



**School:** Bath School of Art

**Researcher:** Mike Tooby

**Project Title:** *wavespeech*

**UOA:** 32 - Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

## 300-Word Statement

'*wavespeech*' at Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney, (2015), was a site-specific collaborative project curated by Mike Tooby. He worked with artists Edmund De Waal and David Ward; with the in-house gallery curatorial team; poet and writer Rhona Warwick Paterson; and local volunteers.

The key research question was: how to test a site-sensitive collaborative curating methodology when applied in a context of very specific identity?

The three-year process tested the leadership role of the 'guest' curator, differentiating the curator as 'caretaker' and facilitator from the curator as 'author'. Referencing James Joyce in its title, it parallels Tooby's work in 'Journeys with 'The Waste Land'', using a literary source as a shared point of reference around which people could articulate new ideas about the visual arts and its audiences, but in a completely different scale and locality.

De Waal and Ward invited Tooby to realise their ambition to collaborate, asking him to research potential locations and broker the relationships involved.

The result had four elements: new collaborative and individual works by the two artists; these integrated into the first ever co-curated redisplay of the Pier's collection; a learning programme, including work with young people and work in the Pier's library; and a retrospective publication. The budget was c£40,000. A new site-specific work by Ward and De Waal, also called *wavespeech*, was acquired for the Pier's collection. The project is captured in the retrospective publication funded by Pier Arts Centre with Wunderkammer Press. It includes a new poem made in response by Rhona Warwick Paterson.

The collaborative model was the first example of this method in the venue. Its dissemination and international peer discussion, by developing collaboration in a closely-knit group, complements the discourse of large-scale participatory curating developed in Tooby's work on 'Journeys with 'The Waste Land'.