

<p><b>Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: D34 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory</b></p>
<p><b>Title of case study: Crafting the Contemporary: Enhancing the sustainability of traditional craft practices in India.</b></p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>This case study describes the impact of a ten-year programme of research, which has influenced attitudes to traditional crafts and cultural heritage in India, and created an ethical model of sustainable crafts practice, leading to economic and social benefits. Research has underpinned the creation of the Ahmedabad International Arts Festival (AIAF) that started in 2009 and with MMU's contribution has now grown into a major, multi-stranded international festival. MMU researchers have worked with museums and cultural organisations in the UK and India to develop ways of engaging new audiences, widening the reach of craft-based practices and thereby creating cultural impact. The project has also drawn attention to an endangered area of Ahmedabad, and assisted in developing a plan for conserving cultural heritage there.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The initial agenda of the unit was to seek ways to address the decline of traditional crafts skills in the face of globalisation, rapid modernisation, and the loss of traditional markets. Its 'manifesto' was to preserve and revitalise cultural heritage, epitomised by the crafts, through contemporary engagement, international dialogue and cultural collaboration. The underpinning research is represented by a decade of applied research around sustainability of crafts practice, with a focus on establishing cultural exchanges between makers in the UK and South Asia.</p> <p>MMU research in this area developed out of a 4-year arts council funded initiative, (£320,000) Here and There (HAT) that ran from 2003 – 2007. HAT established a research model for international exchanges, originally piloted in Australia, and subsequently evolving to include collaborations between artists, designers and craftspeople in South Asia, Australia and the UK. By 2007, 20 individual research fellowships had been completed. MMU's role in HAT was significant, as residency host to three makers from South Asia, organising the conference <i>Migratory Practices</i>, 2006 [2] and contributing residency artists Dixon [3] and Chatwin, writer in residence Webb [2] and film-maker in residence Magee, [1,4].</p> <p>The HAT residency programme concluded in 2007 with a weeklong conference/workshop event at the Sanskriti Foundation, New Delhi, which provided a platform for extending international dialogue and networks.</p> <p>Maintaining this initiative, the unit developed an ongoing research engagement with the Arts Reverie house, in Dhal Ni Pol, Ahmedabad, which functions as a cultural bridge between European and Indian artists, designers and craftspeople. This was the location for a 'brainstorming' event, HAT-Lab, in 2009, where representatives of UK and Indian cultural organisations (including MIRIAD's Hyatt, Dixon) gathered to discuss issues of cultural sustainability in Ahmedabad. One outcome of this event was <i>The Pol Project</i>, 2010 [5], where MIRIAD artists worked in collaboration with the people of Dhal Ni Pol, Ahmedabad, to create temporary site-specific artworks, events and workshops which explored the social aesthetics of the Pol, in order to raise local awareness of its unique and endangered architectural and cultural heritage. A further outcome of HAT-Lab was the establishment of the Ahmedabad International Arts Festival (AIAF 10,000 visitors in 2010), which provided the platform for disseminating the Unit's research in Ahmedabad. Arts Reverie has subsequently been established as a MIRIAD research centre, and has become the focus for further research projects within the unit, including <i>Translating Tradition</i> (Welsh 2011) and <i>Drawing The Line</i> (Kettle 2011) both of which featured in the Asia Triennial Manchester, 2011 [6], and <i>The Warli Film Project</i>, Magee, 2012. In each of these projects, MIRIAD researchers worked directly with Indian crafts-people, with the specific intention of showcasing their traditional skills to a wider, international audience.</p>

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

Most recently, in *Cotton Exchange*, 2012/13, five members of the unit explored the shared legacies of cotton manufacture between Northwest England and Northwest India, working with a consortium of UK museums and with Ahmedabad University's Centre for Heritage Management, with the specific intention of developing new audiences for traditional crafts.

**3. References to the research**

[1] Magee, J. (2003) *The HAT Project: Here and There, Australia/UK*. Catalogue publication. ISBN 0-9546242-0-3

<http://www.hat.mmu.ac.uk/hataustralia/>

[2] Ravetz, A., and Webb, J. Eds. (2009) *Migratory Practices*. Journal publication of conference papers.

*Migratory Practices*. Craft + Design Enquiry, Issue 1, 2012. ISSN 2200-6931 (Craft Australia)

<http://www.craftaustralia.org.au/cde/toc/2009VOL1.php>

[3] Dixon, S. (2006) *Beyond the Seas*, An AHRC practice-led research project.

Journal publication: *Beyond the Seas*, in *Migratory Practices*. Craft + Design Enquiry, Issue 1, 2009. ISSN 1837-445X (Craft Australia)

Exhibitions: *The HAT Project: Here and There* (The Queen's Gallery, British Council, New Delhi, 2007) <http://www.hat.mmu.ac.uk/chat/?id=5>

*Travellers' Tales* (Contemporary Applied Arts, London, 2009)

*Memoranda*, (Crafts Study Centre, Farnham, 2011) with exhibition publication *Memoranda*, Peters, T. and West, J., (eds.) ISBN 0-9542886-1-0

Presentation: *Crafting the Contemporary: Inter-cultural dialogues shaping craft practice*, at the symposium *Disruptive Difference: Transnational Craft Dialogues*, the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, February 2012. <http://theshapeofthings.org.uk/essay.html>

[4] Magee, J. (2008) *Field, Foundation and Longing*,

Three films made during a residency with Indian Warli artists on the Harley Estate, Notts.

<http://www.hat.mmu.ac.uk/residencies/writing.php?artist=71>

Shown in the exhibition *Warli Art*, at the Harley Gallery, Notts. 17 May to 29 June 2008.

[5] Dixon, S., O'Neill, C.J., and Ravetz, A. (2010) *The POL Project*.

A research residency in Dhal Ni Pol, Ahmedabad. Installation works and film, featured in the Ahmedabad International Arts Festival, October 2010.

<http://thepolproject.blogspot.co.uk> <http://aiaf.in/index.html>

[6] Mitha, A., director (2008/2011) *Asia Triennial Manchester*, 2008. Catalogue publication. ISBN: 978-0-9545563-9-6.

A multi-media triennial festival of contemporary arts and crafts by artists from Asia, the UK and the Asian diaspora. ATM2011 included the exhibitions:

[6a]. Made for Manchester: Objects of Exchange. Manchester Craft and Design Centre, 17 September to 12 November. (Works by Dixon, O'Neill, Ravetz, Settington and Welsh.)

<http://www.craftanddesign.com/events/made-for-manchester-craft-objects-of-exchange/>

[6b] Drawing the Line/Extending the Line.

Holden Gallery, MMU, Manchester, 28 October to 25 November. (Works by Kettle.)

**4. Details of the impact****Economic and cultural impact, India.**

The Ahmedabad International Arts Festival [www.aiaf.in](http://www.aiaf.in) (AIAF) was a significant outcome of the research underpinning this case study. In five years, the AIAF has grown from a single event in 2009 to a multi-stranded international Festival attracting visitors from all over the globe. MMU's research has played a key role in the growth and development of AIAF as underlined by its

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

Director who states, “*The participation of artists from MIRIAD...has had a significant impact upon the cultural life of the city. Most important of these has been the impact on the AIAF which was crystallised at a think tank with inputs from John Hyatt and MMU. AIAF values the significant contribution of MMU each year.*” AIAF’s Director goes on to articulate the individual impacts of MMU researchers involvement in specific projects [A and B]. Further international impact has been realised in India (HAT Project exhibition, British Council, New Delhi, 2007, 600 visitors over 10 days) and has brought the work of traditional makers to international attention (Shamji Vishram Siju, Blackburn Museum residency 2012) thereby developing new markets for traditional crafts makers and their products. This research is ongoing, aiming to provide new opportunities and continuing employment for traditional makers. It is our belief that such direct action will save a number of craft practices from being lost.

The unit’s collaborative approach is epitomised by Welsh, who used traditional Indian garments as the basis for her research project *Translating Tradition* [6a]. She worked with Indian tailors to develop garments that retain long-established stitching techniques but have appeal to a 21st-century western audience. Prototype designs were tested in the *Made for Manchester* exhibition, at the *Asia Triennial Manchester 2011*. She has extended this research in conjunction with The Khamir Project, based in Kutch, the heartland of Gujarat textiles practice. This ongoing project involves growers, weavers and spinners in the re-introduction of organic cotton as the basis of a sustainable industry. (This is more resilient to drought and disease, and allows farmers to harvest the seeds, unlike its genetically engineered equivalent). As the Director of the Khamir Project states [C], “*By spreading the message of Kala Cotton internationally, Alison’s project has opened the space for discussion on rain-fed species and building indigenous, local strengths into robust economies. This is unleashing new collaborations and cutting edge R&D.*”

Welsh has collaborated with Indian weaver Shamji Vishram Siju on textile and product design, with the goal of producing viable, economic and desirable garments. Prototype garments were exhibited in *Field to Fashion*, Queen’s Gallery, British Council, Delhi, November 2013.

In the *Drawing the Line* project, Senior research Fellow Alice Kettle shared a residency at Arts Reverie with traditional Madhubani artist Pushpa Kumari in July 2011. Lacking a common language, and without a translator, they communicated through a shared knowledge and understanding of drawing, and collaborated on works which were shown in the exhibition *Drawing the Line, Extending the Line* for the *Asia Triennial, Manchester 2011*, thereby introducing Kumari’s work to a new and international audience.

Similarly, *the Warli Film Project* (2012) continues a series of internationally distributed short documentary films on Indian crafts made by Johnny Magee for the HAT project. [4] It focuses on the practice of the ‘Master’ Warli painter, Jivya Soma Mashe, and in particular examines the ways that this traditional form of practice (which documents the daily lives of the tribal Warli community) has evolved in order to engage with contemporary audiences and markets. Shown at The Loft, Mumbai, November 2013.

**Cultural impact in the UK**

Research conducted by the unit has succeeded in bringing new audiences into museums, through projects combining traditional and contemporary craft practices, in collaboration with Lancashire Museums Service and the ACE Renaissance programme [D]. *Cotton Exchange* (part of the ACE Cultural Olympiad project *Global Threads*) explored the shared histories and legacies of cotton manufacture between Northwest England and Northwest India. Five members of the unit (Dixon, Kettle, Mitchison, Welsh, Zapp) participated in the project, creating a series of installation works, first exhibited at Queens Street Mill, Burnley (2012), and subsequently in Rajnagar Mill, Ahmedabad (2013). These installations were designed with the specific intention of engaging diverse audiences that would not normally visit a museum. (Over 700 visitors to Rajnagar Mill over 4 days). Talking about the impact that MMU researchers had on *Global Threads* the Partnership Manager for Renaissance Northwest says “*MIRIAD researchers...worked together to raise the international ambitions of the project, to develop new skills and new relationships. This meant that it was possible to generate significant amounts of additional funding to make these projects*

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

*happen; we estimate that nearly £500,000 funding was secured in addition to its core funding...the Artists from MIRIAD added a whole new dimension to Global Threads and Cotton Exchange in terms of delivery, but most importantly, in terms of its legacy. This partnership with the MIRIAD researchers enabled Global Threads to reach new audiences by creating new perspectives and insights on the collections and museum offer of Queen Street Mill.* [E]

Similarly, the ongoing Asia Triennial Manchester (ATM: see case study) [6] under the directorship of MIRIAD Research Fellow Alnoor Mitha, has brought contemporary Art and Craft practices from South and East Asia to significant new audiences. (229,000 visitors, ATM 2011)

**Environmental impact in India**

An un-anticipated impact of the project is the attention that the research has brought to the specific area of Ahmedabad in which the Arts Reverie House is situated: Dal Ni Pol. This area of acute architectural heritage is in danger of unsympathetic redevelopment of the sort that will pay little attention to the historic quality of the buildings. In response to this issue, the aim of *the Pol Project* [5] was to work with the people of the Pol to develop artistic interventions drawing attention to their threatened urban and social environment. This collaborative activity centred on 'otlas' (doorsteps), which were identified as a focus of social interaction, and resulted in a documentary/participatory film, screened in the Pol (Ravetz) and site-specific installation works, O'Neill, Dixon (1,000 visitors). The focus that the project has brought to the Pol has led to a more enlightened attitude towards developments within that urban area, and lent significant support to the work of the Centre for Heritage Management at Ahmedabad University in the development of policies that will protect against the demolition of significant structures and the against construction of new buildings that are unsympathetic to the significant heritage of the location [F].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

The following testimonials are available to view on file

**Economic and cultural impact in India:**

[A] Testimonial from Director Ahmedabad International Arts Festival corroborating the international cultural impacts of MMU research on a Ahmedabad and its Arts Festival.

[B] Link to Ahmedabad International Arts Festival (AIAF) "calendars" with introductions each year provided by MMU Professor John Hyatt corroborating the continuing close involvement of MIRIAD with the growing festival: [http://www.aiaf.in/downloads/AIAF\\_2013\\_calendar\\_final\\_0910.pdf](http://www.aiaf.in/downloads/AIAF_2013_calendar_final_0910.pdf) (page 5) [http://www.aiaf.in/downloads/AIAF\\_2012\\_calendar\\_final\\_n.pdf](http://www.aiaf.in/downloads/AIAF_2012_calendar_final_n.pdf) (page 3), [http://www.aiaf.in/downloads/aiaf\\_calendar\\_2011.pdf](http://www.aiaf.in/downloads/aiaf_calendar_2011.pdf) (page 2)

[C] Testimonial from Director of Khamir Craft Resource Centre, Bhuj, Kutch corroborating the economic and environment impact of MMU international research.

**Cultural impact in the UK:**

[D] Testimonial from Director of Education at Lancashire Museums Service corroborating the cultural impacts on audience engagement with MMU craft-based research.

[E] Testimonial from Northwest Regional Coordinator for the Arts Council England Renaissance programme corroborating the cultural impacts of MMU's craft-based research on developing new audiences.

**Environmental impact in India:**

[F] Testimonial from the Director of the Centre for Heritage Management, Ahmedabad University corroborating the environmental impacts of MMU research on the infrastructure / heritage status etc. of Ahmedabad.