



CREATURES OF EMOTION

BORKOWSKI.DO

**‘WHEN DEALING
WITH PEOPLE,
REMEMBER
YOU ARE NOT
DEALING WITH
CREATURES
OF LOGIC, BUT
CREATURES OF
EMOTION.’**

DALE CARNEGIE



**NOVEMBER SAW ONE OF
THOSE MASS DISPLAYS
OF EMOTION WHICH
OCCASIONALLY CATCHES
BRITAIN BY SURPRISE.**



By the time the poppy installation closed, more than 4,000,000 people had queued to see Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red, the river of ceramic poppies which appeared to surge so majestically around the moat of the Tower of London. Recollection and emotion are inextricably linked of course.

Perhaps the collective emotion started with Diana. The crowd mourning outside Kensington Palace symbolised that moment when the switch tripped, the occasion when what had changed over the years became visible, and as social media has spawned since then, we have come to understand this in a more tangible way - the powerful collective emotion of the crowd. Diana of course, knew how to tap into that emotion and leverage it to spread the latest meme. Her life became the early blueprint for

the reality shows that these days we see across a multitude of channels.

The death of Diana gave permission for people both to feel and to express emotion in a ritualised way. In Roman Catholic countries this is common enough, but in Protestant northern Europe had we suppressed collective exhibitions of emotion, perhaps fearing their outcome or the fact that actually, the emotion was a creation of the media.

That may be so, but you could also argue that as our lives have become more private and fragmented, as we hunch over the internet, multi-channel television, apps, Twitter and as we sit on the train, our ears plugged with mobiles to block out the sounds of others, maybe there is a really need now for shared and public experiences.

To that end let's examine the extraordinary power of the motif. The meme of the poppy has continued to grow in strength over the last one hundred years. Whatever your view on the installation, its great success has been the fact that it has got people talking about war – old and new. It has encouraged us to share our experiences and our politics, to moralise and philosophize, and to consider the horrors from which each passing generation separates us.

The scale of the piece brought to mind of Ai Wei Wei's sunflower seed sculpture shown at the Tate Modern in 2010/11. The millions of individual, handmade porcelain seeds invited the viewer to consider both the magnificent sum total of the work and the microcosm of craftsmanship of each individual piece as a means of exploring the lives contained within the phenomenon of mass-produced goods marked 'Made in China'. In the same vein, the moat of handcrafted poppies invites the viewer to contemplate both the mass horror of war, and the profound loss of each precious individual.

The danger in this method, of course, is that it can be perceived to be reductive. We have become so familiar with the symbol of the poppy, that some would argue that along the passage of time we have forgotten the grisly truth that it points to. One writer referred to it as « Remembrance as a form of forgetting ». Maybe much of this has to do with the fact that the stories of those who were maimed

and eviscerated during the war has been wrapped in the shroud of another famous story, renowned for its lasting appeal: that of the Resurrection.

Throughout the Remembrance period, we are invited to 'give thanks', and we are reminded that 'they died for us'. The ceremony, led mostly by a bishop, is then said to bring the soldier from death, through transcendence into the collective memory of the nation, a communion symbolised in the wearing of the poppies sold by the British Legion..

Whilst there is a strong argument for a greater focus to be placed upon the actual lives, art work, and biographical accounts of those who fought in the wars, the public art should not be dismissed entirely as red-washing. In creating this work, Paul Cummins and his team have appealed to the collective consciousness of Britain in its deep-seated taste for nostalgia. They have created a visual event that can be photographed, tweeted, and shared, inviting people to talk about their experience and to debate their views. Being of traditional Derby pottery, they nod to our love of 'Made in Britain', and have been credited with rejuvenating one of our oldest industries. The fact that the poppies have all been sold worldwide adds another petal to the piece, as it has guaranteed further column inches and word-of-mouth stories for months to come. The sale of the poppies is said to have raked in £15m in proceeds for the Royal British Legion.





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Whether we agree with this rendering of the experience of war or not, we cannot deny the power of the artwork to force people to engage with the topic. Much like Danny Boyle's Olympic Opening Ceremony which won the nation over in 2012, whatever our grievances with the process of rendering the history in 2014, it is clear that the image of the poppy continues to reverberate with something within our collective conscienceness, and that its particular manifestation in this exhibit has allowed the sign to speak to us on several levels.

In the past a story may have taken generations to gain a foothold—but

today the Internet has allowed for overwhelming speed of communication. But this pace of dissemination comes at a high price and a story can be forgotten as quickly as it is spread.

A brand's story is outside of its control. The internet put paid to that. Rather than seek to manipulate how the consumer uses the story, companies must recognise the consumer as its author and fabulist, exploring the possibilities of what the crowd can give towards, rather than take away from it.

Stories are important. A story is an idea wrapped in an emotion, and when those emotions are powerful enough they make things happen...

TAKE LONDON 2012. A COUNTRY IN DOUBLE DIP RECESSION WITH FAMILIES STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE, BUT THEN DANNY BOYLE UNLEASHED HIS OLYMPIC OPENING CEREMONY AND THE COUNTRY HAD THEIR COLLECTIVE STORY AND IT LIFTED THE SPIRITS AND SHOWED THE UK AT IT'S BEST - CLEVER, CREATIVE, ORIGINAL AND RESOURCEFUL, AND THE CROWD REVELED TOGETHER. ULTIMATE POWER LIES IN THE COLLECTIVE WILL. BUT THIS WORKS BOTH WAYS OF COURSE...



At Borkowski we have years of understanding how the crowd reacts to a story and how that can change things.

Our absolute belief is in the need to develop coverage along unorthodox pathways, as well as the traditional channels which have been a natural home for a client's information.

At the beginning of 2014, the Criminal Bar Association staged a mass walkout in protest at government plans to slash legal aid fees by up to 30%, arguing that if the Ministry of Justice enforced the latest reduction it would lead to lower quality legal representation, miscarriages of justice and more criminals walking free from court.

It was an unprecedented move to grab the headlines and put the real story at the heart of the media and the people. Borkowski had helped develop the memes and strategy for the protest over many months, and such was the attention and uproar, that the government were forced to postpone their plans for cuts.

The crowd had talked and these days government cannot afford to ignore us. Conversation and transparency mean that information no longer lurks in the shadows, and nobody wants to be on the wrong side of the stampede.

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