

Institution: University of Sussex

Unit of Assessment: UoA 34 (Art History)

1. Context

Research in Art History at Sussex takes the art object as its primary focus of inquiry and this drives the twin goals of our strategy, developed to give our research wide impact. The first is to enhance cultural capital through curating exhibitions and installations; the second is to contribute to the understanding of heritage through both exhibition and research publications. The main non-academic user group of our research is the cohort of directors and curatorial staff at national and regional art and heritage institutions. Through them, our work has an impact on visitors to museums, galleries and sites of cultural heritage.

Despite being a department of only 11.5 FTE, Art History at Sussex has had a major effect on installations, exhibitions and collections as a result of invitations to join curatorial teams. We have worked on a number of curatorial projects at the Victoria and Albert Museum, including those devoted to the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries (Dennis and O'Malley; galleries opened 2009), the Europe 1600–1800 Galleries (Dennis and Howard; presently under way), the British Design exhibition (Howard; 2012) and the exhibition 'Tudors, Stuarts and the Russian Tsars' (Howard; 2012–13). Members of the Department have also been invited to work with curatorial groups at the Tate (Mellor), the Science and National Media Museums (Burbridge), the Louvre (Sargentson), the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery and Pavilion (Clarke and Mellor) and the Brighton Photo Biennial (Burbridge). Other strands of the Department's research affect wider cultural institutions. The research of James, for example, through close work on individual objects with curatorial and science teams in Athens, Ravenna and London, has had a direct impact on the knowledge and understanding of Byzantine and Western mosaics both in UK and European museums and at heritage sites in Greece and Italy.

The Department aims to set standards for innovation in the field. Through the conceptualisation of the Brighton Biennial, for example, Burbridge is generating self-reflexive approaches to exhibition practice by creating a relationship between the contexts in which photographs are displayed and the types of work they perform; at the Camden Art Centre, Mellor is widening the canon of art from the 1960s to the present; at the V&A, Dennis is forging new ways for galleries to present the social context of art objects. This work builds on the track record established by Sussex academics for curating exhibitions that underline the connections between art, artists and popular culture – e.g. Mellor's 'Henry Moore' (2010) and 'Radical Bloomsbury' (2012) exhibitions – and for opening new ways of contextualising a culture, e.g. Dennis' 'At Home in Renaissance Italy' (2006–07).

2. Approach to impact

Our strategic approach has been to enhance cultural capital and to contribute to the understanding of heritage through both individual and project-related research. To achieve this, we have drawn on our associations with museums, galleries and centres of culture and heritage, in the UK and Europe, because they have a deep impact on public understanding of the meaning and contexts of works of art. These bodies are the key users of our research in the first instance, and our associations with many of them are of long standing. We engage by participating in long-term research projects with clear objectives to enrich public (as well as scholarly) understanding of works of art through new or improved presentations of public collections or through the exhibition of a subject or an artist. Our strategy is to support these areas of impact by protecting research time as a regular part of the working week, by targeting grant funding, and by channelling funds from arts institutions for curatorial work through the Department, in order to provide concentrated research time during crucial periods of conceptualising and installing exhibitions.

The most sustained route to impact through long-term association with institutions and significant

Impact template (REF3a)

projects has been through the V&A, with which Sussex Art History has had an association for over 20 years. On our side, the partnership has freed one faculty member per year to undertake research that directly contributes to a V&A exhibition or installation. For example, Dennis' research as a V&A Fellow in 2008–10 contributed to the The Listening Gallery and other aspects of music in the Medieval and Renaissance Gallery project. Howard's V&A tenure contributed to the exhibitions and catalogues *British Design from 1948* (2012) and *Tudors, Stuarts and Early Romanovs* (Kremlin and V&A 2012–13). He is external advisor to the Europe 1600–1800 Galleries project (opening 2014) to which Dennis also contributes. Sussex research for these projects has significantly shaped public understanding of the objects and issues represented in the exhibitions and installations, which aim to challenge traditional ideas and attract wide public interest and significant press coverage. For each project, time was allocated as part of our core work.

A further long-term relationship that has led to impact is with the Tate Gallery. Mellor's work on, and exhibition of, *The Sixties Art Scene*, has led to new acquisition strategies by the Tate. In the 1990s this resulted in the acquisition of one of Pauline Boty's most iconic works and, in this REF period, a commitment to acquire works and the archive of Bruce Lacey. In terms of exhibitions, Mellor's research on Francis Bacon formed a central component of the *Francis Bacon* exhibition at the Tate in 2008. His research on Henry Moore contributed to the Tate's retrospective in 2010, establishing a fundamental relationship between aspects of popular culture and the production of the sculptor's most iconic images.

While the V&A and the Tate are our longest-running associations, we have more recently formed other partnerships to increase the impact of our research. For example, James' project on Byzantine mosaic with the British Museum and the Benaki Museum, Athens, has directly affected the way in which mosaic is presented at both institutions. Howard's project with the National Portrait Gallery on painting in Tudor Britain is changing the understanding of working practices among early-modern British painters and this has a direct impact on the presentation of portraits in the galleries. Burbridge's research on photographic technologies and practices is the catalyst for 'Revelations', the exhibition planned by MediaSpace, the National Media Museum rooms at the Science Museum.

Our aim to enhance cultural capital and the understanding of heritage also informs our approach to improving the perception of local collections. Mellor's research on Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell conceptualised the Brighton Museum's exhibition *Radical Bloomsbury, 1908–25* (2011). The importance of his work for public, as well as curatorial, understanding of the artists' connections to popular culture is demonstrated by comments in the exhibition's visitors' book and in articles in the national press. Clarke's research on British print culture, particularly early antiquarian print shops in Brighton, contributed directly to enhancing cultural capital at the Brighton Museum. Her research was a catalyst for the re-evaluation of the Museum's collection of topographical prints and she identified an overlooked JMW Turner, which led to Brighton Museum reconceptualising the collection in the gallery space. This, in turn, has had an economic impact, improving the value of the public collection. Clarke's work is also influencing the choice of objects presented in *The Keep*, a new archive hub designed for the public in Brighton and East Sussex, presently under construction.

3. Strategy and plans

Our strategy to improve cultural capital and contribute to the understanding of heritage through our curating and exhibition publications will be enhanced by building on the processes presently in place. We plan to work with institutions of art and heritage in the UK and abroad to improve our understanding of good practice concerning impact by engaging with institutions in order to develop ways of measuring impact. For guidance, we will look to the findings of the AHRC Cultural Value Project, presently under way.

On the curatorial front, the Department will develop very practical strategies to support individuals and to enable impact. We will work with the University's Contracts Department to set up workable, properly remunerated contracts for faculty curatorial work. Until recently, funding from museums

Impact template (REF3a)

and galleries for the input of faculty has been *ad hoc* and so often awkward for an individual scholar to negotiate. In future, we will draw on the input of the University's contract professionals, who advised us for the first time on time and remuneration for Burbridge's MediaSpace project. This strategy will give us appropriate contracts that will support the Department's work at the curatorial level and properly fund time for the research that underpins our work on culture and heritage projects. We also plan to build curatorial work with recognisable impact into the workload of faculty in a realistic manner, taking as a model the system put in place for Burbridge with both the *Agents of Change Biennial* exhibition and the MediaSpace exhibitions. Our aim is to allow more time for research and for engagement with culture and heritage institutions. In addition, in order to make the recording of impact easier, we will formalise methods for measuring impact, developed for the Biennial. Our objective is to work with institutions on impact issues from the start of each project. This strategy will fold the high-impact work of the Department into the core of our group and offer crucial support to members of the Department who have hitherto acted largely as lone negotiators, both with the institutions that use their work and with Sussex itself.

On the individual and project research front, we will continue to investigate subjects at the forefront of our discipline and cultivate relationships with the institutions that use our work. Arrangements for continued curatorial work are in place for the next few years. With established partners, Mellor is currently working with the Tate on exhibitions concerning Kenneth Clark and on questions of time and photography in relation to the Great War. Both are planned for 2014. Dennis is exploring an exhibition on domestic music-making with the V&A. Howard will continue as external advisor to the V&A on the Europe 1600–1800 galleries. The Department is building a more formal partnership with the Brighton Museum, based on our long-term relationship in curating projects and in supervising students. With new partners, Burbridge is currently completing work on 'Revelations' for MediaSpace at the Science Museum, for a 2014 opening. The Department is in the process of developing a research partnership with the Ditchling Museum, building on the relationship, launched originally to support the Department's MA in Art History and Curating.

4. Relationship to case studies

Both case studies exemplify the Department's overall strategy to enhance cultural capital and to contribute to the understanding of heritage through both individual and project-related research.

The *Bruce Lacey* exhibition developed directly out of Mellor's work on Lacey in the 1990s. Mellor's 1993 interview with Lacey, and the works of art that Mellor included in the Barbican exhibition *The Sixties Art Scene in London* (1993), brought the largely unknown artist to the attention of the British art establishment. The case study also demonstrates the benefits of long-term relationships, as Mellor's work prompted the Tate this year to decide to acquire a significant body of Lacey's corpus of work, building on a similar process of acquisition of Pauline Boty's work in 1999.

Burbridge's work on the Brighton Photo Biennial highlights the position of photography as an agent of change in political and social life; it relates directly to his research on the meaning of time and space in and for the exhibition of photography. This case study demonstrates how our local impact influences audiences' experience of curated spaces.