

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Leeds
Unit of Assessment: 32 Philosophy (including History of Science)
Title of case study: Impact Case Study 3: Teaching the Role of Character in Artistic Creation and Appreciation.
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Matthew Kieran's research focuses on the role that individual motivations, skills and settled dispositions (i.e. someone's character) actively play in artistic appreciation and creation. In particular, it shows the significant role that character should play in guiding artistic creativity and evaluation. He has worked extensively outside higher education—using small group sessions with the public, contributions to creators' conferences, high-profile media work, policy inputs, a prime-time TV documentary and widely disseminated web materials— to enrich the public understanding of artistic values based on this approach and to help skill people up in developing their artistic creativity and art appreciation.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Kieran's work focuses on the roles that our character (i.e. one's motivations, skills, moral and non-moral dispositions) should play in artistic creation and appreciation. Kieran (6) argued that a judgment of a work to be obscene by an appreciator involves both aversion and attraction as an upshot of character: aversion in going against the appreciator's moral norms or dispositions and attraction in speaking to other personal drives (such as certain sexual desires). Judging a work to be obscene is thus in large part a function of how the work interacts with an appreciator's moral and non-moral character. Kieran (5) then went on to argue that an even wider range of works can be judged to be morally problematic in ways that make them good as art. In particular an appreciator's character can be challenged by morally problematic art in ways that lead to insight through active appreciation (5). This led to an invitation to write the monograph <i>Revealing Art</i> (4), where Kieran argued that challenging works can be successful partly because they get us to endorse or suspend attitudes in ways we are not willing to in real life. Hence, whilst we may not admire Marat, be sympathetic to certain forms of Christianity or endorse honour codes, in actively appreciating David's <i>Death of Marat</i>, the <i>Roettgen Pietà</i> or the <i>Iliad</i> we may have much to learn about ourselves. Indeed, Kieran (4) argues, this can be just as true of pornographic art, which uses artistic techniques to arouse sexual instincts and desires. Kieran (2) further expanded the account regarding the role our emotions play in resisting, appreciating and valuing morally troubling art. Emotionally troubling art, Kieran (2) argues, often requires the appreciator to suspend judgement in exploring what is taken to be morally problematic. Art that successfully gets good appreciators to do this will often yield insight to people about themselves or the world.</p> <p>Whilst arguing that art may teach us about ourselves and the world (2, 4 and 5), Kieran (4) also argues for the claim that art appreciation involves learning from art in a distinctive way, namely through the cultivation of visual skills and mental capacities. Moreover, Kieran (3) argues that part of what we should value about many art works is a function of the imaginativeness, skill and creative character of the artist. Most recently Kieran (1) has argued that good appreciation and aesthetic creativity has to be driven by the right kind of motivations to be most appropriate, reliable and rewarding. Where someone is motivated by external goods such as money or social status, appreciative activity (and often artistic judgement) will tend to be impoverished (1). We should, rightly, be sceptical of appreciators with a snobbish character and, just as importantly, look out for signs of snobbishness in ourselves. Kieran's arguments here amount to the development of a virtue approach to artistic appreciation and creativity – putting character centre stage in the understanding of human engagement with the arts.</p> <p>Key Researcher: Matthew Kieran (University of Leeds; Professor, 2009 – present; Senior Lecturer, 2004 – 2009; Junior Lecturer, 1996 – 2004; Teaching Fellow, 1994 – 1996)</p>
3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

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- (1). Kieran, Matthew, "The Vice of Snobbery: Aesthetic Knowledge, Justification and Virtue in Art Appreciation", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 60(239) (2010): 243-263, 2010. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9213.2009.615.x. *Included in REF2.*
- (2). Kieran, Matthew, 'Art, Emotions and Immorality', in Peter Goldie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of the Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 681-704. *Included in REF 2.*
- (3). Kieran, Matthew, "Artistic Character, Creativity and the Appraisal of Conceptual Art", in Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens (eds.), *Philosophy and Conceptual Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), pp. 197-215. *Included in RAE 2008.*
- (4). Kieran, Matthew, *Revealing Art*, pp. vii + 280, London., Routledge 2004. *Included in RAE 2008.* (translated into Chinese published by Peking University Press 2007 and Korean published 2010)
- (5). Kieran, Matthew, "Forbidden Knowledge: The Challenge of Immoralism", in: Sebastian Gardner and Jose Bermudez (eds.), *Art and Morality*, pp. 56-73, London, Routledge, 2003. *Included in RAE 2008.*
- (6). Kieran, Matthew, "On Obscenity: The Thrill and Repulsion of the Morally Prohibited", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. LXIV, no. 1, pp. 31-55, 2002. DOI: 10.1111/j.1933-1592.2002.tb00141.x *Included in RAE 2008.*

Evidence of Research Quality.

Kieran was a co-investigator for the AHRC large-scale research project on 'Method in Philosophical Aesthetics', October 2009 – March 2013. Part of his work for that project on 'Creativity as a Virtue of Character' (forthcoming) and the earlier work on 'The Vice of Snobbery' led to the award of a Leverhulme Research Fellowship to develop an account of creative virtue. "The Vice of Snobbery" paper was discussed by Dominic Lopes at a plenary session of the Joint Session of the Aristotelian and Mind Societies, 2008, as published in the prestigious Aristotelian Society Supplementary volume series (Dominic Mclver Lopes, "II Virtues of Art: Good Taste", *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, vol. 82, no. 1, pp. 197-211, 2008), prior to its being accepted for publication.

Berys Gaut, in *Art, Emotion and Ethics* (OUP), pp. 50-64, 184-6, noted that Kieran's research provides the only theoretical account giving principled reasons when, where and why a work's morally problematic character can either diminish or contribute to its value as art.

Revealing Art was translated into Chinese and published by Peking University Press in 2007, in a series that has published translated monographs by other world leaders in philosophical aesthetics ranging from Rudolf Arnheim's *Toward A Psychology of Art* and Norman Bryson's *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix* to James Elkins's *How to Use Your Eyes*. It was translated and published in Korean in 2010. It was for *Revealing Art* that Kieran was nominated for THES Young Academic of the Year 2005. *Revealing Art* was well reviewed in *Philosophical Books* (vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 374-377, 2006), the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 285-287, 2006), the *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2006.02.08) and more widely (e.g., half page review in *The Financial Times*, Jan 17, p. 13, 2005). Robert Stecker, a leading figure in the field, praised the book as "a fine discussion of one of the most important topics in aesthetics: the value of art. Its arguments and conclusions are both original and accessible to a broader audience." A Google Scholar search on Feb 12, 2013 showed 43 citations for the book. Other articles also have high citations rates (eg. Google Scholar locates 28 for the 2003 article).

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

Kieran has enriched the wider public understanding of artistic values with his distinctive vision of the role of art in our lives. This has involved engaging with and developing skills in small-group workshops with individuals, contributions to discussion among artists and arts professionals and much wider engagement with the general public that culminated in a prime-time documentary and widely disseminated interactive internet materials.

Small-group public workshops

Tate Britain invited Kieran to design and run a series of public afternoon workshops (2007 – 2008) based on his book *Revealing Art* (A). All of the events were oversubscribed, with about 50

participants in each session. They featured an introduction by Kieran on key concepts from his research followed by a workshop element in which participants were asked to apply these insights to particular works of art and then a general discussion relating the art to the lecture. Strong positive feedback led Tate Britain to invite Kieran to devise a further series in 2009 looking at art, creativity and culture in the 40 years since Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* and in association with the Tate's Triennial exhibition curated by Nicolas Bourriaud **(B)**.

Engagement with artists and appreciators

Kieran's research has also engaged with creative and appreciator communities at venues such as the International Miami - Basel art fair, Crunch Art Festival, Hay on Wye, (200 audience members) **(C)** and various galleries such as the National Centre for Craft and Design **(D)**, the Henry Moore Institute and the Leeds City Art Gallery (typically 50 audience members). Evidence that his engagement enriched the creative process includes the following blog, posted by an artist after participating in the Visual Thinking Symposium for textile artists at HUB National Centre for Craft and Design: *"I particularly liked the talk by Matthew Kieran ... which explored the ways in which character and motivation are crucial to artistic creativity. He presented really well ... I'd really like to see him talk again, so I can get to grips with and start to question his thinking, and explore the subject further."* **(E)**

Contributions to policy making and public debate

Impact on public debate and artistic programming include Kieran speaking in December 2009 at the Henry Moore Institute on art and character for Pavilion's Arts Council Turning Point programme for Visual Arts Organisations 2006 – 2011. Pavilion's Director said: *"Professor Kieran's outstanding presentation on the values of art brought a vital dimension to the discussion, opening up a meaningful debate amongst artists and arts professionals active in the region. This event (including Professor Kieran's invaluable contribution) will help inform the development of the Turning Point strategy as well as Pavilion's curatorial thinking and artistic programme for the coming year."* **(F)**

In 2010 Kieran was on the advisory panel of, and was an author for, the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment public policy project that measured the public's responses to beauty in the natural and built environment and looked at the implications for planning. This generated wider public debate and professional discussion including a Royal Institute for Architecture conference involving architects, politicians and policy makers. An essay commissioned from Kieran by the project, which stressed the importance of beauty in everyday life and its connection to practical motivations, was discussed in, for example, a Royal Society of Arts commentary (<http://www.thersa.org/fellowship/journal/archive/autumn-2010/features/on-beauty>) and the Planning Resource blog (<http://planningblog.planningresource.co.uk/2010/11/15/defining-beauty/>). **(G)**

Media coverage, Channel 4 documentary and Internet engagement

Kieran's work has had widespread impact, including interviews for the BBC/OU Ethics Bites podcast on his work on "Art, Censorship and Morality", April 2008, and for national and international media, such as the *Sunday Times* extended feature piece on 'Censors and Sensibility' October 4th, 2009 and a feature piece in *Le Monde*, 'L'Art Pervers' May 4th, 2013. He also talked on the Today programme, Radio 4, 13th April, 2012, on emotional transgression in Munch's *Scream* and has published art criticism for *The Philosopher's Magazine*.

Such interviews helped establish a media presence and in 2011 – 2012 Kieran acted as the art consultant developing Channel 4's Hidden Talent programme. Kieran's focus on the centrality of appreciators' skills and capacities was reflected in the programme. He helped advise on administering the Meier art test to over 1000 members of the public, which led to the selection of the subject of the programme—Lee Yenson, a tractor factory worker who had left school at 15. Kieran worked closely with Yenson to develop his art appreciation skills, helped to devise the relevant tests Lee had to overcome and explain to the audience what helps to distinguish good from not so good or bad art. The impact on Yenson, who had never entered an art gallery, was profound but the programme also allowed Kieran's ideas to reach an audience of just under 2 million viewers on 1st May, 2012. The programme attracted widespread national and local media

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coverage. Kieran advised on YouTube videos offering further advice to members of the public and helped design a shortened version of the Meier test to go online to test the public's artistic appreciation skills. The series producer said Kieran's thorough approach and accessible style had *"encouraged many viewers to participate in the online testing and explore art in a hugely accessible arena."* (H)

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

- A. Letter from Head of Adult Programmes Department, Tate Britain (2005 - 2011), (dated 04/01/13)
- B. Letter from Assistant Curator, Adult Programmes, Tate Britain, (2007 – 2010), (dated 03/12/12)
- C. Communication with Organiser, Crunch Arts Festival, Hay on Wye, Institute of Art and Ideas, (emails dated 05/10/10; 29/11/10;16/12/10)
- D. Communication from Exhibitions Officer, National Centre for Craft and Design (2009 – 2010), (dated 24/06/13)
- E. Web blog, Sampler – Culture Clash blog : http://sampler-cultureclash.blogspot.com/2010_04_01_archive.html (accessed 24/09/13)
- F. Letter from Director, Pavilion, Leeds, and copy of previous email correspondence from 18/02/10.
- G. Communication from Senior Research Advisor, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (until 2010), (dated 30/05/13)
- H. Communication from Series Producer, Hidden Talent Channel 4 Documentary series, Silver River TV. The website address for 4OnDemand, which carries the programme, is: <http://www.channel4.com/info/press/programme-information/hidden-talent>
The Facebook art appreciation test for the public is still available: <https://apps.facebook.com/hiddentalentshow/fb/tests/art> (accessed 24/09/13)