an' had tink in the park

Fraserburgh are brilliant

•

Fraserburgh are brilliant

•

Fraserburgh are brilliant

•

I'm nae daein' it



Testing the transmission equipment.



Beginning work on the EDGE FM museum exhibit.

The
Fraserburgh/Peterhead
games attract a bigger
support than most 'a the
teams in the Scottish league

There was a moment when
we was in the Scottish cup
We had seven buses away tae
Arbroath for a cup game
That was a good day out



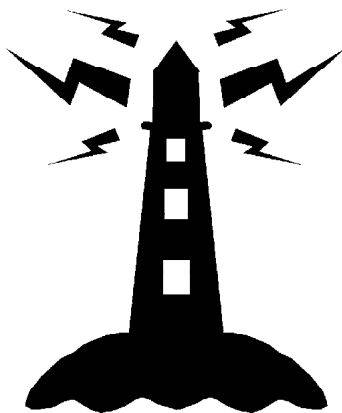
Me an' ma friend are
volunteers in a drop-in centre
cause apart from the day
centre there's not alot for
people with disabilities
to do in Fraserburgh
So we try an' promote
equality for people with
disabilities in Fraserburgh

•

I would say generally
most people in Fraserburgh
are good towards
people with disability

EDGE FM

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EDGE F.M. IS AN ART PROJECT ENABLING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE FRASERBURGH AREA TO EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO COME FROM THE BROCH. THE TEAM HAVE BEEN WORKING EVERY WEEKEND IN JULY INTERVIEWING AND COMPILING MATERIAL FOR THE 2-DAY BROADCAST.

EDGE F.M. WILL BE BROADCASTING THROUGHOUT THE FRASERBURGH AREA BETWEEN 2 P.M. AND 9 P.M.ON FRIDAY THE 1ST OF AUGUST AND SATURDAY THE 2ND OF AUGUST ON 87.9 MHZ F.M..

THERE IS TO BE LUNCH AT THE KEEPERS COTTAGES AT THE LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM ON SATURDAY THE 2ND BETWEEN 2P.M. & 4P.M.

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO COME ALONG AND MEET THE EDGE F.M. TEAM.
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED**

Poster advertising the broadcast launch.

EDGE
87.9



The EDGE FM museum exhibit.



What would you say
is the best thing to do
with your spare time
in Fraserburgh?

Nothing

Are you saying there's
nothing to do?

Nothing for young
people to do

Would you rather surf
in Fraserburgh
or Aberdeen?

Fraserburgh

Is Fraserburgh
beach good?

Aye, it's nice and clean

Cause last year it wasn't?

It's better now

If you could move
somewhere else
where would you go?

Somewhere else
in Scotland
I suppose

Would you prefer that
or Fraserburgh?

Fraserburgh

What d'you
think a' the Broch?

the Broch's great

•

only alot a' people's
been telling us

the Broch's pretty rubbish

EDGE FM: POSTSCRIPT

Dr Anne Douglas

Principal Researcher to On the Edge Research

“We have some ideas of what we want. David wants us to be up here at the museum so that the project is connected with the museum. He has kindly given us space to do stuff in. So I think if we can do it up here, that is great.

What do I want? I want a great project.

Carole and Anne want to find out what is going on as the project happens.

It is your project in some ways. The main thing we want is not to come and say ‘This is what we are doing and this and this and this. I think a radio station would be a good idea, then the rest is up to you.’”

(Paul Carter introducing the project to 15 skateboarders in June 2003 at the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses).

In making new work, artists normally author discrete works for consumption by an audience – an installation, a play, a film or a poem. Paul’s artistic approach is different. He focuses on positioning himself as an artist in relationship to other individual players within a live project. The site of the project contributes levels of meaning to the process. Paul’s positioning is carefully and skillfully judged. It is part of a very precise aesthetic that harnesses the energy and imagination of the participants who are encouraged to question their everyday ‘realities’ in ways that generate and politicize aspiration.

For the particular group of young people involved in this project, the everyday is about play and hanging out, centred around the skate park or other more improvised spaces for boarding or roller blading. The function of the artwork in Edge FM has been to find and value ‘the norm’ while enabling individuals to open up a different set of relations with the adult world, to become part of the adult world by being heard.

To this end, a particular group of young people in Fraserburgh, explored their perceptions of the Broch as ‘home’. They first created a shared identity through a name – Edge FM, through a



related logo, a project flag to be hung outside the dedicated space in the museum and a 'corporate' design for a t-shirt. They gathered sound bites through interviews with fellow inhabitants. For them it was something to do on a Saturday and an extension of what they always do – skate, blade, flirt, tease, arm wrestle, play tag and hang out. Working with Paul, they built a radio station within the grounds of the museum, and broadcast an edited version of the interviews across two days. The *process* as a socio political space was developed and co-ordinated by the artist. The *work* was largely generated by the young people, who substituted their normal space of play, the skate park for another - the museum.

In what sense is this project 'artistic' and 'of quality'? This question is fundamental to the On the Edge research because the research set out to test approaches to the visual arts that are both appropriate to remote rural living (a context marginalized by mainstream practices) without loss of quality. It is also raised by Jambo, a fourteen year old participant who in this quote is trying to understand the connection between what for him is 'something to do' and its value as 'art'.

“Art, I ken you said at the start it was art cause I mind that when we were in the big room at the start but we were just sort of É This is something for us tae dae. Forever it had to do with art was just something else, which was good.”

To address this issue more clearly we need to look at the project’s context and its development and scrutinize the way in which it unfolded.

Fraserburgh as a place for artistic intervention

Fraserburgh, in the north east of Scotland, is dependent upon a single, now declining fishing industry. It has an outstanding history of technological innovation. The Stevensons developed the modern lighthouse from Kinnaird Head, at the most eastern tip of the Scottish coast where the town is built. Marconi carried out his first tests in radio close to the site of the actual lighthouse that forms a significant part of the museum.

Fraserburgh needs to reinvent itself to survive. The young are at the sharp end of this creative challenge because they experience its tensions without having the power or authority to create change. On the one hand they bear witness to the corrosive effects of economic constraint that cause hardship in individual families and, on the other, they share that powerful sense of place and community that is essential to naming somewhere ‘home’.

While the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses is well known across Europe, few people from the local community regularly cross its threshold. At the outset of the project, David Bett, the museum’s director, was particularly concerned with attracting young people into the museum space. For David, the lighthouse itself symbolized the relationship between technology and communication. He felt that the museum’s future lay in using the material culture of lighthouses and lighthouse keeping as a starting point to explore contemporary forms of communication and their relationship with technology. David was particularly interested in technologies used by young people. We therefore initially considered a focus in computing, text messaging and even branding through the clothes that the young choose to wear.

The artistic response – taking a decisive role

As lead artist, Paul's interpretation of the brief has remained true to that brief. He has achieved this in an unexpected way. He has involved *all* the participants – artist researchers, young people and museum staff, in a process of questioning.

Paul turned around many of the ideas that had been generated prior to his engagement about how the project should happen. He exposed these as over familiar and as lead artist he was seeking to transform and challenge the familiar. He went further than the original project aim of *engaging* young people in the museum by enabling them, for a brief while, to *occupy* the museum with the content of their lives – a far more radical political act than had been envisioned.

From the outset Paul questioned the use of digital technology as a suggested locus of the project's content. He felt that an earlier more accessible form of technology would be ultimately more powerful and empowering. Digital technology, he argued, involves levels of cost and training that that would distance young people from a means of expression that was immediate and appropriate to their way of life. It represented a form of specialization that ultimately determined an unequal relationship between individual participants. Young people were not to become supplicants by learning *how*. Instead they were given the responsibility and trust to *act* and to *be themselves*. He therefore focused the project by using the relatively low technology of radio that was well within the know how of the group and a medium resonant within their local history. The building of the radio station quite literally 'gave voice' to individuals who are not normally heard, let alone responsible for creating broadcast material.

"I think the mechanism of using radio is interesting because you can actually get into people's houses (laughter) without actually getting into people's houses so hopefully there are councilors in Fraserburgh listening to what your ideas are right now."

(Paul in conversation with the Edge FM participants.)

The initial project brief made an assumption that 'young people' would be interested in participating without knowing who these young people were. Paul understood that reaching deeply into the specific motivation of individuals (rather than working within an

assumed 'youth') was the key to success in the project. He went to some lengths to identify and get to know the participants as individuals and the intricacies of their world, acting as an ally rather than an adult who might be driven by a 'project agenda'. Paul rejected the more formalized introductions to 'youth groups' by introducing himself as artist on their own territory - the skate park or the street. He judged processes of working together, gaining trust and respect through listening, responding and guiding rather than adopting a position of control¹. He generated relationships rather than playing out familiar hierarchies, in particular that of adult to child. Individual participants acknowledged the importance of this in terms of a quality of involvement.

"Have you seen the rules? We got to make up our own. There were only a couple of things he said we were not allowed to do. You can live with that ..It 's when adults tell you 'You mustn't go out at this time' or 'You must be there at that time' ..He says 'Come around at half twelve. You might be there for a couple of hours. You can leave when you're needin'."

The interviews exposed familiar perceptions of the Broch and generated new ones

Fraserburgh as 'home' has both its good and its 'minky' bits, but it is important to focus the good bits. Fraserburgh *could* become the surfing capital of Northern Europe. The young people of Fraserburgh are not factional in the way that they are in urban contexts

"In our town it is different. Like someone said on the radio, in the big cities skaters hate the bmxers and bladers hate the bmxers and skaters hate the bladers and they all hate each other, but in Fraserburgh we all stick together because we all basically like the same thing".

The young have high expectations of the local Council that are generally unfulfilled, in part because their expertise as dwellers in matters that effect them is not valued.

"The skateboarding - we were just using as an example because it was a real blunder. We were looking at different types of grund (ground) and they chose a really stupid spot. They put it on a basketball court underneath sand and seaweed. They put down heavy concrete ramps and then tarmaced it all and it all sunk in. Now whenever it rains and the rest of Fraserburgh dries up, our

skateboard park, which is supposed to be a place to go, is full of puddles ankle deep. If you put something heavy on the surface, it sinks so you can't use it.

We complained about it as soon as it got put in but it costs more to pull it up and put in new ground than it would be to buy a new skate park probably.”

The young Brochers are more worldly than their urban counterparts. Having worked with both rural and urban groups of young people, Paul Carter made these observations on the day of the broadcast.

“The young Brochers travel much more than any groups that I know in the city because they have to. They have been to Livingston to skate and of course to Edinburgh and to Aberdeen. People in Livingston haven't been to Aberdeen. They are a lot more streetwise so they are in a position to comment much more than anyone else. They have been to Manchester as 15 year olds. The sport is just a vehicle to meet other people. Going to Manchester to hang out with people is an incredibly cosmopolitan thing to do but the Mancunians haven't been to Fraserburgh so they don't get to see the world in the same way.”

The Edge FM project as a space and event structure

Edge FM questioned existing ways of relating between a group of young people and the museum's infrastructure. The latter had to relinquish their sole control of the space and allow for a different and challenging co – existence for the period of the project, provoking questions of assumed roles and responsibilities within the museum space. Young people's everyday lives (as opposed to those of the engineers who designed the lighthouse or of the keepers who ran them) became a subject within the museum space. Could a skateboarder act as museum guide for a day, given that the interior is ramped to accommodate wheel chairs and that young Brochers naturally skate, blade or board to get from a to b? What might that mean in terms of redefining the museum's function and relationship at a local level and as an international visitor attraction?

Paul responded to the circumstances that the present offered him by making 'modest connections', intervening in ways that 'linked levels of reality normally kept apart from one another'² – the museum and the skate park, the lighthouse keeper and the young

'brocher', the young 'brocher' with inhabitants of other places and in other times who would experience the project through its dissemination in the form of this book. In a sense the book becomes the vehicle for a testimony of the project experience, recording and preserving the *here*, the *now* and with *these people*. The project has generated these links without attempting to contain them. Like the stone thrown into a pool of water, the energy resonates and effects beyond its own existence, engaging with other energies en route. On one level the project through this book '*lives*' in the future, a quality that the artist considers essential to drawing out its real meaning.

To return to the question – In what sense is Edge FM art of quality?

In some clear and fundamental way, Edge FM has articulated some of the key and real challenges of contemporary art in relation to its specific cultural, social or political context. Its form or aesthetic is essentially immaterial, even though material presence is traditionally the dominant vehicle of communication in the visual arts. This is usually manifest in highly crafted, aestheticised and consumable things. In this project, things are informal, improvised, and not intended to be consumed or to generate profit. They are part of a series of interdependent elements that make a structure proposed by the artist and acted upon by others who choose to be part of his process.

Edge FM reverses many of the values normally or traditionally celebrated in the visual arts. In this reversal, an image is constructed in one's mind's eye that is lasting and holds good well beyond the moments or incidences of the actual process. It is as if the experience that the artist helps us to construct, acts like a trajectory into a very different world, where new values pertain and where we might, by being present and attentive, recover the essence of our humanity. This book is placed back within the town – a container for the voices of now - rippling out

Footnotes

¹ Interview by Heather Delday with the artist, Edinburgh 4th April 2004, part of PhD thesis

² Bourriaud, N., translated 2002 *Relational Aesthetics les presses du reel*



THE EDGE F.M. GROUP WOULD LIKE TO THANK

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EDGE FM

87.9 MHZ

Edge FM is one of five visual art projects within a programme that has formed the On the Edge research, hosted by Gray's School of Art and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board. This research is interested in evolving and testing fresh thinking and approaches to the visual arts. All the projects take place in remote rural places and offer different artistic outcomes. Key to the investigation is the concern to produce work of quality.

On the Edge

Visual Arts Research

The term 'on the edge' both defines geographical and therefore social and cultural circumstances as well as a critical positioning. Each project takes risks by suspending belief and allowing outcomes and output to emerge from the interaction and playfulness of its participants. In other words, the 'edge' is a quality of engagement.

www.ontheedgeresearch.org