

Institution: University of Manchester
Unit of Assessment: 34 (Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory)
Title of case study: Exhibiting Surrealism to the Public
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The case study focuses on exhibitions and artistic collaborations undertaken by the Centre for the Study of Surrealism and its Legacies. It demonstrates an impact on cultural life arising from the presentation of cultural heritage, as well as influence on creative practice. The exhibitions, co-curated by David Lomas (Centre Director), drew upon the Centre’s academic research to enrich public understanding of surrealist art and ideas. Both exhibitions exceeded their attendance targets and elicited a strongly positive public reaction; they have also had a lasting impact on the galleries’ approach to exhibition making. Collaboration generated new ideas and directions for the artists concerned.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The impact is based on research on Surrealism conducted at Manchester since 1995, when Lomas joined the university. As one partner in the AHRB Centre for the Study of Surrealism and its Legacies (2002-07), Manchester gained a reputation for innovative Surrealist research. Other contributors include affiliated research associates: Anna Dezeuze, James Boaden, Julia Kelly, and Samantha Lackey.</p> <p>The Centre has provided an umbrella for research that is varied and far-reaching, as evidenced by material published in its online journal, <i>Papers of Surrealism</i>, and the work of the eight postdoctoral researchers associated with the Centre at Manchester since its inception. The research programme of the Centre is organised around a number of themes. With Tate’s involvement in the Centre, one objective has been to develop new approaches to display and exhibition of Surrealism. Areas of research most directly pertinent to the public outputs examined in this case study are:</p> <p>Surrealist Legacies. The intellectual and artistic legacies of Surrealism have been a core research topic. The eclipse of modernism in the visual arts witnessed the re-emergence of concerns with the body, desire and subjectivity that resonate strongly with Surrealism (3.2, 3.3, 3.6). The artistic and intellectual legacies of Surrealism are central to Lomas’s work up to and including his most recent book, <i>Simulating the Marvellous</i> (2013), the research for which preceded and fed into the exhibitions described in the case study. Dialogue with artists is another means by which the Centre has explored the multivalent insertions of Surrealism in contemporary visual culture. Collaborations hosted by the Centre have enriched the respective artists’ understanding of Surrealism, altering the direction of their work in some instances, whilst their creative insights have been a spur to further academic research. Working with the artist Mark Dion caused us to look at the historical Bureau of Surrealist Research, and Dion’s work inspired by this continues to intrigue museum visitors. Similarly, Surrealist automatic writing experiments inspired a new performance staged by the artist Ron Athey.</p> <p>Surrealism & Sexuality. Surrealism purported to emancipate desire. Whilst eroticism has been given extensive coverage within surrealist scholarship, it has mainly been from a normative viewpoint. Same-sex desire - an issue far more contentious for the Surrealist group - has not received comparable attention (3.1, 3.4, 3.5). The Centre’s AHRC-funded project on “Surrealism and Same-Sex Desire” (2009-12) aimed to redress this neglect. New perspectives on Surrealism emerged from comparative case studies of Surrealist reception in England, the United States, and Australia, disputing the prevailing view that these countries produced only watered down imitations of a more radical French Surrealism (3.4). In these settings, Surrealism offered a cultural space and a visual language in which desires and identities outside heterosexual norms could be articulated and affirmed. A Harvard workshop (2009) initiated dialogue between Surrealist experts, queer theorists, and historians of homosexuality. By coining the term ‘queer surrealism’ the project has irrevocably changed perceptions of Surrealism and shaken up surrealist studies. David Lomas, Charlie Miller, and Joanna Pawlik from AHVS were key participants on the project.</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

3. References to the research (AOR – Available on request)**i. Publication list**

- 3.1. Chapter in edited book - 'The *Metamorphosis of Narcissus: Dalí's Self-Analysis.*' In *Salvador Dalí: A Mythology*, edited by Dawn Ades and Fiona Bradley, pp.78-100. Exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1998-99. (AOR)
- 3.2. Book - David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity.* Yale University Press, 2000. (AOR)
- 3.3. Chapter in edited book - 'Omnipotence of Desire: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis and Hysteria.' In *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, edited by Jennifer Mundy, exhibition catalogue, Tate Modern and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2001-02, 55-76. (AOR)
- 3.4. Journal article - 'James Gleeson's Desiring Production', *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 6 (Autumn 2007), 1-38. (AOR)
- 3.5. Book - David Lomas. *Narcissus Reflected: The Myth of Narcissus in Surrealist and Contemporary Art.* The Fruitmarket Gallery, co-published with Reaktion Press. 2011. (AOR)
- 3.6. Book - David Lomas, *Simulating the Marvellous: Psychological Medicine, Surrealism, Postmodernism.* With contributions by Jeremy Stubbs. MUP, 2013. (AOR)

ii. Evidence of quality:

The AHRC's final report (2009) gave an overall assessment of 'outstanding' (the highest grade) for the initial period of research centre funding until 2007. Publications have been brought out by major academic presses (Yale, MUP) and museums (Tate, Metropolitan Museum of Art).

4. Details of the impact**Context**

The Surrealism Centre afforded a context in which academic research was able to inform the exhibitions and artistic collaborations described. Received views about Surrealism were challenged, and new, inventive approaches to display were adopted, thus animating gallery spaces and encouraging more active audience engagement. Through collaboration with the Centre, major contemporary artists were led to discover in Surrealism a fruitful source of inspiration for their creative practice (5.1, 5.2).

- i. ***Subversive Spaces: Surrealism and Contemporary Art*** (2009) Whitworth Art Gallery; Compton Verney, Warwickshire; Sainsbury Centre, UEA. Visitor total: 72,922.

Pathways to Impact

Subversive Spaces was developed with the Whitworth Art Gallery as a flagship, ambitious loan exhibition. It adopted the rubrics of inner and outer space in order to trace two distinct itineraries from Surrealism to contemporary art. A key section dealt with themes of interiority and psychic disturbance, drawing extensively on Lomas's research into Surrealism, psychoanalysis and hysteria. The exhibition explored commonalities between Surrealism and more recent art.

Reach and Significance

- i. The Whitworth's visitor numbers (49,966) represented a huge increase on the same period in previous years. The Gallery's report notes that *Subversive Spaces* 'showed an increase in the 25-45 age group (31%), a target group we are keen to increase'. (5.7)
- ii. Louisa Buck, on BBC Radio 4's "Front Row", commented: "What's so good about this show is it is very, very well curated." *Manchester Confidential* reported "This is the Manchester art scene pushing its limits, eliminating them, and providing something at international level". Visitor book comments were highly appreciative. The exhibition was included in *The Independent's* Five Best around the Country, *The Art Newspaper's* Pick of the Week, and *The Times'* Critics' Choice. (5.7)

Mounting an exhibition on this scale and ambition has transformed the Whitworth's approach to exhibitions and its public perception. According to the Director, 'the process enabled the Gallery to develop a new mode of academic engagement, which culminated in an internationally significant exhibition'. (5.9) Other impacts:

Impact case study (REF3b)

- a. The gallery was led to develop a wholly new system for managing loans. (5.7)
- b. A downloadable pdf self-guided visit pack for teachers and students was produced that was so successful the gallery's Learning Team now produces similar resources for every major exhibition. (5.7)
- c. The complex planning and design led to new guidance protocols for curators. (5.7)
- d. *Subversive Spaces* was followed by other cutting-edge shows that moved the Whitworth centre-stage in Manchester's contemporary cultural scene. (5.7)

At each of the venues, educational programming and outreach activities targeting groups within local communities were scheduled: their success is a notable feature of the final project report. (5.7)

ii. ***Narcissus Reflected*** (2011) Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh. Visitors: 30,003 (exceeding target figure of 25,000).

Pathways to Impact

This exhibition was a main outcome of the Centre's AHRC-funded project on Surrealism and sexuality. The Narcissus subject - a vehicle for homoerotic desire in Surrealist and more recent art - allowed the research to be presented in a format that was accessible to a public audience. Careful selection and arrangement of works enabled viewers to appreciate meanings and make connections themselves.

Reach and Significance

1. Visitors' book comments demonstrate the excitement felt by visitors. (5.6) The gallery's report to its funders noted, 'the exhibition attracted audiences who may not otherwise come to the Gallery... visits to the website for *Narcissus Reflected* were up 22.9% on the same time last year to 13,777 visits... Facebook referrals are up 53% at 358 visits and Twitter has seen the most impressive jump in visit referrals'. (5.6)
2. The gallery noted increased donations compared with equivalent periods. Bookshop takings during the exhibition were £23,778, far higher than the target of £17,000 as well as for previous exhibitions. (5.6)
3. The exhibition was extensively and appreciatively reviewed in the local and national press as well as in art journals: for example, 'this is a great show of ideas, rich and complex' (*Independent on Sunday*); 'a clear and careful show... the results are both visually intriguing and highly scholarly' (*The Times*). (5.5)
4. The exhibition gave Fruitmarket a new sense of its potential: through the mix of works, the loan of prestigious objects, the academic input, and the reaching out to new audiences. As staff attest, and newspaper comments agree, the exhibition changed Fruitmarket's profile relative to other galleries in Scotland. (5.4, 5.5, 5.6)

iii. **Artist collaborations**

Pathways to Impact

Owing to the reputation of his Surrealist Bureau (Manchester Museum, seen by an estimated 500,000-1,000,000 visitors since 2005 (5.8)), US artist Mark Dion was commissioned to produce a work responding to the Dada-Surrealist collections at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. German artist Gregor Schneider produced *Kinderzimmer*, an installation to accompany *Subversive Spaces*. Colm Tóibín declared *Kinderzimmer* 'the most exciting and compelling single space created anywhere for a long time' (5.3). After participation in a roundtable discussion (2010) hosted by the Surrealism Centre, in 2011 Ron Athey recruited a team of local artists and orchestrated a new performance on automatic writing in the university's Whitworth Hall.

Reach and Significance

Each case illustrates how dialogue with academic researchers has given fresh stimulation and new challenges to artists, influencing their practice and exposing it to different contexts.

Impact case study (REF3b)**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

All claims referenced in section 4.

- 5.1 AHRC end of funding report on The AHRB Research Centre for the Study of Surrealism and its Legacies. Reference: RC / PID number: 6351 / AID Number: 12835
- 5.2 An archive of past events can be found on the Surrealism Centre's website:
www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk
- 5.3 <http://www.colmtoibin.com/content/gregor-schneider?page=2>
- 5.4 Fruitmarket Gallery – unpublished 'Terra Foundation for American Art Final Exhibition Report'
- 5.5 Fruitmarket Gallery – unpublished 'Report to the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne'.
- 5.6 Fruitmarket Gallery – 'Narcissus Reflected – Exhibition Report'
- 5.7 Whitworth Art Gallery, 'Subversive Spaces – Final Project Report', January 2010 (this includes reports from Compton Verney and the Sainsbury Centre)
- 5.8 Letter from the Head of Collections, Manchester Museum.
- 5.9 Letter from the Director of Whitworth Art Gallery and Manchester Art Gallery.