

The Thierry Henry statue: a hollow icon



Ffion Thomas and Chris Stride

Sporting Statues Project, University of Sheffield

www.sportingstatues.com



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Sporting Statues Project

Why research sporting statues?

- The first sustained integration of UK sport and sculpture, and of UK Sport and public art.
- The first time that sport history is widely and proactively being taken beyond the confines of archival material and artefacts to be displayed in a physical form visible to the wider public.
- A substantial investment of public and private resources.
- A modern phenomenon that has appeared since the mid-90s and become embedded without warning, fanfare, over-arching coverage or scholarly investigation.



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Project goals

- **Documenting** the UK statuary www.sportingstatues.com
 - Providing context for case studies, a resource for further research collaborations and a site for disseminating research. Completed March 2012.
- **Developing theory** around its existence and form:
 - Why are statues of sportsmen and women being erected, and why has there been a dramatic increase in statues since the mid-1990s?
 - Do motivations affect subject choice and design?
 - How does the UK statuary compare with overseas equivalents?



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The UK's football statues deconstructed

- ⚽ 61 figurative subject-specific statues in situ, featuring 58 subjects. 2 more unveiled but now stored, 1 removed and replaced, 10 more planned.
- ⚽ Subject-specific statues in situ:
 - ⚽ 67% feature Players
 - ⚽ 26% Managers
 - ⚽ 7% Chairmen/Founders
- ⚽ Subjects most likely to be those who performed in the 1950s-1970s
- ⚽ All but 3 erected since 1995, the majority since 2005
- ⚽ 79% at stadia, 21% in city locations



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The UK's football statues deconstructed

Statue Project Instigation





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The UK's football statues deconstructed

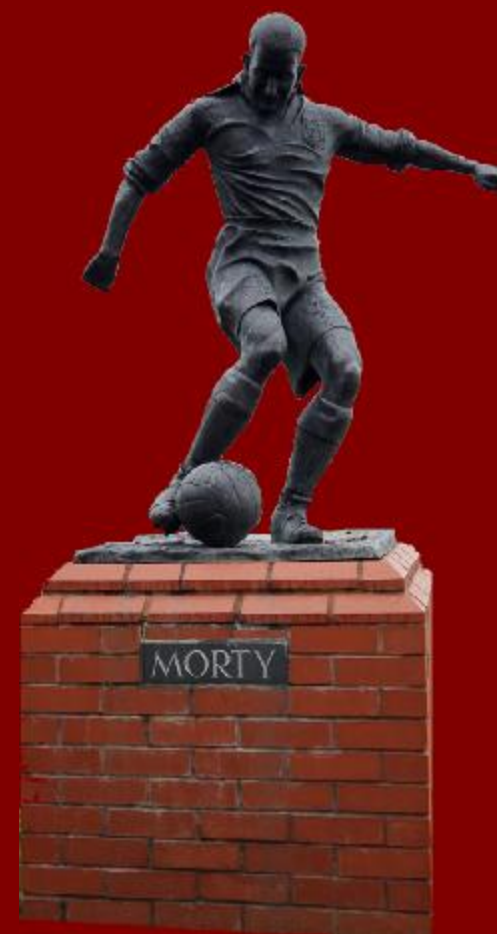
TOTAL
FUNDS
NEEDED



Primary Funding

- ⚽ Clubs (46% of statues)
- ⚽ Fans (28%)
 - ⚽ Donations
 - ⚽ Fundraising events
- ⚽ Public Money (14%)
- ⚽ Commercial (10%)
 - ⚽ Sponsorship/plinth plaque
 - ⚽ Selling maquettes
- ⚽ Football Authorities (2%)

*Bronze statues (since 1985):
14-150K per figure (median = 65K)*





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The UK's football statues deconstructed

A Suggested Typology...

- ⚽ **Club statues** - statue sited at club ground, club has ownership through instigation and control of funding, sculptors rarely chosen by competitive process.
- ⚽ **Fan statues** - usually (though not always) sited at club ground, fans instigate and/or organise fundraising.
- ⚽ **Civic statues** - located in subject's home town, instigated and organised by local government, funded by public money, sculptor usually chosen by open or at least limited competition.
- ⚽ **National statues** - instigated and funded by football authorities, not at a club-specific location.



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Why football statues are built: Motivations

- ⚽ **Commemoration: mourning inflation**
- ⚽ **Branding: creating a distinct identity within the increasingly homogenised environments of stadia/town centre**
 - ⚽ Proclaiming success (BIRGing; Cialdini et al, 1976)
 - ⚽ Evocation of nostalgia helps fans “*relive experiences enjoyed and endured*”, providing “*inspiration to pilgrimage*” (Holbrook and Schindler, 1996)
 - ⚽ Attraction of projected authenticity
 - ⚽ Instantly recognisable visual identity
 - ⚽ PR exercise, both club-specific and for all of football



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Why football statues are built: Motivations



Ownership

- Ownership of the stadium environment
 - Home vs away – inclusion and exclusion
 - Fans vs club – *cathedral of fans*, owned by club
- Ownership of the club
 - Contested claims to ownership
 - Visible demonstration of knowledge of history
 - Legitimacy, and ability to celebrate heroes
- Moral guardianship of the game
 - Subject choice / Campaign process



Why football statues are built: Motivations

Statues are ‘hollow icons’ (Osmond et al, 2006)

- ⚽ Sites of remembering – and forgetting
- ⚽ The statue promoter and sculptor can and will choose which narrative(s) are foregrounded
- ⚽ Specific moments are not necessarily representative
- ⚽ Sites of inclusion and exclusion
- ⚽ Their multivalence i.e. the ability to carry multiple potential narratives, and the different types of statue instigator, funder and location observed makes multiple motivations for the statuary as a whole (and sometimes a single statue) likely.



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Arsenal Football Club

- ⚽ Arsenal Football Club founded 1886
- ⚽ Arsenal Stadium, Highbury since 1913
- ⚽ Club badge redesigned in 2002
- ⚽ Moved to Emirates Stadium in 2006
- ⚽ *“This great monolithic statement, 60,000-seater stadium, but it felt a bit cold and didn’t feel like home.”* (Michael Artis, 20.20)
- ⚽ Process of ‘Arsenalisation’ established August 2009





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Arsenalisation

You want to transfer the history of the club somewhere into the walls, and create a new history with the results. At the moment we have maybe not achieved that, not outside or on the pitch. My job and that of the team is to create it.

Listening to
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ger, manager, 2009



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Arsenalisation

YOU CAN'T BUY CLASS
ARSENAL  FOREVER



"IT'S UP FOR GRABS NOW..."



LONDON'S FINEST



GLORY GLORY?

'71  2004

IS YOURS  GOLD?



GOOD OLD ARSENAL
WE'RE PROUD TO SAY THAT NAME

SHE WORE
A YELLOW RIBBON



BE FAITHFUL



FOREVER



WE WON THE LEAGUE
AT WHITE HART LANE



MEN BECAME GODS
THE INVINCIBLES



CLASS IS PERMANENT



"IF YOU PLAY HARD AND
RESPECT THE SHIRT
THEY REMEMBER THAT"



"Remember who you are,
what you are, and who
you represent."

David Rocastle



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The Thierry Henry statue

- ⚽ Arsenal 125 celebrations
- ⚽ Three statues unveiled at Emirates Stadium, 9th December 2011
- ⚽ Herbert Chapman (1925-1934, manager, 2 titles, 1 FA Cup)
- ⚽ Tony Adams (1983-2002, captain, 4 titles, 3 FA Cups)
- ⚽ Thierry Henry (1997-2007 (2012), all-time leading scorer, 3 titles, 2 FA Cups)





The Thierry Henry statue

- January 2011 – Arsenal approach 20.20 (*strategic design consultancy*) with brief for a ‘sculpture park’
- Original brief for 10 sculptures - cut for budget
- Subjects chosen by forum of representative fans
- Designs finalised by 20.20 from visual references
- All three statues sculpted by props company MDM
- Entirely funded by club, from pitch to plinth <1 year





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The Thierry Henry statue





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The Thierry Henry statue

- ⚽ In context of the UK statuary:
 - ⚽ The first current player
 - ⚽ The first black player
 - ⚽ The first foreign player
- ⚽ Arsenal are behind most of the 'big' clubs – excepting Spurs, all have a statue or statues
- ⚽ Atypical era – not 1960s/70s
 - ⚽ Loss of Highbury makes any association nostalgic?
 - ⚽ 1971 only major success?





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The Thierry Henry statue

- Choice of a star/celebrity player helps brand the club
- Inclusion for younger fans, casual fans and tourists
- Height and posture invites fans to interact, pose, clamber
- Sited off thoroughfare, in front of 'Spirit of Highbury' mural
- Establishment of Henry as the icon of the Highbury era
- Nostalgia by association





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The Thierry Henry statue

- ⚽ Triumph pose represents a specific moment – 13 mins, Arsenal 3-0 Spurs, 2002
- ⚽ Nostalgia element comes from video memory
- ⚽ Limited interpretative material both reflects fame of subject and drives hierarchy of fans:
 - ⚽ Casual football fan
 - ⚽ Casual Arsenal fan
 - ⚽ Arsenal superfan





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The Thierry Henry statue

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Michael Artis, 20.20



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A hollow icon?

- ⚽ A site of multiple interpretations
 - ⚽ A sports tourist and an Arsenal superfan will interpret the statue differently
- ⚽ A site of remembering – and forgetting
 - ⚽ All-time leading scorer and iconic figure
 - ⚽ Stars have been sold to rivals – Fabregas, Nasri, van Persie – but Arsenal can claim Henry as ‘theirs’
 - ⚽ Arsenalisation is a mechanism for ‘forgetting’
 - ⚽ Lack of on-pitch success – no trophy since 2005
 - ⚽ Fans feel excluded by high ticket prices



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Contact Details

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Statue Project Instigation



The UK's football statues deconstructed

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Arsenal Football Club

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- 🌀 "This great monolithic statement, 60,000-seater stadium, but it felt a bit cold and didn't feel like home." (Michael Artis, 20.20)
- 🌀 Process of 'Arsenalisation' established August 2009



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Arsenalisation

Turning the Gunners' home into a visible stronghold of all history with the results. At the moment we have maybe not achieved that: not outside or on the pitch, by seeing it through a gallery, or artistic and creative means

Listening to the message that they want to place the history are done with and the value of the rich tradition of Arsenal!

They want to do it a...

...here first by the stadium, these things, the tradition of a new stadium. Our had their they think 'that been a part of the board


...2009


...Jr, manager, 2009






Arsenalisation






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The Thierry Henry statue










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- Choice of a star/celebrity player helps brand the club
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Tension in the Union of Art and Baseball:

Competition for Ownership of the Baseball Statuary and its Influence Upon Design

Chris Stride & Ffion Thomas
The Sporting Statues Project
University of Sheffield, UK; University of Central Lancashire, UK

The Sporting Statues Project

- Documenting the world's sporting statuary
- Developing theory around its existence and form:
 - Why are statues of sportspeople being erected?
 - Why a dramatic increase since the mid-1990s?
 - What are the similarities and differences in the UK, US, European and world statuary and why?
 - What does form, location and subject choice say about sport, fan culture and wider society?
- Testing theory and predicting the future:
 - Can we model and predict subject selection?
 - Which sports, clubs and players will be next?
 - How is statue design likely to develop?

Talk Outline

- Describing** the baseball statuary:
 - Where, when, and what?
 - Design characteristics?
- Ownership** of project and image as an antecedent of design:
 - Competing stakeholders?
 - Motives and desires of stakeholders?
- Examples** of influences on design:
 - Walter Johnson* at the Nationals: Artistic reassertion.
 - Albert Pujols* at St Louis: Ceding ownership to the subject?
 - Teammates* at the Red Sox: New branding strategies.
 - Jackie Robinson* in Montreal and Daytona: Tolerance branding.

The Baseball Statuary

- Recently unveiled documentation of the US baseball statuary at www.sportingstatues.com.
- 189 subject-specific statues in situ, 166 different subjects. Also a large number of non-subject specific statues.

Players: 73% (Hitters 58%, Pitchers 15%)	Managers 7%	Executives 14%	Broadcasters 5%

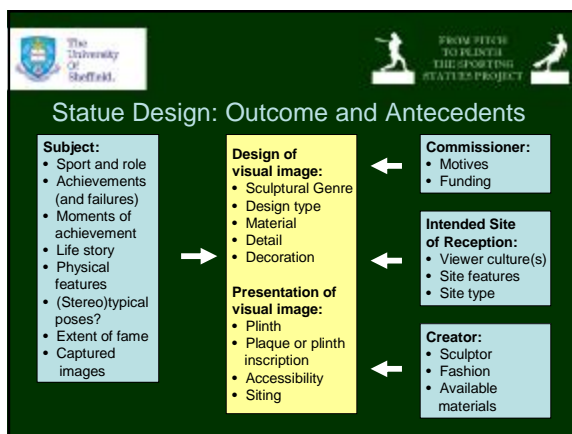
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Major League Ballparks	Minor League Ballparks	City Centres or Parks	Museums or HOFs	Schools or Colleges
55%	14%	12%	12%	6%



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THE SPORTING STATUES PROJECT
- ## Statue Design: Commissioner Motives
- Clubs: branding through nostalgia, success and association with success, creating authenticity, identity and spectacle, proclaiming ownership of territory.
 - Colleges: branding through success (BIRGing), creating identity, proclaiming ownership of territory.
 - Community Groups with City Authorities: branding through success (BIRGing), creating identity, reinforcing community...
 - ...and on the rare occasions where art departments are involved, a desire to create meaningful and critically credible artwork.

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- ## Statue Design: Other Stakeholders
- Fans: most often the intended recipients and interpreters of the piece.
 - Subject: 'moral' ownership and potentially legal ownership of image rights.
 - Subject's family: inherited 'moral' ownership, especially if subject is recently deceased.

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- ## Statue Design: Other Stakeholders
- Sculptor:
 - Their work is effectively their portfolio and business card.
 - Desire for artistic creativity and job satisfaction balanced against needs and expectations of other stakeholders, particularly those who pay them.
 - However they choose to depict the subject, they will want to capture resemblance and spirit.
 - But... maybe a benefit in establishing and proclaiming ownership of artwork through distinctive style?

Stakeholder Ideals = Design Inertia

- Subjects want to be depicted in their prime, doing what they do best – and recognisably themselves.
- Fans want subjects to be depicted as they remember them in their youth – identifiable.
- Commissioners want subject to be clearly recognisable and promoting their brand i.e. baseball, success, entertainment; and often to evoke nostalgia.

The result of this consensus...

- The safe design option is almost always chosen, whether as a first preference or as a compromise.

Stakeholder Ideals = Design Inertia

Honus Wagner: 1955, Pittsburgh. Billy Williams: 2010, Chicago.



Statue Design: Progression and Variation?

- Walter Johnson, (Frank Howard, Josh Gibson), 2009, at Nationals Park, Washington. Sculptors: Studio Amrany.



Statue Design: Progression and Variation?

- Mixed reception...
 - "The guy was my grandfather, for heaven's sake, and this absolutely negates the whole thing. I will have a difficult time going to ballgames now and seeing the statue" Henry Thomas (Johnson's grandson)
 - "The purpose is not to make art; it's to show real people as they really were" Henry Thomas
 - "This is not some frozen figure. This is not just about sports; it's about art." Omri Amrany (sculptor)
 - "Everybody can criticize art because there are a lot of elements. But the fans always have the final judgments." Omri Amrany
 - Complaints that the Nationals got their statutory 'for free'.

Statue Design: Progression and Variation?

- Albert Pujols, 2011, at Westport Plaza, St Louis. Sculptor: Harry Weber.



Statue Design: Progression and Variation?

- "There's going to be a lot of people asking, 'Well, why is he not swinging the bat?' That's to remind me it's not about me, but it's about Jesus Christ who gave his life so we can have eternal life. It's really easy to lose focus when you have millions of people telling you how great you are." Albert Pujols
- "You can't pack the statue with you!" St Louis journalist



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THE SPORTING STATUES PROJECT

Statue Design: Progression and Variation?

- *Teammates* (DiMaggio, Doerr, Pesky, Williams), 2010, at Fenway Park, Boston. Sculptor: Antonio Tobias Mendez.





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Statue Design: Progression and Variation?


- *Jackie Robinson*, 1987, at Olympic Stadium, Montreal; and 1990 at Jackie Robinson Ballpark, Daytona. Sculptor: Jules Lasalle.





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Statues Quiz Answers




A) Babe Ruth
@ Orioles




B) Connie Mack
@ Phillies




C) Josh Gibson
@ Nationals



D) Jackie Robinson
@ Montreal



E) George Sisler
@ Cardinals



F) Ty Cobb
@ Braves

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Further Information and Contact Details

Published Papers:

- Stride, C.B., Wilson, J.P. and Thomas, F.E. 'From pitch to plinth: documenting the UK's football statuary'. *Sculpture Journal* (In Press).
- Stride, C.B., Wilson, J.P. and Thomas, F.E. 'Honouring heroes by branding in bronze: theorising the UK's football statuary'. *Sport In Society* (2013).
- Stride, C.B., Thomas, F.E., Wilson, J.P. and Pahigian, J. 'Modeling Stadium Statue Subject Choice in US Baseball and English Soccer'. *Journal of Quantitative Analysis in Sports* (2012).

Under Review:

- Stride, C.B., Thomas, F.E. and Smith, M.M. 'Ballplayer or Barrier Breaker? Branding Through the Seven Statues of Jackie Robinson'.

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Standing Out From The Crowd: Imaging Supporters Through Sculpture



Chris Stride & Ffion Thomas
Sporting Statues Project
University of Sheffield, UK
and UCLAN, UK



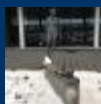
The Sporting Statues Project

- ✓ **Documenting** the world's sporting statuary
- ✓ **Developing theory** around its existence and form:
 - ✓ Why are statues of sportspeople and associated figures (managers, owners, fans) being erected?
 - ✓ Why a dramatic increase since the mid-1990s?
 - ✓ What are the similarities and differences between statues of differing nations and sports - and why?
 - ✓ What does form, location and subject choice say about sport, fan culture and wider society?
- ✓ **Testing theory and predicting the future:**
 - ✓ Can we model and predict subject selection?
 - ✓ Which sports, clubs and players will be next?
 - ✓ How is statue design likely to develop?



A Sports Statuary...

- ✓ The world's sporting statuary has shown an exponential increase in the past 2 decades... as of May 2013:
- ⚾ Baseball: over 250 statues worldwide
- ⚽ Soccer: over 200 statues worldwide
- 🏏 Cricket: over 50 statues worldwide
- ✓ Many, many other sports represented!



...but a Sports Fan Statuary?

- ✓ However, alongside the development of statues of players, managers, coaches, founders and broadcasters, has emerged a small but increasing number of statues featuring fans
- ✓ 23 identified across 3 sports researched in detail



...but a Sports Fan Statuary?

- ✓ Unlike sport statuary, all but 2 sited at stadia, typically commissioned and funded by sports organisations or stadium developers (though a handful by public money)
- ✓ Mostly baseball fans, but examples found for soccer and cricket
- ✓ All erected since 1987



Research Questions

- ✓ Why do fan statues exist? Many of the key motivations behind player/manager/founder statues erected at and/or by sports organisations are not (or rarely) applicable:
 - ✓ BIRGing? Very unlikely, fans don't typically perform outstanding sporting feats...
 - ✓ Identity? Unlikely, a fan is not going to be as well recognised as a player...
 - ✓ Commemoration/Sympathy? Possibly, but in extreme circumstances...
 - ✓ Nostalgia? Plausible in some cases, though fans are more likely to remember and nostalgise great players and moments...

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Research Questions

- ✓ Are there distinct typologies of design and meaning?
- ✓ What do their images and their very existence say about how clubs perceive fans, in terms of their understanding of fan ideals, and their 'ideal fan'?
- ✓ What do they say about the fan experience and why fans attend? Myth or reality?



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The fan as seen by a sports organisation?

- ✓ The fan or The fans?

"Like the mass entertainment industry it specialises in, baseball history has found it convenient to idealize or caricature the fan (the father soft-tossing in the backyard with his son) as some entity removed from the fans (The T-shirted fools spilling beer over one another whilst they reach over the railing to grab a ball still in play)"

Dewey: 10th Man - The Fan in Baseball History (2004)

- ✓ Observer or Active Participant?
- ✓ Customer or Supporter?
- ✓ Child or Adult? Family or Individual?




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Case Study 1: Brooks Robinson and Fans

- Brooks and fans, unveiled 5/4/2008, sculptor Lorann Jacobs
- Sovereign Bank Stadium, York Revolution, York, PA
- Funded and Commissioned by York Revolution ownership




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Case Study 1: Player and Fan statues

- ✓ Statues with fans alongside a player make up over half of fan statues
- ✓ Anonymous fans are accessories to a player, usually (but not always) subject specific
- ✓ Typically children of both genders are featured. All but one fan statue features children.
- ✓ These statues brand player, stadium, organisation and sport...




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Case Study 1: Hero-worship

- ✓ Accessibility of baseball players, the (often Minor League) organisation and the sport to fans (casting a light upon other clubs/sports?)
- ✓ Uniqueness of the live experience
- ✓ Humility and generosity of player
- ✓ Yet its form signifies a clear hierarchy of player and fans:
 - ✓ Interaction is hero-worship
 - ✓ Fans seen by club as customers (and 'subjects')?
 - ✓ Fans as passive recipients
- ✓ Also a nostalgic and/or idealised image: are players really so accessible now - and have they ever been?





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Case Study 1: Continuity and Child-like Fandom

- ✓ The sport, stadia and organisation are accessible to children (of both sexes)
- ✓ *"A train of experience starting from the backyard and stopping off at the schoolyard before arriving at the ballpark. Where the rider got off as an athlete depended on talent and the time to hone that talent. When he did get off the found ubiquitous reinforcement for maintaining a fan interest in the game."*
- ✓ Dewey: 10th Man - The Fan in Baseball History (2004)
- ✓ *"If you can't keep converting children into fans, you can't stay in business."* Koppett (1974)
- ✓ Also generates nostalgia for their childhood amongst older fans?
- ✓ Fandom is essentially a childlike behaviour?

Case Study 2: *Statue to the Fans*

- *Statue to the Fans*, unveiled 24/8/2002, sculptor Andy Edwards
- The Stadium of Light, Sunderland, UK
- Funded and Commissioned by Sunderland FC




Case Study 2: Family Statues

- ✓ 40% of fan statues feature a family group (i.e. at least one parent and one child)
- ✓ Family portrayed is most often a gender balanced, nuclear 2-adult, 2-child unit (*Statue to the Fans* has 3 generations)
- ✓ Family groups are happy and smiling - but never fervent
- ✓ Again, these statues are designed by sports organisations to brand the stadium environment, organisation and sport








Case Study 2: A Family Sport?

- ✓ Family unit of parent(s) and children is an ideal customer profile for a sports organisation:
 - ✓ Multiple consumers of tickets and concessions
 - ✓ Continuity of support
 - ✓ Unlikely to cause trouble
- ✓ Placing their version of idealised fandom amongst the fans:
 - ✓ Welcomes fans of that type – and excludes others?
 - ✓ Sets a behaviour standard?




Case Study 2: A Family Sport?

- ✓ Utopia? The fans as a homogenous collective family?
- ✓ Rewriting history?

“The statue of the family is a good idea because obviously we are trying to attract this family image. It would have been nice if they had signified a goal celebration or something like that though.”
Sunderland FC fanzine editor.








Case Study 3: *The Audience*


- *The Audience*, unveiled 3/6/1989, sculptor Michael Snow
- Rogers Centre (formerly The Skydome), Toronto
- Funded and Commissioned by the City of Toronto



Case Study 3: The fans... plural

- ✓ Very few fan statues depict crowd behaviour i.e. the fans.
- ✓ Only statues to do so are funded by civic/arts bodies rather than the stadium or sports organisation.
- ✓ Partly due to cost - but primarily because they do not necessarily portray the image of the fan experience that the sports organisation think is required?
- ✓ Yet maybe a more effective advert for attending a game?




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Case Study 3: The fans... plural

- ✓ Excitement, atmosphere, partisanship
- ✓ Spectacle – of which the crowd is often the most entertaining part
- ✓ The crowd feeds off each other – the crowd is often watching the crowd
- ✓ The crowd as organic group of distinct individuals – all different, all together.
- ✓ Not a homogenous or stereotypical family. Anyone is welcome



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Case Study 3: The fans... plural

- ✓ Grotesque styling of images in *The Audience* both repels and entices like medieval gargoyles: posits the ballpark as a venue for 'dark tourism.'
- ✓ Escapism: the ballpark offers a different world from the mall...
- ✓ Realism: fans 'trapped' in tower. The fan as a captive of his own commitment to the team



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Case Study 3: The fans... plural

- ✓ Image suitable for Blue Jays because as young franchise they lacked tradition of support when ballpark opened: a statue 'teaching' fans?

"Blue Jays' players could have done without the polite applause Toronto fans conferred on just about anybody for anything at all (hits by opponents, outs by home team) after the club joined the American League in 1977."

Dewey: 10th Man - The Fan in Baseball History (2004)



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Conclusions

- ✓ Almost all fan statues at stadia – fans require the context of their team and their environment, unlike every player
- ✓ Sports organisations erect statues to primarily brand their stadium, themselves and their sport. This applies to fan statues, which add a different dimension to player statues
- ✓ Clubs portray their idea of fan ideals (hero worship, childlike fandom, folksy nostalgia) through the demographic representation of their ideal customers (children, families, gender/ethnically inclusive) in terms of both short-term spending, public relations and crowd behaviour.
- ✓ However the foregrounded messages of these images bypass substantial elements of the fan body, bear only a weak correlation with reality... and maybe ignore what is most attractive about fandom?

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Conclusions

- ✓ As a depiction of the fan experience...

"...men of all grades, ages, and standing - the young and strong, the aged and feeble, crippled, blind and maimed; garrulous, patient, enthusiastic, combatable and non-combatable, in truth a motley group comprising everything"

Wilkes: Spirit of the Times (1871)

"Football supporters took part in a popular theatre, combining colour, noise and humour..."

Duke: Local Tradition Versus Globalisation (2002)

"Entertainment as pain was an entirely new idea to me, and it seemed to be something I had been waiting for"

Hornby: Fever Pitch (1992)

...only *The Audience* comes close!




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FROM PITCH TO PLINTH
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Published Project Papers:

- ✓ Thomas, F.E. and Stride, C.B. 'The Thierry Henry statue: A Hollow Icon?' *Leisure Studies* (2013).
- ✓ Stride, C.B., Wilson, J.P. and Thomas, F.E. 'From pitch to plinth: documenting the UK's football statuary'. *Sculpture Journal* (2013).
- ✓ Stride, C.B., Wilson, J.P. and Thomas, F.E. 'Honouring heroes by branding in bronze: theorising the UK's football statuary'. *Sport In Society* (2013).
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