

**Institution: University College London**

**Unit of Assessment: 34A - Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory: History of Art**

**a. Context**

The Unit's research delivers multiple benefits to non-academic audiences both nationally and internationally, in line with UCL's broader commitment to engage directly with external organizations and the wider community. Interactions with non-academic groups enable us to raise public awareness of our art historical, theoretical and practical research so as to enrich and contribute to cultural life and our common artistic heritage. The Unit is committed to developing public debate about art and its histories (e.g. in relation to geo-politics, to ecology, to science and technology). Several of our research specialisms, in particular in **contemporary art, material studies** and **preservation**, have proven highly suited to delivering strong impacts in collaboration with a wide range of external partners, both locally and globally. We have two main groups of beneficiaries, each of which may be subdivided into numerous distinct (but sometimes overlapping) user groups: 1. A *general public* who benefit from our efforts to protect and promote national and international artistic and cultural resources and, more specifically, from our delivery of learning experiences via open public events including exhibitions, conferences, screenings, panels, artist's interviews, lectures, broadcasts and gallery talks. 2. A broad group of our *professional partners*, made up of practitioners, curators, conservators, museums and gallery professionals and others, whose needs we seek to address particularly through collaborative projects and partnerships with them. By working with professional partners based in public and commercial spheres we have delivered further benefits to their own non-academic audiences in both the UK and abroad.

**b. Approach to impact**

Our approach to impact is underpinned by a twofold commitment: firstly, to transferring our expert knowledge, skills and experience in support of the preservation and promotion of cultural and artistic resources and heritage; and secondly, to generating new ways of thinking about art and its histories, and making these accessible to as wide a non-academic audience as possible. By sharing our knowledge of these topics we aim to engage non-academic audiences with important socio-cultural and aesthetic questions about our material and cultural heritage. This involves:

**1. Generating exhibitions, catalogues and related activities:** over the REF period, the generation of exhibitions drawn from our research specialisms has proven to be our most effective means of transferring specialist knowledge to non-academic audiences. Several Unit members have worked as curators in collaboration with museums and galleries: indeed we have, in total curated more than 14 exhibitions in the UK and abroad since 2008; curatorial work has come to be at the very heart of our approach to impact and a key driver of our Impact Strategy. Examples of **curated exhibitions** range from the small-scale *Nameless: Anonymous Renaissance Drawings*, which brought anonymous drawings from the British Museum to the regional gallery at the Moray Art Centre, Scotland (Wright, 2011), to larger politically engaged exhibitions such as *Figures and Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography* (Garb, 2011) at the V & A London (see case study 34A-GAR). In 2012, a student-led postgraduate initiative called The International New Media Gallery ([inmg.org.uk](http://inmg.org.uk)) was set up as an on-line curatorial project accessed through the departmental website with the support of the Visual Resources Unit. Curatorial projects have allowed us to extend the geographical reach of our engagement with museum partners and their audiences both within the UK (e.g. *Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation. Demos*, Nottingham Contemporary, 2010) and beyond (*Zones of Conflict. Demos*, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York 2008-2009). Innovative curatorial methods have been critically acclaimed: *Sigmar Polke: We Petty Bourgeois!* (Lange-Berndt et al, Kunsthalle Hamburg, 2009-10), for example, received the Exhibition of the Year Award from the International Association of Art Critics (German Section). Exhibitions have been highly effective in expanding the reach of our research through public programming, wide press coverage and large visitor numbers, as well as enabling us to build strong partnerships with public institutions (e.g. Fer's collaboration with the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh - see case study UCL34A-FER). **Exhibition catalogues**, produced as an essential part of curatorial practice in partnership with host institutions, make underpinning research available to a wide non-academic audience. Since 2008, 10 catalogues have been produced by Unit members for their own curated exhibitions, and more than 80 catalogue essays have been contributed to exhibitions curated by others. Expert knowledge is also transferred through our **provision of**

**consultancy** on exhibitions e.g. Garb's major role as consultant curator for *Gauguin: Maker of Myth* (Garb, Tate Modern 2010-11) and F. Schwartz's consultancy for the MOMA Bauhaus exhibition (2009).

**2. Generating public activities and events and media involvement:** We have regularly run and contributed to public events specifically designed to raise awareness amongst both general and specialist audiences of current issues in art history and debates in contemporary art. Many of these have been organized under the auspices of the **Centre for the Study of Contemporary Art (CSCA)**, set up in 2008 and allocated Dean's Funding of £5000 per year in 2012. The Centre has become a key platform for impact; to date it has generated 82 public events, 35 of which were run in collaboration with external institutions. These included public institutions like Tate, INIVA, V&A, Camden Art Centre, as well as commercial galleries like Hauser & Wirth (see [www.ucl.ac.uk/art-history/events/archive-of-events](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/art-history/events/archive-of-events)). Examples of CSCA public engagement activity include: 'East Art Map' (James and S. Schwartz UCL June 2012), a public symposium on documentary histories of the Ex Eastern Bloc, organized in partnership with the gallery Calvert 22. A series of symposia on Hesse, Applebroog and Barlow showcased Unit specialisms in women's art practice (sponsored by Hauser and Wirth); international conferences included *Eco-Aesthetics: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Demos, March 2013). All events have been fully booked, with an average of 150 attendees from beyond the university, including artists, curators, critics and members of an interested but non-specialist public. To maximise the reach and impact of all CSCA events, outputs are made available as re-usable resources accessible via the UCL History of Art website as well as, where possible, the websites of collaborating bodies. Since its inception, the Unit has provided funds totalling £14,000 to support the CSCA programme, with most public events offered free of charge to a large general audience. Researchers across the Unit are also contribute to a wide range of media outlets, including TV, radio and various on-line and digital channels, as well as the art press eg *Artforum*, *Art Monthly* and *Art Review*, plus blogs *FAD* and *Preserved!*

**3. Cross-disciplinary collaborations and non-traditional partnerships:** Individual staff are encouraged to take advantage of institutional support for innovative inter-disciplinary projects: as part of UCL's commitment to support and showcase engagements with external organisations, a UCL Grand Challenges for Sustainable Cities Grant of £5000 was awarded to Taws (PI) to set up a project titled *Ephemeral Cities: Sustainable Research into Non-Sustainable Urban Objects*. Run in collaboration with UCL's modern language and architecture departments, this involves workshops, public lectures, and development of a web presence. Developments in core research have enabled us to take new specialisms into a number of exciting new areas yielding rich benefits: innovative research on the relationships between the histories of art, science and medicine, for instance, has led to especially strong partnerships with museums such as the Natural History Museum and the Hunterian Museum. The AHRC-funded *Culture of Preservation Network* (Fend, Lange-Berndt) has organized major public events providing forums for debate about the preservation and display of biological and taxidermic specimens in Natural History Museums and other collections, setting up a series of workshops bringing together curators of zoology, taxidermists, filmmakers, and artists. Other events involved the Hunterian Museum London and the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, and a conference on the 'Ethics and Politics of Specimens on Display' was held in May 2012. *Preserved!* received a Wellcome Trust grant (£4900, July 2013) to fund a further collaboration (*The Congress for Curious People*) with Morbid Anatomy and Strange Attractor.

**4. The transfer of specialist knowledge and expertise to art professionals:** These cross-disciplinary developments in material studies have built on the substantial impacts and multiple partnerships achieved by the Painting Analysis Unit and its involvement in a variety of different Museum Conservation Departments (see UCL34A-SHE). The Unit's work on the care and conservation of artworks has provided an important vehicle for delivering and maximizing the non-academic impacts of its research by communicating its findings to professionals both in museums and in the art trade. The benefits of the Unit's research are further realised through **membership of advisory boards and networks:** Garb, for example, is a facilitator on the curatorial programme for young African curators run by Center for Contemporary Art, Lagos (2013) and Demos, The International Curator's Network (2013). In addition, we participate in a range of activities enabling the transfer of our specialist knowledge to major public institutions and relevant policy-making organizations. These include membership of the Steering Group of the Collections Network, a new confederation of museums, galleries and archives in London (Mills, 2013-); and of Tate Council (Fer, 2010-), Tate Collections Committee (Fer, 2012-), and the Mellon-funded Panza Collection

Initiative on modern ethics of conservation, Guggenheim Museum New York (Fer, 2011-2013).

### c. Strategy and plans

The Unit will continue to support existing impact initiatives, driven by our commitment to generating topical critical debate stemming from research produced in the Unit and to sharing the fruits of our research with other specialists outside of the University context, as well as with a broader non-specialist public. As well as maintaining our current, productive relationship with existing partners and stakeholders (the general public, artists, curators, museum and other art professionals), we plan to create the conditions in which our collective responsibility to public involvement can best be put into practice. To these ends, we plan to:

1. Seek new opportunities to create partnerships with both public and private organisations, to reach non-academic audiences outside the University, and to continue to develop collaborations across and between disciplines as a means to seed links with new partners and audiences.
2. Ensure that the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Art continues to build on its current success and expands its programme (with Faculty support) to reach out to new communities.
3. Build on the proven effectiveness of curatorial work as a vehicle for impact by encouraging individuals and groups within the Unit to collaborate with external organisations to create exhibitions in the UK and abroad. We will support staff to enter into these kinds of partnership, for example by allowing some flexibility in negotiating teaching timetables in the light of exhibition schedules. We are already in the preliminary planning stages of several exhibitions with a diverse range of partners.
4. Develop the full impact potential of material studies through a number of key initiatives. Building on the success of the Painting Analysis Unit, we are in the process of transforming and integrating this area in the light of Richardson's core research. We aim to build more direct exchanges with the Conservation departments of public Museums: two collaborative projects with the Conservation and Conservation Science Departments at The British Library have been confirmed. We also intend to build stronger links with the Institute of Making (based in the Engineering Faculty at UCL) to organise jointly-run events in their impressive, specially designed space and amongst the unique collection of their Materials Library and MakeSpace Workshop. We plan to apply for a UCL Beacon Bursary public engagement grant for the purpose of funding a series of events on the ethics of conservation and 'heritage science' during 2014.

**In order to achieve these goals**, we intend to appoint a member of staff as Impact-Mentor (I-M) to advise colleagues on best practice and to help develop projects with impact potential. The I-M will join the Departmental Research Committee and, with administrative assistance, develop systems to collect data in order to monitor and maximize impact activities. We recognise that delivering impact by curating exhibitions, for instance, is not suited to everyone's research; however, part of the I-M's remit will be to ensure the generation each year of initiatives able to yield major non-academic impacts. The Research Committee will pay attention to the balance between impact and commitments to research and teaching by factoring in impact-led activities to workload models and taking these into account in the allocation of sabbatical leave. Ensuring balance between teaching, research and impact will become a formal part of staff appraisal.

### d. Relationship to case studies

Two of the submitted case studies focus on exhibitions curated by members of the Unit. Both 34A-GAR (**South African** Photography) and 34A-FER (**Hesse: Studiowork**) show, in different ways, how exhibitions have been a main driver of our impact and have enabled specific bodies of research to be effectively communicated to large audiences both nationally and internationally. Both demonstrate (i) how sustained collaboration with external partners and organisations has made possible multi-faceted projects that maximise benefits for many different audiences on a global as well as a local scale; (ii) how important research questions can both inform and be embedded in the curatorial process and made visible in the material evidence of the exhibition and its organisation; and (iii) how, amongst numerous benefits, the exhibition format and related activities can generate critical debate and bring aesthetic, material and political issues to the attention of large non-specialist audiences, as well as specialist art professionals. 34A-SHE (**Painting Analysis**) describes the significant impacts of our research on material studies, both in terms of our specialist transfer of skills and knowledge and of galvanising general public interest in discoveries made through the analysis of paints and pigments in historical works of art. All three case studies have helped us to devise our strategy for the effective delivery of impact in the future.