

Institution: Oxford Brookes University

Unit of Assessment: 34 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

a. Context

The UoA's research demonstrates broad cultural, economic and public discourse benefits enabled through engagement, most notably, with communities of interest and place. These impacts map onto the research groups in UoA 34: ARP (Arts Research Practice; **Black, Cascella, Streffen, Warr**); SARU (Sonic Art Research Unit; **Cornford, Kubisch, Lee**); and SSRU (Social Sculpture Research Unit; **Kugler, Kurt, Sacks, Zumdick**). The principal non-academic user groups of the UoA's research are:

- Arts audiences with particular regard to live events (**Black, Cornford, Kubisch, Lee**), recordings (**Cornford**), exhibitions (**Black, Cornford, Kubisch, Kugler, Lee, Sacks, Warr**), public realm artworks (**Black, Lee, Sacks, Streffen**), participatory projects (**Black, Kurt, Sacks, Warr, Zumdick**) and social sculpture processes (**Kurt, Sacks, Zumdick**).
- Local constituencies and particular interest groups with regard to socially engaged arts practices, participatory and social sculpture projects (**Black, Kurt, Sacks, Warr, Zumdick**).
- Local Government Authorities in the UK and Europe (**Black, Sacks, Zumdick**)

The UoA's research is able to reach its beneficiaries by engaging with users of particular sites in a wide range of contexts e.g. allotments (Oxford; **Black**), City Centres (Hanover; **Sacks**), Heritage sites (Hadrian's Wall; **Streffen**), Rivers (Thames; **Warr**), engaging with Arts audiences through presentation of large-scale kinetic sculptures presented at festivals and outdoor events including popular festivals such as WOMAD (**Lee**); and changing users' experience of their surroundings through permanent and temporary public art commissions (Wolverton, Oxford, Greenwich; **Black**).

b. Approach to impact

Through the three specialist research units and the research planning process, staff have been encouraged and supported to develop their projects to include dissemination, public engagement and knowledge exchange activities. The development of the research unit structure within UoA 34 has assisted researchers to focus on outward-facing activity. Staff have made successful applications to Central University Research Funds and School of Arts (SoA) QR funds in support of their impact-related activities, particularly organising events that bring together academics, industry experts and members of the public. In September 2012 the SoA, of which UoA 34 is a part, appointed a Research Assistant with the remit to support the impact agenda across the three UoAs within the School (34, 35, 36).

Research unit activities

The Social Sculpture Research Unit (SSRU; www.social-sculpture.org) has developed projects with Municipal Authorities and the wider community including Ort Des treffens (Hannover; www.ortdestreffens.de). **Sacks** engaged with the citizens of Hannover asking the question 'What am I doing in the world?' The responses to this question were recorded and the audio was later relayed on a series of over 100 listening posts throughout the City. *Ort des Treffens* grew out of a dialogue with Gabriele Cicieor from the *Hannover Kulturburo* about developing a space for new vision in the City. **Kugler's** work with the Steiner archive has enabled him to develop a series of exhibitions that have had a broad impact internationally including public engagement work with the Steiner archives (Dornach). **Sacks' University of the Trees** (<http://www.universityofthetrees.org>) is developed as an alternative, mobile university that offers approaches for exploring the connection between imagination and transformation, between the poetic and the practical, and for developing new forms of creative action. It is a participatory project shaped by the frameworks developed by Sacks and the contributions of participants. The process is outlined at <http://www.universityofthetrees.org/about/how-it-works.html>. There are groups exploring these processes and participating in shaping the project in Berlin, Darmstadt, Exeter, Kassel, and Oxford.

The Sonic Art Research Unit (SARU; www.sonicartresearch.co.uk) has worked closely with non-academic organisations including OCM (Oxford Contemporary Music). **Lee's** large-scale performance work (*Siren*; 2004; *Chorus*; 2012) has been produced and promoted by OCM which is an Arts Council England (ACE) national portfolio organisation producing a series of live events throughout the year. OCM are co-producers of the annual festival of experimental composition and sound art; *audiograft* (described below); and have supported PGR students as developing artists including Blow and Ford. Between 2004 and 2012 **Lee's** work *Siren*, initially promoted by OCM, toured to 47 different venues, being performed 250 times to live audiences in the region of 10,000 people; many more have viewed the work online. Such was the demand for this work that a duplicate installation needed to be manufactured. The work was, for example, simultaneously presented in Tenerife and in New York in May 2008. During 2008 and 2009 one set of work was located in North America whilst the other toured Australia and New Zealand. *Siren* engaged with local constituencies in each location including Iowa, US; and Wellington, NZ; where local organisations developed educational projects around the work engaging students aged 7-13 with objectives including understanding of the way that sound travels from the rotating arms of the tripods. SARU has developed impact strategy by providing seed-corn funding for innovative projects including **Cornford's** *Binatone Galaxy* that was presented at ZKM, Karlsruhe (2012) as part of the biggest retrospective of Sound Art since *Sonic Boom* at the Hayward Gallery, London (2000). The impetus to take the research findings of the SARU to a popular audience is particularly evident in the *audiograft* festival. Founded by Dibley and Whitty (UoA 35) as Sonic Art Oxford in 2009 the event became *audiograft* in 2011 and has since been directed by **Cornford** and Whitty (UoA 35). The festival has received ACE funding (£45.5k, 2011-14) and has grown to attract international artists and a considerable audience locally and nationally, and international interest through the festival's online presence. *Audiograft* aims to develop new audiences and reach the broadest possible constituency for the innovative sound practices hosted by SARU. The festival uses Oxford's established venues for music and the visual arts and is collaboratively marketed by established partners: Oxford Contemporary Music (OCM), and Modern Art Oxford (MAO). The festival specifically aims to extend public awareness of the role of the auditory in cultural experience and everyday lives. SARU has undertaken a series of pilot projects in schools to test a series of resources exploring auditory awareness amongst pupils aged 7-11. ACE funded activities require a full evaluation following completion of the project, so *Siren*, *audiograft*, and associated projects have been thoroughly audited with regard to their interaction with audiences.

Arts research Practice (ARP) provides a focus for fine art practitioners **Black**, **Cascella**, **Streffan** and **Warr**. **Black**, **Streffan** and **Warr** step outside conventional gallery spaces to engage the audiences. **Black** has completed a series of public realm commissions from Barratt Homes (Wolverton; 2011-12); Oxford City Council (Rosehill; 2012); and Girlguiding UK (2009) in which she has engaged in public consultation with end users. **Warr** has, in particular, developed a project *River Runs* that includes academic collaboration with artists based at MIT and a series of consultations, dialogues and symposia including the Wet Symposium held in the River Thames that involved non-academic constituencies including the Environment Agency, the Canal & River Trust and the Outdoor Swimming Society.

Individual activities

Many of the research practices within UoA 34 lend themselves to interaction with non-academic users particularly the exhibition of work by **Cornford** and **Kubisch** at ZKM Karlsruhe (2012) as part of a major show of Sound Art also featuring work by Eastley (UoA 35); and **Lee's** touring Sound Art work *Siren*. Participatory projects have been developed by **Black**, **Sacks**, **Streffan** and **Warr** in a variety of contexts; **Black** worked with allotment owners and brewers in *Plot 16* a project co-produced with MAO; **Sacks** worked with the citizens of Hanover to create the previously described *Ort Des treffens* project; and works with the public through the development of social sculpture processes such as the *University of the Trees*; whilst **Warr** has developed a project that engages with diverse constituencies including the Environment Agency, Canal & River Trust and the Outdoor Swimming Society. Impact is embedded in the projects developed by staff in UoA 34 and is evaluated and assessed through reports to ACE, and end user feedback in the case of public commissions including **Black's** Rose Hill project commissioned by Oxford City Council.

Institutional support mechanisms

The University's RBDO (Research and Business Development Office) supports researchers in the dissemination and commercialisation of their work to achieve impact and to fulfil knowledge exchange commitments to funders. Eight staff and consultants advise on potential routes to commercialisation and knowledge exchange, development of commercial propositions, and engagement with external stakeholders including the public and business communities.

c. Strategy and plans

Impact enabling activities are a key element of the research planning process within UoA 34. Each researcher completes a three-year research plan outlining proposed outputs, applications for external funding and impact activities. Impact is a standing item on the School of Arts Research Committee Agenda.

A particular focus is to provide continued support for colleagues engaging with the public through site-based processes and by addressing issues that are current in public debate. Site based processes are addressed, for example, by **Kubisch's** public artwork *Rheinklänge* installed in Bonn from October 26th 2013 until December 31st 2014. This will give a broad public time to experience the work and be challenged by the way that it reshapes the experience of the soundscape of the Rhein. The experience **Kubisch** has in engaging the public through sound art will inform her mentoring of junior colleagues developing research projects. Issues in public debate are addressed through the project that **Steffen** is conceiving around drones and their uses, *dronology*. The political currency of the subject matter of this project will enable interaction with current debates beyond academia. Alongside **Warr's** *The Artists' Body* (Phaidon; 2000), these two projects are likely to form the basis of future case studies. **Warr's** potential case study will focus particularly on the impact her text has had on discourse and practice amongst artists and fine art audiences.

The research units will continue to provide support for staff engaged in impact activities. The SoA has provided support for each unit from QR funds (£3k per annum) specifically designed to support development costs for projects with non-academic end users.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies are indicative of the range of impact activities within the UoA. **Lee's** *Siren* has attracted a broad audience through presence at specialist Arts Festivals globally and Popular Music Festivals including WOMAD (2013). A key challenge is to ensure that the research practices involved in the creation of the work are communicated to audiences, and that they are able to move on from the sense of wonder often engendered by the works, to a greater understanding of the sonic environment. **Sacks'** participatory social sculpture processes, for example *University of the Trees*, seek to engage with the audience beyond a simple encounter with artwork, involving them in the shaping and development of the work.