



School: School of Art

Researcher: Keith Harrison

Project Title: Social Experiments: Knowledge is Power; 6 Towns 2017 &

Material Environments: Bad Shit 2018

UOA: 32

300 Word Statement

Rooted in history and place, **Social Experiments** brings together 2 projects, **Material Environments: Bad Shit** and **Knowledge is Power: 6 Towns**, to research the means and capacity for material and socio-political transformation through live scientific experimentation. It asks:

1. How might the idea of libraries as empowering repositories of knowledge, be harnessed and communicated through a collective act of making, to create a catalyst for regenerative socio-political change? 2. How might scientific and engineering processes be manipulated and developed, in response to the industrial heritage and former social hierarchies of a site, to operate simultaneously as installation, laboratory and social critique? 3. Can audience participation in volatile and unpredictable acts of material transformation initiate new ways of thinking and offer fresh perspectives on societal systems?

Basing **Knowledge is Power: 6 Towns** 2017 on Stoke-On-Trent Libraries' 6 Towns

Collection of local history books Harrison worked collectively with the local community at the former Spode ceramics factory to make a complete set of replica clay books housed in 6 adapted library shelving units. The clay volumes were fired daily in accordance with library lending figures, to unpredictable effect - a ceramic production process destabilised through technological intervention, reflecting the potential for transformation through access to knowledge.

Commissioned for *Material Environments* at The Tetley, **Bad Shit** 2018, spanned 2 office spaces of the former brewery, responding to the site's industrial heritage and former social hierarchies. Through live experimentation with fermentation processes Harrison activated an erratic production of CO₂ to inflate and deflate a giant red balloon, accompanied by an adapted Asteroids video as an evocation of the unpredictable alchemical circulation.

Social Experiments enabled Harrison to test the limits of ceramics practice and extend his interventionist approach to investigate the mutability of other materials through creative and destructive processes, to suggest potential for regenerative change.