

Institution: University of Brighton	
Unit of Assessment: D34 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	
Title of case study: Transforming Design Curation at the V&A	ICS [2]
1. Summary of the impact	

Developed through a sustained partnership with the V&A that began in 1996, researchers at the University of Brighton (UoB) have transformed the curatorial and museological approach to the collecting, display and interpretation of 20th- and 21st- century design in one of world's largest public museums. They have changed the way the museum proactively responds to the needs of higher education (HE); reshaped conceptions of the museum as a physical and digital learning space; and reconfigured the museum as a place for active professional, creative and cultural dialogue about the roles of contemporary design, design history and design policy.

2. Underpinning research

The award of a prestigious six-year British Academy Fellowship in *Product Design and Museology* (1997), enabled the university to sustain and develop a research partnership with the V&A. Its purpose was to examine the curatorial and museological policies for contemporary design in the museum for the 21st century. The award built upon our considerable research expertise in material culture, design history (WOODHAM) and design curation (TAYLOR) (REF3b [1]). Working closely with WOODHAM and the V&A's Director of Research the first phase of research by our V&A Fellow (PAVITT) examined how existing methods of curation (broadly articulated as connoisseurship), categorised in well-defined 'material or typological areas' (eg silver, glass, ceramics, furniture), could be effectively contextualised through research and scholarship, and communicated to broader audiences. Through discussion with experts in the field, and comparative case studies with other world-leading institutions (Pompidou in Paris, Neue Sammlung in Munich, MOMA in New York), PAVITT drew a number of important conclusions that impacted on all aspects of curation and acquisition policies, including how to communicate their social and cultural meanings. The main outcomes of PAVITT's research were detailed in the report *The V&A – a museum of design* (2001) which emphasised the tangible benefits accruing from 'a strategic and coherent approach to contemporary product design'. In particular, PAVITT recommended:

- adopting a research-led curatorial model supported by rigorous object scholarship
- raising the international profile of the museum for design
- capitalising on educational opportunities and learning experiences
- providing a focus for scholarship in design studies
- addressing the acquisition and curation of digital products
- developing younger professional audiences and contact with the creative industries
- placing the museum at the heart of debates about the social impact of design.

In implementing these recommendations, the second phase of PAVITT's research involved curating a series of experimental exhibitions that explored how a contextualised and thematic approach to design could be achieved. These were: *Designing in the Digital Age* (V&A 1999), *The Shape of Colour: Red* (Glasgow 1999) and *Brand.New* (V&A 2000) [reference 3.3]. These exhibitions, which provided strong evidence that this approach could fulfil the objectives set out in her report, led to two subsequent research directions for the UoB and V&A partnership. The first was the planning and curation of two major design exhibitions and a series of related outputs and events: *Cold War Modern: Art and Design in a Divided World 1945–75* (2008) [3.1, 3.2] structured around cultural narratives of the Cold War, and *Postmodernism: Design 1970–90* (2011), which considered the impact and meanings of postmodernism in broad design terms. The exhibitions brought together material from a spectrum of design fields, including architecture, product design, graphic design and fashion and a comprehensive programme of study days and events was held, focusing specifically on HE, with a student symposium on the architecture of the period. A further phase of research is now being developed by JULIER, the second V&A research fellow, which focuses on the social role of design and the V&A's role in shaping contemporary design cultures.

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A second key impact resulted from the bringing together of PAVITT's research recommendations with those previously outlined in V&A Head of Learning and Interpretation David Anderson's *A Common Wealth* (1997). Anderson's report concluded by identifying the loss of previous structured educational connections for collaborative working between museums and universities, and a growing focus on 'informal learning' for schools and for adult learners. Both expressed a need for a more structured, systematic and scholarly approach to curation and the need to rethink and develop new frameworks and forms of support for university students to build back the learning continuum between schools, adult and professional learners. The realisation of this educational gap formed the basis for a new programme of research that revisited both potential for such relationships and the need to bring together the work of the Learning and Interpretation and Research Departments of the V&A. BODDINGTON (lead) with BOYS, Cook, Reynolds, and SPEIGHT, examined: the potential, value and transferability of 'object scholarship' across sectors and disciplines [3.4]; the re-conception of the museum's spaces specifically for learning in universities, and; how to develop a new learning continuum between schools and all forms of adult and professional learners [3.5]. Their research examined both the digital and physical environments within HE and the museum, considering how these might be more effectively designed and utilised to support students and inspire a wider range of learners and professionals, and the potential impact of this on current institutional policies [3.6]. This emanated from research being undertaken from the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching through Design (CETLD), (a collaborative £4.85m programme led by UoB, together with the V&A, the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Royal College of Art).

Key Researchers:

- Anne Boddington: Head of School (Jan 1999–Sept 2006), Dean (Oct 2006–to date).
 Jos Boys: Senior Lecturer (Sept 2006–July 2007), Senior Research Fellow (July 2007–Feb 2012).
 Guy Julier: Principal Research Fellow (Jan 2011–Nov 2012), Professor of Design Culture (Nov 2012–to date).
 Jane Pavitt: Senior Research Fellow (Mar 1997–Dec 2005), Principal Research Fellow Jan 2006–July 2010).
 Catherine Speight: Research Officer (Jan 2005–Mar 2006), Research Fellow (May 2006–July 2010).

3. References to the research

- [3.1] PAVITT, J. and CROWLEY, D. (2008) *Cold War Modern: Art and Design in a Divided World 1945–1970*. V&A exhibition [Quality validation: 91,300 visitors; review, *the Financial Times*, 27 Sept 08]
- [3.2] PAVITT, J. and CROWLEY, D. (2008) *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–1970*. London: V&A Publishing [Quality validation: review, *Journal of Design History* (2009) (22) 4: pp.420-423]
- [3.3] PAVITT, J. (2000) *Brand.New*. V&A exhibition [Quality validation: submitted to RAE 2001 – Quality Profile for RAE2001: Rated 5]
- [3.4] COOK, B, REYNOLDS, R and SPEIGHT, C. (2010) *Museums and design education: looking to learn, learning to see*. Farnham: Ashgate. [Quality validation: review comment on book jacket, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, Emeritus Professor of Museum Studies, University of Leicester: 'this is a thorough, detailed and sophisticated book, which will prove a very valuable contribution to a neglected area of museum work']
- [3.5] BODDINGTON, A. and BOYS, J. eds. (2011) *Re-shaping learning: a critical reader*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers [Quality validation: REF 2014 output 1]
- [3.6] BODDINGTON, A. BOYS, J. SPEIGHT, C. (eds.) (2013) *Museums and higher education: challenges and opportunities*. Farnham: Ashgate [Quality validation: REF 2014 output 4]

4. Details of the impact

Impact on the curatorial practice, display and interpretation of 20th- and 21st- century design: The underpinning research in both curatorial practice and learning spaces has transformed curation, approaches to acquisition at the V&A, and promoted wider public understanding of post-war and contemporary design. Exhibitions have offered new approaches to

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the curation of design in specific periods, and the object scholarship and 'learning spaces' research both provided more practical understandings of design and its cultural impact as well as providing a series of public fora for dialogue and debate. Overall the research has fundamentally changed the curatorial practices of the V&A and it has succeeded in placing the museum at the forefront of international design debates. In particular, it has transformed the ways in which different departments within the V&A communicate and collaborate and how the museum works with universities. The first of PAVITT'S two exhibitions: *Cold War Modern: Art and Design in a Divided World 1945–70* [3.1] from 2008 attracted 91,300 people (source 5.1). Its thematic presentation of the subject, drawing on artefacts from many different fields of design, showed how 'politics influences design' (5.2). International impact is evidenced by the exhibition's subsequent showing in Italy and then Lithuania, where it was one of the most highly attended exhibitions ever held and the accompanying literature clearly placed it within the Lithuanian context (5.3). The second exhibition, *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970–1990* from 2011, attracted attendance figures of 114,900, exceeding predicted numbers by 15% and attracting, according to V&A reports, a very different demographic from previous exhibitions of a design 'period'. Visitors were more likely to be professional (63% of the visitors were from the creative industries) and younger (34% were in the 16–24 age group) (5.4). *Postmodernism* was subsequently shown in Italy and Switzerland.

Both exhibitions were accompanied by publications [3.2] and V&A Publishing, 2011, conferences and educational events including an international conference (*Cold War Culture*, 2008) and a symposium (*The Postmodern Legacy*, 2011). A central focus of these was an examination of how art and design was enmeshed with social and political issues. These initiatives stimulated the international press and media to generate widespread public discourse, which raised awareness of the political and historical significance of design and ephemera behind the iron curtain (5.5).

PAVITT'S research has been extended and developed by her successor at the V&A, JULIER, who has overseen the formation of a new V&A Contemporary Team (2013) (5.6), focusing on the social role of design. He has instigated the popular 'Design Salon' series (5.7) putting the V&A at the centre of professional, educational and public debate about the contemporary role of design. Additionally, JULIER'S role as a member of the Associate Parliamentary Design & Innovation Group (APDIG) that examined the design of public services (*Restarting Britain 2: Design & Public Services*, 2013) has led to increasing influence on Parliamentary discourse about design issues in the UK.

Developed contemporary conceptions of learning spaces: The work of BODDINGTON, BOYS [3.5, 3.6] and Cook et al [3.4] as part of the CETLD resulted in structural and operational changes within the V&A and contributed to the development of the Sackler Centre for Arts Education. For example, the Learning and Interpretation Department and the Research Department now work collaboratively to maximise opportunities for structuring learning from research, and have together produced a new programme of events for these new and growing audiences. As a direct outcome from the CETLD the museum created a new dedicated HE and creative industries programme manager to support university tutors, undergraduate and postgraduate students through a regular cycle of events, including tailored tours and talks. This manager also advises on how to make optimal use of the V&A both as a physical and an online learning space and encourages graduates and academics to apply for residences within the museum. In addition to working closely with six major HE partners, the museum has, since 2009, acted as a creative agent, running over 100 events that link HE students with creative industry professionals to augment learning and knowledge exchange between sectors (5.9). As the V&A'S former Director of Learning and Interpretation explained of this project: 'It has changed the landscape in an important area of museum work, and will have an impact on thinking in museums (and, I hope, higher education) for years to come' (5.8).

This research continues to develop through the first award of an AHRC Collaborative Doctorate in 2010 (SPEIGHT) with the museum's Learning and Interpretation Department. Two international cross-sector conferences held in 2010 (*Re-shaping learning? the future of learning spaces in post-compulsory education*, Brighton; and *Learning at the Interface: museum and university collaborations*, V&A) resulted in the publication of two books [3.5, 3.6]. They both brought together international cross-sector audiences that included museum curators, learning and interpretation specialists, academics, architects, planners, social scientists, and estate and facilities managers.

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They examined: 1) the implications of integrating physical, digital and personal learning spaces within universities and museums; 2) the practical and policy barriers for such realisations, and; 3) how these may be overcome. In addition, they identified the need for further research to construct theoretical models and evaluation frameworks to monitor and review the commissioning, user experiences and effectiveness of the significant investment currently being made in educational buildings and digital infrastructures for learning worldwide. The wider impact of this research has been acknowledged within the museum world both in the UK and abroad: ‘the project had a transformatory effect on the V&A. It prompted the Museum to introduce a range of new services for HE students, and to reshape other public services, for example, in the design of new galleries, to better meet their needs’ (5.8). The work has also been adopted by the Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education following visits and consultations with BODDINGTON and BOYS in Brighton, (5.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Testimonial available from Director of SCCVA, Norwich describing the impact of the joint University of Brighton/V&A Research Fellow, and the exhibitions she curated, on the museum and beyond.
- 5.2 V&A evaluation report for the *Cold War Modern: Art and Design in a Divided World 1945–70* exhibition (2008). This report provides information on visitor numbers and a demographic analysis.
- 5.3 Report from the National Gallery of Art, Lithuania, including figures and evaluation for the *Cold War Modern: Art and Design in a Divided World 1945–75* exhibition (2008). This also includes examples of the publicity text placing the exhibition within the Lithuanian context.
- 5.4 Museum evaluation report for the *Postmodernism: Design 1970–90* exhibition (2011). This report provides information on visitor numbers and a demographic analysis.
- 5.5 Review of the Cold War exhibition in the *Financial Times* (27 September, 2008), highlighting how ‘Its breadth and truth to economic and political realities sets this exhibition apart even from recent V&A stunners ‘Modernism’ and ‘China Design Now’ ‘. Selected press reviews in *the Times*, *the Guardian*, *the Financial Times*, *Evening Standard* and other leading newspapers are included for both the *Cold War Modern: Art and Design in a Divided World 1945–75* exhibition (2008) and *Postmodernism: Design 1970–90* exhibition (2011), as supplementary evidence. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.brighton.ac.uk/docview/250142827>
[Accessed: 15th November 2013]
- 5.6 Testimonial available from the Head of Research on the impact of JULIER in his role as Research Fellow at the V&A. Also includes an article from the Museums’ Association *Museums Journal* on the restructuring of the Contemporary Team at the V&A.
- 5.7 V&A report with statistics on attendance at Design Salons and increasing creative industries constituency, with supporting evidence from the University of South Denmark outlining the significance of JULIER’s consultancy work and the influential nature of his policy advice in developing design history/culture as a subject and Kolding as a design city.
- 5.8 Testimonial available from the V&A’s Director of Learning and Interpretation on CETLD’s shaping of HE post and subsequent priorities and work on HE at the V&A. Supplementary screen-shot evidence showing CETLD design audios on the What’s in the V&A ‘Visit us’ pages of the V&A website, offering experts’ guidance around the Silver Galleries, British Galleries and Cast Courts.
- 5.9 The V&A Museum’s Higher Education and Creative Industries Programme Manager report, summarising the role and activities since 2010.
- 5.10 Report by the Danish Agency for University and Internationalisation, Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education, citing BOYS and BODDINGTON’s learning spaces work as an influence/case study. Supplementary screen-shot evidence of impact of CETLD Learning Spaces work on the RIBA website: ‘Since the completion of the CETLD-Bene Education Room at the RIBA we have had over 1,500 design and architecture students in under two years, which is a huge number for us when before we have inducted maybe 50/60 per year.’ Director of the RIBA British Architectural Library.