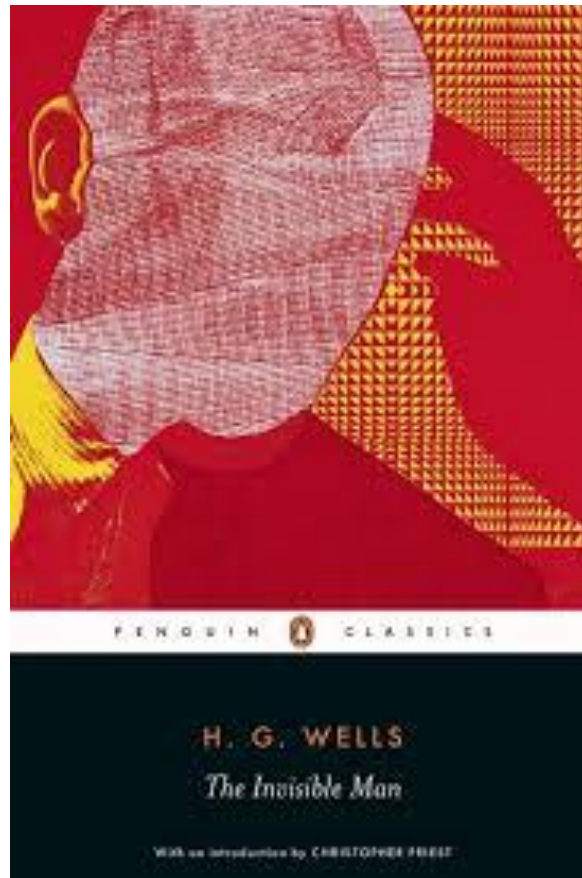


Picturing the Invisible:

A journey begins



Ruth Morgan, 27 April 2019

We have just finished a two-day workshop that has enthused, refreshed, expanded, and (in a good way) blown my mind. I have been seated with artists, a philosopher, curator, astrophysicist, historian, medics, engineers, and a psychoanalyst all with the energy and willingness to share key challenges within their own field and explore viewpoints of other disciplines. Our topic was 'picturing the invisible' a challenge that is common across many disciplines for many reasons, not least in the universal nature of the quest to be able to articulate 'that which is not known'.

Regardless of discipline, a key ingredient of excellent research is inquisitiveness, curiosity, willingness to ask questions (even if they might seem obvious) and a relentless energy to get to the bottom of the challenge. When we are considering

complex challenges, we need to add in to that a joy in looking outside our own domain and reaching out to other domains, as well as developing the means of communication that allow us to work together.

In our current age, there is often a tendency to reduce complex issues to dichotomies. But complex issues rarely have simple solutions, and they are rarely unconnected to other challenges. So, to be sitting around a table with experts from a diverse range of fields and to have time to explore together what synergies we could identify between our disciplines was quite simply brilliant, refreshing and not a little extraordinary.

The discussions were wide ranging from physically imaging artwork before and after restoration, to implicit relationship experience in psychoanalysis, invisibility of key people and voices in contemporary art, discovering the unknown in forensic science, unnamed and unseen territories of the human body and the universe, and the power of voids in sculpture. What emerged were some exciting themes around how we can articulate, represent and interpret the invisible or unknown, the importance of negative spaces or voids in revealing what is unseen, the importance of language and communication, the value of tools, and the power of human observation.

The complexity we encounter at every scale is truly phenomenal whether that is what can be observed through microscopy and scanning technologies, or the important role of tacit knowledge that evades capture but is core to everyday activities. There is wonder to be discovered in the act of unmasking to reveal mechanisms, processes, views, connections, and voices, that fundamentally challenge and re-orientate our understanding and engagement with the natural world, art and communities.

Truly interdisciplinary working that creates a new coherent and 'bigger than the sum of its parts' approach to a challenge that can drive innovation and new discovery is elusive. I sense I have taken a step into the unknown with a group of fascinating people representing a very broad spectrum of fields and disciplines. To the outside world this may look eclectic and disparate, but after two days I know that is only how it looks on the surface. I'm looking forward to sharing our discoveries on this journey, the encounters that lead to 'lightbulb' moments, and the themes that

emerge that will unlock a new way of thinking about and approaching complex challenges across the arts, sciences and humanities that is novel, holistic and above all exciting.