

<b>Institution: University for the Creative Arts</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 34 Art &amp; Design: History, Practice and Theory</b>
<b>Title of case study: Lost in Lace</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p><i>Lost in Lace</i> was an exhibition curated by Professor Lesley Millar MBE at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG), between 29 Oct. 2011 and 19 Feb. 2012. The project was presented by BMAG and the Crafts Council (CC) as the inaugural exhibition of the CC biennial Fifty:Fifty partnership programme. An independently commissioned evaluation reports that significant economic impact, audience development and curatorial innovation resulted from this work. BMAG and the CC were the principal beneficiaries of this impact in that the exhibition and its associated programme of activities fulfilled their stated strategic aims and ambitions for the specific project and wider organisational goals.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p><i>Lost in Lace</i> brought together Eastern and Western understandings of the articulation of space, building upon a rich tradition of relationships between lace and architecture. In particular it was concerned to explore Japanese spatial notions of <i>Ma</i> and <i>Hashi</i> within the context of Western theorising of space, in order to offer new insights into the ways in which we configure and negotiate the thresholds and boundaries we encounter as we move through space. The research investigated the material processes of making through interviews with makers such as artists and architects. The exhibition and publication expanded the themes and ideas identified during the research through a series of architectonic installations developed in discussion between Professor Millar as curator, and each of the international cohort of exhibitors drawn from the UK, Japan, USA, Germany, Italy and France.</p> <p>This project was researched, developed and delivered over a 3-year period. In 2006–7 Millar ran an AHRC project (Context and Collaboration) in which she investigated ways in which museums, HEIs, funders and practitioners might work together to increase the profile of contemporary textiles. As a consequence, ideas and themes that emerged from the seminars and workshops that formed the primary research for this work were developed in conjunction with Craft Space in Birmingham, and subsequently the BMAG, and led to Millar being invited to curate an exhibition for the Gas Hall. This venue, which until that point had not presented a contemporary, site-sensitive exhibition, offered the opportunity for Millar to further explore interactions and connections between textiles and the built environment, pursuing ideas first generated and developed by her exhibition project <i>Textural Space</i> (2001). Initial Research &amp; Development for <i>Lost in Lace</i> was supported by successful application for a Crafts Council Spark Plug Award.</p> <p><i>Lost in Lace</i> sought to present innovative, newly commissioned work. For example, <i>Black Lace</i> is an interdisciplinary moving image and sound installation created by Professor Kathleen Rogers for the exhibition. The work developed and extended Rogers' experimental use of non-optical microscopy as a 'plastic' technical medium for the production of art, and was made in collaboration with the Biomedical Imaging Unit based at Southampton University General Hospital. The material basis of the work comprised a 19th-century Chantilly lace fragment from the BMAG collection, embedded on a metal disk, and thinly coated with ionized gold particles for enhanced dark space imaging. Using a Scanning Electron Microscope and a Con-Focal Laser Fluorescent Microscope, Prof. Rogers mastered technical and aesthetic challenges to create a piece that reconceives and represents the intricate structure and material substance of the lace. This is the first time that lace has been subject to scientific imaging: the work extends the application of both craft and scientific digital media, and encourages public engagement with the concepts and physics of non-optical bio-imaging. The work has subsequently featured in public engagement activities of Southampton University Hospital Biomedical Imaging Unit, and featured in <i>Real to Reel: Film as material making</i>, the Crafts Council's 2013 London Design Festival Showcase at Design Junction (18–22 Sept.</p>

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2013), which will tour the UK throughout 2014.

*Lost in Lace* was accompanied by an academic conference. The public programme attracted over 20 professional society/HE specific group visits in addition to several public tours (768 participants).

### Project Funding

£50,000 Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

£50,000 Crafts Council

£45,000 Arts Council England

£50,000 Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

£15,000 worth of crystals (in kind) Swarovski

£4,000 Japan Foundation

£3,000 The Textile Society

£1,500 The Great Britain Saskawa Foundation

€1500 Culture Ireland

£800 + return air travel Embassy of Brazil

€788 Mondriaan Foundation

### 3. References to the research

- Millar, L., *Lost in Lace*, exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (29 Oct. 2011–19 Feb. 2012) (**REF 2014**)
- *Lost in Lace* Conference, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (3 Feb. 2012)
- Millar, L., (ed.), *Lost in Lace | transparent boundaries*, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, 2011, ISBN 978-0-9570494-0-6
- Millar, L., 'Boundaries' in Basso Peressut, L, Forino, I, Postiglione, G, Rizzi, R (eds.) *Interior Wor(l)ds\**, Umberto Allemandi & Co, Torino, Italy, 2010, pp. 173–177.
- Rogers, K., *Black Lace*, exhibit commissioned for *Lost in Lace*, 2011 (**REF 2014**)
- Lesley Millar interview *Woman's Hour*, BBC Radio 4 (28 Oct. 2011)  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01693gl>
- Lesley Millar interview *The Radio 2 Arts Show* (21 Oct. 2011)  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b015n4j6>

### 4. Details of the impact

The details of impact are drawn largely from an independent evaluation report commissioned by the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery [1]. Earthen Lamp, an independent consultancy on the creative sector, was commissioned to carry out a research-based evaluation of the *Lost in Lace* exhibition. BMAG's primary evaluation objective was to ascertain and measure a change in perceptions of the Museum from being associated with the traditional, to an increase or change in association with the contemporary.

The main aims of the evaluation were:

- To understand if the exhibition had an impact on the perception of BMAG
- To calculate the level of first time visitors to BMAG attracted by *Lost in Lace*
- To gain feedback from visitors on the exhibitions
- To test the success of the exhibition app and other online marketing methods
- To understand the demographics of the visitors
- To calculate the economic impact of the exhibition

The survey was developed in consultation with the BMAG and the Crafts Council team to address the aims outlined above, and the report was generated using the West Midlands Cultural Observatory online Economic Impact Calculator developed in 2011 as part of the Cultural Olympiad in the West Midlands: [www.eitoolkit.org.uk](http://www.eitoolkit.org.uk) .

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**Economic Impact**

- Evidence suggests that *Lost in Lace* has generated around **£948,283.56** worth of economic activity.
- The estimated economic impact of *Lost in Lace* was **£738,282.72** (before multiplier), or **£922,853.40** (after multiplier).

**Audience Development**

- *Lost in Lace* had a total of **40,046 visitors**.
- Around a quarter of all respondents to the survey lived in Birmingham while a further 40% lived in the rest of the West Midlands.
- There is evidence to show that some of the visitors to *Lost in Lace* came from places such as Italy, Holland, Portugal, Spain, China, Japan, Malta, USA and Iran.
- 34% of all respondents were visiting BMAG for the first time and a further 19% had not been in the last 12 months. Using the total visitor figures it can be inferred that around **13,600** visitors were on their first visit to BMAG to attend *Lost in Lace*.
- Around 19% of all respondents travelled less than 5 miles to the exhibition. Using the total visitor figures, this translates to **7,600** unique individuals. Additionally, 38% (**15,200** individuals) travelled more than 31 miles to the exhibition.
- 42% of respondents indicated that they were visiting Birmingham (city centre) specifically to attend the exhibition. Using the total number of visitors this translates to around **17,000** unique individuals.
- Word of mouth was the most popular source of information for the exhibition. Around 15% of respondents chanced upon the exhibition. Around 13% found out about it from specialist art/craft publications.
- Around 36% of all respondents indicated that they had a smartphone and a third of those that did, downloaded the *Lost in Lace* app and rated it. Of those that rated the app, 70% thought that it was Very Good or Good.
- 95% of all respondents felt that their overall experience of the exhibition was either Very Good or Good.
- Only 15% of respondents were 65 or over, while 23% were under 25. Around 13% were male, while 8% considered themselves to have a disability.

**Curatorial Innovation**

A significant ambition of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery was to present an exhibition of contemporary art that was different from the more traditional regional, historical, and period art collection exhibits for which they are more commonly known. Findings demonstrate a significant shift in visitor expectations of BMAG

- Just over a quarter of all respondents felt that *Lost in Lace* was not the kind of exhibition they would expect to see at BMAG.
- A large percentage of respondents (55%) were motivated specifically by their interest in the art form to attend the exhibition.
- For 3% of all respondents, this exhibition was their first arts/cultural event. Using the total number of visitors this equates to around **1,200** unique individuals.
- Only one in five of all respondents had been to another exhibition organised by the Crafts Council; the exhibition therefore extended the reach of the CC.
- Around half of all respondents felt that the exhibition had inspired them to learn more about lace/the artists.
- The majority of respondents found the object information useful and felt that the handling samples enhanced their experience of the exhibited work.

The Executive Director, Crafts Council, and the Exhibitions Manager, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery have testified to the impact of *Lost in Lace*:

'Fifty:Fifty presents an excellent opportunity for an organization to work with the Crafts Council on

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developing and presenting a high-quality contemporary exhibition focusing on craft. The first Fifty:Fifty partner was BMAG and the resultant exhibition – *Lost in Lace* – was a daring and thought-provoking exploration of contemporary textiles. It received double the number of visitors predicted and hopefully paved the way for more contemporary craft exhibitions at BMAG.’ [2]

Executive Director, Crafts Council.

‘The exhibition *Lost in Lace* was an absolute success – ambitious, risk-taking, critically acclaimed, hugely exceeding its visitor targets and widening the audience for contemporary textile practice. This could only have been possible through strong, creative and supportive partnerships, and Fifty:Fifty was the ideal partnership for achieving this. BMAG immensely valued the opportunity to collaborate with the Crafts Council through Fifty:Fifty, to shape, produce and present *Lost in Lace*. The partnership enabled us to work together as a team, sharing skills, experience and resources to go beyond our usual capacities to deliver something exceptional and which really engaged and excited audiences beyond their expectations’. [2]

Exhibitions Manager, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[1] *Lost in Lace Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery Report* (Earthen Lamp, March 2012) – see REF2014 Millar (Staff Ref: 873) **Output Identifier: 882** Supporting Portfolio

[2] <http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/collection-and-exhibitions/exhibitions/fifty-fifty-programme/>

[3] Annabelle Campbell (Crafts Council) and Andy Horn (BMAG), ‘A Tale of Two Halves’ *Arts Professional*, 30 April 2012 <http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/feature/tale-two-halves>

[4] <http://www.creativetimes.co.uk/articles/lost-in-lace-a-tale-of-craft-and-collaboration>

#### [5] Exhibition Reviews:

Caroline Roux, *Crafts* Sept/Oct 2011, Issue 232, p. 104

Corinne Julius, *Blueprint* Jan 2012, Issue 310, p. 78

Jo Hall, *Embroidery* Jan/Feb 2012. Vol. 63, p. 56

Rachel Campbell-Johnson, *The Times, Saturday Review* 24 Dec. 2011, p. 22

Domusweb - <http://www.domusweb.it/en/news/2011/11/03/lost-in-lace.html>

Crafts Council – Crafts - <http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/crafts-magazine/reviews/view/2012/newsarticle-201201041613-4f047a91b8f62?from=/crafts-magazine/reviews/list/2012/>

**N.B.** All weblinks were accessed and accurate on 26 Nov. 2013