

Institution: King's College London
Unit of Assessment: 33
Title of case study: 'Art in Christianity' and 'Christianity in Art': A Collaborative partnership with the National Gallery
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The developing collaborative strategic relationship between Professor Ben Quash and the National Gallery stemming from Quash's research, in particular his unique exploration of religious art – or specifically 'Christian' art along the dual lines of 'Art in Christianity' and 'Christianity in Art' – has impacted on the approach of this world-leading cultural institution in a number of ways. It has been central to the Gallery's decision to make 'Art and Religion' one of its four lead research themes. It has been responsible for attracting significant financial support from donors impressed by the theological character of the questions Quash's research explores. It has resulted in the Gallery's commissioning of its most ambitious educational investment to date in a series of online educational resources; and it has influenced the Gallery's staging of its highly successful 2011 summer exhibition 'Devotion by Design'. Finally, Quash's research has impacted on how the National Gallery's education department organizes the public study of religion and art.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research underpinning the impact indicated above was undertaken by Quash, a Category A member of staff at King's College London since 2007, and currently Professor of Christianity and the Arts. The underpinning research has argued that a theological approach to the visual arts introduces questions and insights to the study of Christian works of art, both from the past and also contemporary art, that are not habitually articulated in art-historical approaches. In particular it outlines an approach to the study of Christian art, which makes two lines of enquiry central; the combination of <i>both</i> is genuinely innovative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first can be summarized as examining 'Art in Christianity'. It asks questions about the ecclesiastical settings, spaces for private devotion, and liturgical uses for which particular works of art were commissioned and made. This requires knowledge of church history, of theological writings and statements of the periods in question, the contents of sermons and other forms of popular piety – and the complex ways in which they feed into the art. There is some consideration of these questions in existing art-historical scholarship, but considerably less than there should be. • The second line of enquiry can be summarized as examining 'Christianity in Art'. This asks questions about how works of art themselves are 'doing theology'; that is to say, expressing, developing, modifying and transmitting Christian viewpoints in a distinctively visual medium. It asks how, for example, a painting might be considered exhortatory – having some of the characteristics of a sermon; how it might seek to move or instruct; and above all how not only its visual content (or subject matter) but its very medium permits the exploration of theological truth claims and commitments. <p>Both are brought together innovatively through Quash's application of what he terms a 'theological hermeneutic' that examines how theological meanings (both historical and contemporary) are generated, justified and transmitted in Christian tradition and then applied to the interpretation of works of art. This approach is unique and sensitive to both the devotional motivations that may have governed the making of such objects, but also to the value of later receptions of them by religious interpreters in subsequent periods of history. Paintings in the National Gallery collection that Quash has interpreted both theologically ('Christianity in Art') and in some cases also art historically ('Art in Christianity') include Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Virgin of the Rocks', an entrancing, intense exploration of how beauty unfurls in seemingly barren and unpromising surroundings that plays off the forbidding and the exquisite against each other. Quash has also applied this approach to Piero della Francesca's supremely poised 'The Baptism of Christ'. This work binds earth and heaven together, with the heavens rendered earthly by the water of baptism, which reflects them (bringing them down to earth); and Christ moving between both, his baptism not a necessity but an act of solidarity with humanity.</p>

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

- 1) 'The De-sublimations of Christian Art' in N. Llewellyn & C. Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime* (London: Tate Publishing, 2013)
This is a peer-reviewed main theological contribution to Tate's major scholarly and artistic appraisal of the idea of the 'Sublime' ('The Sublime Object') - a 3-year research project running from 2007-2010. <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/sublime-object>

- 2) 'Community, Imagination and the Bible' in N. Messer, & A. Paddison (eds.) *The Bible: Culture, Community, Society* (London: T & T Clark International, 2013)
This peer-reviewed essay is adventurous in its interdisciplinarity, working not only as a theological exploration of the arts, but across four different art forms (poetry, painting, drama and a modern art installation) – and in the service of a set of theological proposals for how the Bible may be re-appropriated in the Church today.

- 3) 'A Christian Crucifixion: Is the Cross a Symbol for Universal Human Experience' in N. Hepburn (ed.), *Cross Purposes: Shock and Contemplation in Images of the Crucifixion* (London: Ben Uri Gallery 2010)
This is an essay for the catalogue of a highly-acclaimed public exhibition.

- 4) A series of public lectures and talks subsequently disseminated online. All model how Quash's research has been translated into public lectures and educational resources with wide circulation, and demonstrate the fruitfulness of bringing theological questions to the interpretation of art. They include:
 - 'Art as a Theological Medium: An Integration Seminar' (Biola University, USA, March 2012)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPShCqJMau0>
 - What Space Can Show Us About God, (Biola University, USA, March 2012)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rfbyyknWSU>
 - 'Theological Aesthetics' (St John's Nottingham Timeline Project, 2012)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1WVevycW3k>
 - 'The "Desublimation" of Modern Art: A Theological Task?' (Gresham College, 30 March 2012)
<http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/seminar-thinking-theologically-about-modern-art>
 - 'God's Good Order and the Artist's Patterns' (Gresham College, 14 March 2013)
<http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/gods-good-order-and-the-artists-patterns>

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

In the Spring of 2008 Quash met with Nicholas Penny, the Director of the National Gallery, and presented to him the idea of a joint MA degree. This appealed to Penny for two reasons. First, it would provide the Gallery, with its world-leading collection of religious art, access to Quash's own research expertise in the area of theology. This is often deficient in art-historical approaches (and has been one of the reasons why the Gallery rarely collaborates with University departments of art-history – as it has its own art historians – but was keen on a collaboration with a Theology and Religious Studies Department). Second, Penny recognized that King's College London, at Department, School and College levels, had the resources and expertise to aid in generating high-quality online educational materials, which the Gallery was keen to adapt for its website at the time.

This initial contact led to further meetings between Quash, Penny and the full team of senior curators at the Gallery. At these meetings Quash put forward his unique two-fold research approach on which this impact case is based – the relationship between 'Art in Christianity' and 'Christianity in Art'. This resulted in the development of a joint MA, approved by King's College London and the National Gallery in 2009, in a signing ceremony involving King's Principal Rick Trainor and Nicholas Penny. (In the wake of this, in June of that year, Quash was interviewed on BBC1's Songs of Praise programme about teaching Christianity and the Arts to undergraduates in London, with footage of King's College London students being taught outside the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square (see Section 5.3.1).

Impact case study (REF3b)

Since then the collaboration, underpinned by Quash's two-fold research approach has transcended the MA degree and now can be divided into five distinct but overlapping types of impact. In the words of Susan Foister (5.1.1) the National Gallery's Deputy Director and Director of Public Engagement, the Gallery has been 'extremely pleased with the considerable public impact brought about by its innovative and fruitful collaboration with Professor Ben Quash and King's, and looks forward to its continuation'. Dr Jennifer Sliwka, Ahmanson Fellow in Art and Religion at the National Gallery, has credited Quash's expertise as having 'already yielded several innovative and pioneering projects' and looks forward to further 'joint ventures' (5.1.2).

Impact A

In 2010, the National Gallery identified 'Art and Religion' as one of its four central research priorities for the following 10 years. The Gallery explains the aims of the theme on its website: 'The Art and Religion research theme focuses on interpretation of paintings that are of sacred subjects, nearly all of which are Christian. Christianity became the predominant power shaping European culture after classical antiquity, inspiring artists and patrons to evoke the nature of these sacred mysteries in visual terms' (see 5.2.1).

This commitment to the theme of Art and Religion is largely the result of the ongoing collaboration of the Gallery with Quash. This has been summed up by Susan Foister: 'the engagement with Ben Quash has made an extremely important contribution to the Gallery's decision to initiate, to renew and to strengthen the topic of "Art and Religion" as one of its four main research themes and priorities in...the period covering the Gallery's current research strategy as presented to its board of trustees' (5.1.1). The Principals of the Ahmanson Foundation (the lead donor to the National Gallery in this area) also acknowledge the 'major impact' that Quash's research has had on the 'way the National Gallery has developed and expanded its work' in the area of art and religion (5.1.4), while Nicholas Penny, Director of the National Gallery, speaks of the 'real impact' Quash has had on the Art and Religion theme, which in turn has 'opened up all sorts of possibilities' for future collaboration (5.1.3)..

Impact B

Quash's research, in collaboration with the National Gallery, also fed into the way that the Gallery's major 2011 summer exhibition 'Devotion by Design: Italian Altarpieces until 1500' was curated. This included the way that the works in the exhibition were presented, hung above altar-like structures, with candle-like lighting, the accompaniment of liturgical music, and an altar cross. As Dr Jennifer Sliwka, Ahmanson Fellow in Art and Religion at the National Gallery has noted, Quash's expertise had a 'direct impact both on the exhibition display and the accompanying film' (5.1.2).

The feedback was impressive. 'So beautiful that it would be easy to miss the audacity of the installation', wrote Richard Dorment of the Daily Telegraph; 'one of the most beautiful exhibitions I have ever seen about the Quattrocento', said the presenter of Avant-Premières on France 2 Télévision). The related exhibition page was viewed 53,500 times, and the exhibition film was viewed 4,000 times online.

Quash was one of those mentioned in the acknowledgements section of the major 2011 catalogue of The Italian Paintings Before 1400 by Dillian Gordon (see 5.2.3). Quash's research was also incorporated in a National Gallery podcast about the exhibition, and a Radio 4 broadcast 'Sunday Worship: The Art of Worship', on 3 July 2011, live from St Martin-in-the-Fields. Timed to coincide with the National Gallery's summer exhibition, 'Devotion by Design', in this programme Quash spoke about the devotional significance of altarpieces (see 5.3.2).

Impact C

The National Gallery has commissioned a series of 10 short films on John the Baptist in art, written and presented by Quash and Dr Jennifer Sliwka of the Gallery, totalling just under an hour of material. This has been described by Dr Sliwka as 'the most ambitious investment to date by the National Gallery in online education' (5.1.2). The decision to commission this 'groundbreaking' podcast series (5.1.4) was born out of the Gallery's appreciation of the importance of Quash's research and teaching on Art as a Theological Medium, with its special focus on the figure of John the Baptist. Quash already has extensive experience of different mediums to disseminate research (see for example 5.3.3 and 5.3.4). As Susan Foister (5.1.1) has said, 'This is a major step beyond

Impact case study (REF3b)

the Gallery's existing programme of monthly podcasts and we see it as an important experiment in reaching a wider public with more sophisticated, deeper content, one that not only places Art and Religion at the centre of the Gallery's Public Engagement strategy, but is a new departure directly linked to the Gallery's evolving relationship with Ben Quash'.

Impact D

The Gallery has secured 10 years' worth of funding for a series of five 2-year post-doctoral research fellows in Art and Religion from the Howard and Roberta Ahmanson Fellowship in Art and Religion, which in the words of Susan Foister have arisen 'quite specifically from the Gallery's collaboration with Professor Quash', as the donors were deeply impressed by the particularly theological character of the questions Quash's research explores. As these donors have explained, Quash's research on art and religion 'validated' their funding of the National Gallery in this area (5.1.4).

Impact E

Quash's research outputs also impacted on the way that the National Gallery's education programme was developed around the 'Devotion by Design' exhibition. In particular it significantly influenced the way the Gallery's educational department is now looking more intentionally to address the historical and contemporary interests of religious 'audiences' for painting (see 5.1.2 and 5.2.1). Quash presented a paper at one of the Gallery's major public study days on the exhibition, and also presented at a private study day for international academics (also centred on the exhibition). The 'Art and Religion' theme has encouraged the Gallery to offer subsequent public study days on theological themes (see 5.2.4).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**5.1 Main corroborating statements (uploaded)**

1. Deputy Director & Director of Public Engagement, the National Gallery
2. Howard and Robert Ahmanson Fellow in Art and Religion, the National Gallery
3. Director of the National Gallery
4. The Principals, the Ahmanson Foundation
<http://www.theahmansonfoundation.org/>

5.2 Web links

1. National Gallery 'Art and Religion'
<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/art-and-religion/>
<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/art-and-religion/about-art-and-religion>
2. National Gallery 'Devotion by Design'
<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/devotion-by-design>
3. National Gallery, Dillian Gordon 'The Italian Paintings Before 1400'
http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/upload/pdf/Gordon_2011_Introduction.pdf
4. Study days on theological themes
http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on/calendar/saints-alive-student-study-day?utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Test%20-%20Landy%20student%20study%20day&utm_content=
5. Centre for the Arts and the Sacred at King's (ASK)
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/trs/research/ask/index.aspx>

5.3 Broadcasts and podcasts

1. Songs of Praise
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b001162c>
2. BBC, live from St Martin-in-the-Fields, timed to coincide with the National Gallery's summer exhibition 'Devotion by Design'
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0128hs4>
3. 'Reflections on Caravaggio' on BBC's 'The Essay', 14 July 2010; repeated 5th August 2011
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00swr1p>
4. 'Tracing Beauty', 8 January 2012, Radio 3
http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b018sqpk/Sunday_Feature_Tracing_Beauty/