

<p>Institution: University of Essex</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 34 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory</p>
<p>Title of case study: A Surrealist Exhibition in Vancouver: a New Context for Pacific North-western Native American Artefacts</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Professor Dawn Ades has dedicated much of her research to the history of Surrealism and in particular to the ethnographic interests of surrealist artists. In 2011 Ades used this research to inform her major exhibition of Surrealist art at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Through a consultation process involving local First Nations community representatives, Ades secured permission for the Gallery to use First Nations objects and established connections for the Gallery for future projects in this area. The popular and critical success of the exhibition resulted in over 100,000 visitors and greater reputation and credibility for the Gallery.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Dawn Ades has pioneered research into the broad ethnographic interests of Surrealism, paying special attention to objects collected and exhibited by members of the Surrealist group. Her work documents how, from the 1920s onwards, the Surrealist movement challenged prevailing assumptions about non-Western cultures. Ades has investigated how the Surrealists found strategies to question the imperialist and colonialist treatment of these cultures and their art. This research has informed her academic publications, her curatorial work, and her exhibition essays.</p> <p>Much of Ades' work on Surrealist interest in non-Western cultures has accompanied her activities as a curator. In 1995 Ades co-curated the London South Bank touring exhibition <i>Fetishism: Visualising Power and Desire</i>. The essay Ades published to accompany her exhibition ('Fetishism: Surrealism's Job', 1995) examined the Surrealist embrace of African, Oceanic, and American cultures, and explored the Surrealist movement's collection of non-Western objects. The essay also revealed the ways in which the Surrealist movement criticised contemporary 'fetishism', whereby Western 'fetishes' were equated with non-Western tribal objects and practices.</p> <p>In 2006 Ades co-curated London's Hayward Gallery's <i>Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and Documents</i>. The exhibition included Ethiopian Prayer Scrolls, Ivory Coast masks and African musical instruments juxtaposed with major Surrealist works by Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso. Ades' research for <i>Undercover Surrealism</i> also examined the alternative Surrealist publication edited by Georges Bataille, <i>Documents</i>, which included anthropological and ethnographic essays, collated by Bataille, which examined African, Oceanic, and American art and cultural objects. Ades edited and contributed a number of articles to a book accompanying the exhibition (2006). Her contributions to the book revealed the ethnographic interests of the dissident Surrealist authors involved with <i>Documents</i>.</p> <p>Ades further explored Surrealism's ethnography in her British Academy lecture of 2009. The lecture ('Surrealism and its Legacies in Latin America') explained Surrealism's openness to cultural difference and to the fertile exchanges between the movement's practices and cultural traditions outside the Western canon. In her lecture Ades argued against the view that the Surrealists were European invaders of Latin America who fabricated a version of Latin American culture that satisfied their own interests. Ades explained in her lecture how the Surrealists had a much more</p>

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respectful relation with contemporary and pre-conquest Latin American culture, and how Surrealism has influenced Latin American art since the 1920s.

Further research into the ethnographic dimensions of Surrealism has taken place under the aegis of the Centre for Studies of Surrealism and its Legacies, based at Essex and led by Ades for five years (between 2001 and 2006). The Centre launched an important online journal, *Papers of Surrealism*, which has published several articles addressing the ethnographic current in the movement. The Centre's research in Surrealism is on-going, with 'Surrealism beyond Europe' (including the Surrealists' ethnographic interest in the Americas) established as one of the Centre's four research themes. Ades continued her work with the Centre as its Co-Director until 2013.

3. References to the research

- Ades, D. (1995) 'Fetishism: Surrealism's job' in A. Shelton (ed.) *Fetishism: Visualising power and desire* London: South Bank Centre and The Royal Pavilion Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton, in association with Lund Humphries, London. ISBN: 9780853316770
- Ades, D., S. Baker, and F. Bradley (2006) *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and Documents* London: Hayward Gallery. ISBN: 9780262012300
- Ades, D. (2009) 'Surrealism and its Legacies in Latin America' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 167. DOI: 10.5871/bacad/9780197264775.003.0012
- Ades, D. (2011) *The colour of my dreams: The Surrealist revolution in art* Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery. ISBN: 978-1-895442-87-8
- Ades, D., R. Eder, and G. Speranza (eds.) (2012) *Surrealism in Latin America: Vivísimo muerto* Getty Research Institute. ISBN: 978-1-60606-117-6

4. Details of the impact

Ades' research in Surrealism and its ethnographic practices informed a major exhibition of Surrealism that she curated at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2011. Through the exhibition Ades' research helped to bring a variety of benefits to her partners at the Gallery. *The Colour of My Dreams* was the first comprehensive exhibition of Surrealism in Canada and broke new ground by exhibiting Surrealist work alongside Canadian First Nations objects that had once been collected by Surrealist artists. Ades' choice and curating of those objects was guided by her research in this area. The research also aided Ades' diplomatic efforts with First Nations community representatives, guiding the Vancouver Art Gallery's consultation process to secure permission to include First Nations objects in the exhibition. The result was a highly successful exhibition that established connections between the Gallery and First Nations groups, inspired future Vancouver Art Gallery projects in this area, attracted over 100,000 visitors, and helped increase the popularity and credibility of the Gallery.

First Nations diplomacy, securing permission for Vancouver Art Gallery

There is considerable sensitivity to use of First Nations objects in gallery exhibitions. At first the Vancouver Art Gallery project met with opposition, particularly to the proposal to include First Nations work in an exhibition of 'Western art'. This was seen as a neo-colonial appropriation of First Nations work that would emphasise the exotic elements of that work without attention to its meaning or function. In order to respect these sensitivities, the Gallery undertook an extensive

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consultation with representatives of the First Nations, artists, academics and anthropologists from the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. Ades contributed substantially to the consultation, using her research to inform the discussion of the way the Surrealists had respected First Nations objects and arguing that the exhibition could echo this respect. Ades also directed Vancouver Art Gallery staff to secure permission from those whose ancestral works were to be considered for the exhibition. As a result of Ades' diplomatic work the exhibition received approval from a range of communities sensitive to its proposed content [confirmed by a Professor involved in the consultation from Simon Fraser University, corroborating source 1].

This preparatory process was not only vital to the exhibition itself, but also had impact for the Gallery after the exhibition. Ades' collaboration with the Gallery was integral to bringing not just her expertise but also the expertise of those she identified as important contacts for the consultation process. The combination of her input and those of the First Nations representatives, artists, and academics that Ades brought to the consultation resulted in a significant learning experience for the Gallery and has prompted new activities in this area at the Gallery, as confirmed by its Chief Curator and Associate Director:

Equally significant was the learning that took place with staff of the Gallery as well as for other individuals who participated in the consultations. There was a remarkable sharing of knowledge that was generous and productive on all sides and has produced long-term relationships for the museum. These conversations also ignited an interest in this topic with several people furthering these ideas through other projects that are still in production – [Ades] was a catalyst.

Chief Curator and Associate Director, Vancouver Art Gallery

The Exhibition and its impact

'The Colour of My Dreams' was held at the Vancouver Art Gallery from 28 May 2011 to 2 October 2011. The exhibition featured 350 works by leading Surrealist artists including Salvador Dalí (*Lobster Telephone*), Max Ernst (*The Forest*), Joan Miró (*Photo: This is the Colour of My Dreams*) and Man Ray (*Emak-Bakia*). Alongside the Surrealist pieces, the exhibition featured a number of First Nations objects including a Kwakwaka'wakw headdress, two Yup'ik masks from Alaska, and a Haida feast bowl.

As noted by the Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, *The Colour of My Dreams* 'breaks new ground by exploring, for the first time in an exhibition, the Surrealists' intense interest in indigenous art of the Pacific Northwest' [corroborating source 3]. The exhibition's novel juxtaposition of First Nation objects and Surrealist art was both informative for visitors to the exhibition, and the focus of most of the overwhelmingly positive reviews of the exhibition.

The exhibition was covered by over a dozen local, national, and international publications, including several reviews that spoke very favourably of the exhibition as a whole and in particular of the juxtaposition of Surrealist work and First Nations pieces. Most reviews describe this as the big surprise of the exhibition. In the words of one reviewer, 'the exhibition does a wonderful job of showing the links between Surrealism and the art of the Northwest Coast. That in itself was a revelation' (Kevin Griffin, *Vancouver Sun*; see also *inter alia* Steven Harris in *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* (6.1) and Leah Sandals in *Canadian Art* (2 June 2011) [corroborating sources 4-6]).

In the words of one of the local Professors involved in the consultation process, the exhibition 'enjoyed universal appeal in the city of Vancouver and beyond; it was warmly received by museum professionals, scholars, critics, artists, gallery members and, judging by the line-ups outside the gallery, by the general public.' [corroborating source 1] The success of the exhibition has, according to their Associate Director, benefited the reputation of the Vancouver Art Gallery:

The exhibition was 10,000 sq feet in size, with over 300 works of art, with a 335-page book that had 14 authors besides Dawn Ades – it was a superior project and we could not have been happier with the results!...As a result, this exhibition has brought the Vancouver Art Gallery great merit and credibility in the museum world.

Chief Curator and Associate Director, Vancouver Art Gallery

The exhibition resulted in significant visitor numbers and revenue through guided tours and shop sales:

Vancouver Art Gallery Data for 'The Colour of My Dreams' [corroborating source 7]

Visitor figures: 104,746

Guided tours: 188

Visitors included in tours: 4,048

Income from guided tours: \$14,104 (Canadian)

Sales in Vancouver Art Gallery shop related to exhibition: \$273,912

Total Vancouver Art Gallery revenue from exhibition: \$288,016

5. Sources to corroborate the impact [All sources saved on file with HEI, available on request]

1. Professor at the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver
2. Chief Curator and Associate Director at Vancouver Art Gallery
3. Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, 'Foreword', *The colour of my dreams: the Surrealist Revolution in Art*, Vancouver Art Gallery, 2011
4. 'Dawn Ades: the Surrealist Revolution in Art', Kevin Griffin, *The Vancouver Sun*, 27 May 2011: <http://blogs.vancouver.sun.com/2011/05/27/dawn-ades-the-surrealist-revolution-in-art/>
5. Harris, S. (2011) Exhibition Review: 'The Colour of My Dreams: The Surrealist Revolution in Art', *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 5 (1)
6. 'The Colour of My Dreams: Surrealism's First Nations Connections', Leah Sandals, *Canadian Art*, 2 June 2011: http://www.canadianart.ca/see-it/2011/06/02/the_colour_of_my_dreams/
7. Vancouver Art Gallery data, received from Vancouver Art Gallery Curatorial Division