

Institution: Plymouth University
Unit of Assessment: 34
Title of case study: Madness and Modernity: Mental Illness, Psychiatry and the Visual Arts in Vienna 1900
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>From 2004 to the present, Gemma Blackshaw (Reader in Art History at Plymouth, 2002-present) has worked on the relationship between mental illness, psychiatry, and the visual arts in Vienna 1900. Through exhibition, a non-specialist book, film, and associated social media platforms, this work has reached and responded to audiences outside academia, including mental health communities. It has generated new knowledge, interpretations and approaches to the history and study of mental illness. It has encouraged international public discourse on how society used to engage with the mentally ill, and how we continue to engage with this community 100 years on.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Blackshaw's work began with her role as co-investigator on an AHRC-funded 4-year major research project 'Madness and Modernity: Art, Architecture and Mental Illness in Vienna and the Habsburg Empire, 1890-1914', working with Leslie Topp (Birkbeck) and Sabine Wieber (now University of Glasgow) as research associate. The project was rated A* by the AHRC, the anonymous expert reviewer remarking: 'We have here an enterprise with the potential for serving as a model for future interdisciplinary research.' The project was funded from 2004-08 and resulted in outputs that stretch across the RAE and REF periods of assessment, including multiple articles in peer-reviewed journals (eg. Blackshaw, 2007), a conference funded by the British Academy and the Wellcome Trust (2007), a co-edited collections of essays (Blackshaw and Wieber, 2012), and two exhibitions (2009-10). Since the exhibitions, Blackshaw has worked independently on issues related specifically to the visual arts in Vienna.</p> <p>The turn of the 19th into the 20th century was a momentous time in the history of the city of Vienna, seeing its rapid development into one of Europe's leading centres for modernism. Political, economic, and social change brought about unprecedented innovation in such fields as psychiatry and the visual arts. The project established the formative links that existed between these two 'distinct' fields. Vienna was the home of Freud, who dominates our understanding of modern European culture. The project demonstrated that his contribution was in fact one of many new approaches to the mind and body, and associated ideas on sickness and health. It re-positioned Freud's work, re-mapped psychiatry in the 'City of Dreams', and identified new territories to explore: namely, the important relationships that existed between artists, psychiatrists and the mentally ill. Blackshaw has considered the various ways and contexts in which psychiatry, mental illness, painting, writing and caricature interacted in Vienna in 1900. With a focus on the 'mad' writer Peter Altenberg, she has reconsidered assumptions made about the links between madness, modernity, and the development of modernist portraiture and literature in the city at this time.</p> <p>The earlier phase of the research led to an invitation to Blackshaw and Topp from the Wellcome Collection to present the results through a major international loan exhibition 'Madness and Modernity: Mental Illness and the Visual Arts in Vienna 1900' in London in 2009. The aim of the exhibition was 1) to explore through a range of different objects the relationship between the development of modern psychiatry and modernism in the arts in Vienna 1900, and 2) to investigate how this relationship has influenced our attitudes to the mentally ill. The accompanying catalogue presented the research for a non-specialist readership. Critical acclaim for the exhibition led to a commission to present it in an expanded form at the Wien Museum, Vienna in 2010. The catalogue was translated into German but the first part of the English title – 'Madness and Modernity' – was maintained at the request of the museum director, to signal to Austrian audiences that this was a new and controversial 'outsider' perspective on Vienna 1900.</p>

An image of Altenberg was chosen to advertise both exhibitions, and from 2011 to the present Blackshaw has focused on this individual, reconstructing the history of his mental illness and its intersection with his image in painting and caricature. Despite his celebrity status in Vienna around 1900, Altenberg is not a well-known figure outside Austria and few of his works are available in translation. Blackshaw engaged in extensive archival research to re-trace his journey through psychiatric hospitals in order to contextualise his identity as Vienna's 'mad' writer. In bringing Altenberg to the attention of English-speaking audiences, and in translating unpublished correspondence between the writer, his family and friends, Blackshaw generated further knowledge on modernist circles and patient experience in Vienna circa 1900, proposing new interpretations of artistic identity formation. She presented this research at the College Art Association's annual conference in Los Angeles (2009), and in her co-edited collection of essays *Journeys into Madness* (2012). The 'Madness and Modernity' exhibitions contained film installations by the artist filmmaker David Bickerstaff. Blackshaw and Bickerstaff went on to collaborate on a feature-length documentary film devoted to Altenberg, which premiered at the Neue Galerie for Austrian and German Art, New York, and the Freud Museum, London (2012). Images of Altenberg will appear in Blackshaw's new, major exhibition *Facing the Modern: The Portrait in Vienna 1900* at the National Gallery London (2013-14). His work will also feature in Blackshaw's forthcoming single-authored book *Exhibiting Portraiture in Vienna 1900*, supported by the Leverhulme Trust.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- (1) Blackshaw, single-authored essay on 'Peter Altenberg: Authoring Madness in Vienna circa 1900', and, with Wieber, 'Introduction to *Journeys into Madness*' in Blackshaw and Wieber (eds), *Journeys into Madness: Mapping Mental Illness in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*, New York: Berghahn, 2012. This peer-reviewed book was the 14th volume of Berghahn Book's prestigious series devoted to Austrian and Habsburg Studies, sponsored by the Centre for Austrian Studies at the University of Minnesota.
- (2) Blackshaw, 'The Pathological Body: Modernist Strategising in the Self-Portraits of Egon Schiele', single-authored scholarly article, *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2007, 377-401. The peer-reviewed *Oxford Art Journal* has an international reputation for publishing innovative critical work in art history, and has played a major role in the recent rethinking of the discipline. Blackshaw's article has consistently remained in its Top 50 'most read' articles, which is generated on a monthly basis; in August 2013 it was listed at no. 24.
- (3) Blackshaw and Topp, *Madness and Modernity: Mental Illness and the Visual Arts in Vienna 1900/ Madness and Modernity: Kunst und Wahn in Wien um 1900*, co-edited exhibition catalogue, Surrey: Lund Humphries, 2009; Vienna: Brandstätter, 2010. Includes key essays by Blackshaw on 'Gustav Jagerspacher: Portrait of Peter Altenberg' and 'Mad Modernists: Imaging Mental Illness in Viennese Portraits'. Blackshaw and Topp cooperated on 'Scrutinised Bodies and Lunatic Utopias: Mental Illness, Psychiatry and the Visual Arts in Vienna, 1898-1914'. Since the 1980s, Lund Humphries has pioneered museum co-publications; it joined the Ashgate Publishing group in 1999, a leading independent press dedicated to publishing the finest academic research. Christian Brandstätter publishes the major exhibition catalogues devoted to modern Austrian and German art from the continent.
- (4) Blackshaw and Bickerstaff, *Peter Altenberg: The Little Pocket Mirror*, documentary film collaboration, 2012.
- (5) Blackshaw, single authored essays 'On Stage: The New Viennese' and 'Past Times and Present Anxieties at the Galerie Miethke' and 'The Appeal of the Artist: Self Portraits by Klimt, Schiele and Schönberg' in Blackshaw (ed), *Facing the Modern: The Portrait in Vienna 1900*, National Gallery Company in association with Yale University Press, 2013. The manuscript was peer-reviewed by the other authors, and by a further, independent expert in the field: Professor Clare Willson at the University of Glasgow.

(6) *'The Mad Objects of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Journeys, Contexts and Dislocations in the Exhibition "Madness and Modernity"'*, single-authored essay by Topp (Birkbeck university) reflecting on the co-curated exhibition in Blackshaw and Wieber (eds), *Journeys into Madness*, 2012.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research project was selected as the case study for the AHRC's website to illustrate excellence in the public engagement with the humanities (1). As Nobel Prize winner Eric Kandel acknowledged in his 2012 publication on Vienna 1900, *The Age of Insight*, 'Madness and Modernity' re-wrote a significant period in modern European history (2). Responses to the research as presented through the exhibitions were captured primarily in reviews (93 in the case of the London exhibition, with a circulation of 55,975,642 people; 126 in the case of the Vienna exhibition) and visitor book comments. The feedback highlighted the project's generation of new knowledge. For example, in an article for *The Lancet*, Joanna Bourke declared the London exhibition 'a "must see"... the exhibits have been carefully chosen, and many appear in the UK for the first time' (3). Both exhibitions provided visitors with the opportunity to engage with work that was completely new, enriching their lives. As one visitor commented: 'This exhibition is a knock out... The discovery of Raedler and Frau St. is gold indeed. And so much Egon Schiele too! I am gratified beyond belief.' 40,320 people, including mental health service users and professionals, visited the London exhibition. As one doctor working in psychological medicine remarked: 'It's just so wonderful. I have a real emotional high' (4). The Governor of The Retreat, a centre for those with mental health needs in York, was also struck, asking for copies of the exhibition labels: 'because of parallels with late 18th-century developments in the treatment of mental illness by Quakers' (4). The London exhibition was paired with another devoted to a contemporary artist who exhibited drawings reflecting upon her experience as a NHS patient. The dialogue between our look back at how society used to engage with the mentally ill in 'Madness and Modernity', and how society continues to engage with it 100 years on in 'Bobby Baker's Diary Drawings: Mental Illness and Me, 1997-2008', was very much a part of how the Wellcome presented the research. This was acknowledged in the public discourse. In *Nature* magazine, one writer reflected: 'Fears of living in a modern city created anxieties that resonate today, raising questions about our attitudes to mental illness and its treatment.' (5) In preparing for the exhibition, Wellcome staff had guidance on how to treat people with mental health problems in anticipation of the number of people with experiences of mental health issues that would be attracted to the exhibition. The staff used elements of 'Open to All', a training programme for gallery staff produced by the Department of Health. But it was not only the lives of exhibition staff and visitors that were enriched by the project: radio and blog coverage engaged audiences unable to visit London or Vienna. ABC Radio Australia devoted a programme on the exhibition for their series 'All in the Mind', broadcast on 25 July 2009 (6); Blackshaw's interview was used to develop a blog for their listeners. The Wellcome produced a film on the making of the exhibition which was uploaded on to their site and to You Tube: since appearing in 2009 the film has had 2,745 hits (7).

In terms of the ongoing enrichment of cultural life, the statement issued by the Wellcome on the project highlighted 'how it helped greatly to increase the breadth of Wellcome Collection's audience... cementing our reputation for mounting the kind of intelligent and accessible interdisciplinary exhibitions which have put us on the cultural map' (8). The impact of the Wellcome exhibition is also evident in collecting and display endeavours. For example, the work of Raedler, a schizophrenic, was shown to audiences in the UK for the first time in 'Madness and Modernity'; on closing, every drawing by Raedler exhibited was purchased by James Brett for his new public arts space 'The Museum of Everything' in London, devoted to self-taught artists living 'outside modern society'. In a broader sense, the exhibition had a demonstrable impact on cultural programming in London, igniting an interest in modern Viennese culture, and Blackshaw's ongoing research has been very much a part of this. Since 2009, she has been working on two exhibition projects: *Facing the Modern: The Portrait in Vienna 1900* for the National Gallery (2013-14) and *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude for the Courtauld* (2014). Such projects have led to a greater interest in the modern

period in Europe in UK film and broadcasting. Blackshaw was invited to collaborate with David Bickerstaff on the documentary film *Peter Altenberg: The Little Pocket Mirror*, which was shown at the Freud Museum London in 2012 and the Shakespeare & Company bookshop in Vienna in 2013 (9). Following up on her co-edited book *Journeys into Madness* (10), the BBC approached Blackshaw to advise on a series presented by Michael Portillo on 'Great Continental Railway Journeys' that engages with health tourism around 1900. The development of such projects, outside of the book and exhibition outputs that characterise the work of art historians in universities, shows the richness and relevance of the 'Madness and Modernity' research.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. For the AHRC's acknowledgement of the impact of the research project see: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-and-Events/News/Pages/AHRC-funded-research-leads-to-acclaimed-exhibition-at-the-Wellcome-Collection.aspx>
2. For an example of the impact of 'Madness and Modernity' on interpretations and approaches to Vienna 1900 see Nobel Prize winner Eric Kandel's *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain, from Vienna 1900 to the Present*, New York: Random House, 2012.
3. For a review of the exhibition by Joanna Bourke in *The Lancet* see: [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(09\)60968-5/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(09)60968-5/fulltext)
4. Visitor's book for 'Madness and Modernity: Mental Illness and the Visual Arts in Vienna 1900', property of Wellcome Collection, London.
5. For a review of the exhibition in *Nature* see Volume 458, No. 973 (23 April 2009).
6. For the ABC radio programme devoted to the contemporary resonances of the exhibition, including an interview with Blackshaw see: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/allinthemind/madness-modernity-and-those-nervous-times-vienna/3064276>
7. For the film devoted to the making of the exhibition see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4QVlpLaRS4>
8. Testimony from James Peto, Head of Exhibitions at Wellcome Collection, London.
9. For a review of *Peter Altenberg: The Little Pocket Mirror* see: <http://www.viennareview.net/on-the-town/on-screen/the-man-who-lived-at-the-cafe-central>
10. For Blackshaw's interview with Berghahn Books on Peter Altenberg see: <http://berghahnbooks.com/blog/interview-with-the-editor-gemma-blackshaw-co-editor-of-journeys-into-madness-mapping-mental-illness-in-the-austro-hungarian-empire>