

Institution: Kingston University
Unit of Assessment: 32, Philosophy
Title of case study: Impact of philosophy of contemporary art on cultural institutions in the UK, Norway and Italy
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study is of impact arising from research by Peter Osborne in the area of philosophy of art – specifically, contemporary art: the philosophical reinterpretation and critical analysis of conceptual and post-conceptual art, from the early 1960s to the present.</p> <p>This research has had a significant effect upon the awareness and understanding of the philosophical issues at stake in contemporary art for a range of practitioners in art institutions, of which three (in the UK, Norway and Italy) make up the case study here: at the level of their direction, curation and adult programming (non-HE art education) and in associated public discourse.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research underpinning the impact in this case study may be divided into two main phases: 1997–2002 and 2003–12.</p> <p>Phase one involved research into the relationship between the history and philosophies of conceptual art, leading to a new critical history of conceptual art (Refs 1 & 2, below). This critical history has two main philosophical features: first, the claim that conceptual art represents a transformation in the historical ontology of the artwork; second, the development and application of a method for constructing such an ontology, through the treatment of the historical field of conceptual artworks as the product of a constellation of negations of features hitherto considered central to modern art.</p> <p>In the second phase of the research these two ideas were explored further with respect to: (i) the broader relationships between ‘aesthetics’, philosophy of art, art criticism and the history of art (Ref. 3.); (ii) a philosophical reconstruction of the concept of modernism, with respect to a generalization of the previously developed methodology of constitutive negation (Ref. 4); and (iii) application to contemporary art through theoretical engagement with the works of both now-canonical US artists of the 1960s (Sol LeWitt, Gordon Matta-Clark, Robert Rauschenberg) and currently practising European and north American artists (The Atlas Group, Victor Burgin, Elmgreen & Dragset, Tracey Emin, Gerhard Richter, Jeff Wall). This latter work was developed in the context of engagement with a series of major European art institutions, through public lectures, consultancy and the writing of catalogue essays (six of which are collected together, in Spanish translation, in Part IV of Ref. 5, pp. 289–412).</p> <p>More recently, the work from the second phase of the research has been brought together in a revised form to receive a more integral and conceptually systematic presentation (Ref. 6). This has involved the elaboration of a further aspect to the research, which has connected it up with Osborne’s previous research on the philosophy of time: namely, the construction of a critical concept of ‘the contemporary’, understood as a category of the philosophy of history. Research in the philosophy of art over two decades, 1993–2012, underpinning the impact in this cycle, has thereby acquired a strong retrospective conceptual unity.</p> <p>Peter Osborne is Professor of Modern European Philosophy and Director of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP), Kingston University</p> <p>The research was conducted while at Middlesex University (1993–2010) and Kingston University (2010–12) in the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP). (HECFE have recognised this period at Middlesex as ‘transferable’ to Kingston for the purposes of REF impact, as a result of the transfer of the CRMEP from Middlesex to Kingston in July 2010.)</p>

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3. References to the research

1. Peter Osborne, 'Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy' in Jon Bird & Michael Newman (eds), *Rewriting Conceptual Art: Critical and Historical Approaches*, Reaktion Books, London, 1999, pp. 47–65; reprinted as Ch. 6 of Peter Osborne, *Philosophy in Cultural Theory*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000.
2. Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon Press, London and New York, 2002, 304 pp. hb; includes: 'Survey', a 25,000-word essay, 230 colour & 66 b/w illustrations and 110,000 words of edited documents; hb reprinted 2005; pb. 2011; also in French, Italian and Spanish translations, from the same publisher, 2006, but without the edited documents.
3. Peter Osborne, 'Art Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Criticism, Art History and Contemporary Art', special issue of *Art History*, Vol. 27, no. 4 (2004), pp. 651–670; reprinted in Deborah Cherry, ed., *Art : History : Visual : Culture*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2005, pp. 171–190.
4. Peter Osborne, 'Modernisms and Mediations', in F. Halsall, J. Jansen, T. O'Connor (eds), *Rediscovering Aesthetics: Transdisciplinary Voices from Art History, Philosophy and Art Practice*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2009, pp. 163–177; revised as the first half of Ch. 3 of Ref. 6, below.
5. Peter Osborne, *El arte más allá de la estética: Ensayos filosóficos sobre el arte contemp-oráneo* [*Art Against Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays on Contemporary Art*] translated by Yaiza Hernández Velázquez from the English, CENDEAC, Murcia, 2010, 497pp., 80 b & w illustrations (Spanish translation of 18 essays and 2 interviews, 1999–2009).
6. Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, London and New York, 2013, 282 pp; includes revised versions of outputs from research (see Acknowledgements, pp. 213–4).

Evidence of the quality of the underpinning research

Refs 1, 3 and 6 have been entered as outputs in Research Assessments (2001, 2008, 2014)

Ref. 2 is published in a series by a major art publisher. (In the Winter 2002 edition of *Bookforum*, Barry Schwabsky, chief art critic of *The Nation* and co-editor of international reviews for *Artforum*, described it as 'an original, challenging, reinterpretation of Conceptual Art'.)

Ref. 5 is a 497 pp. volume of essays in a Spanish translation funded by the Centre for the Documentation and Advanced Study of Contemporary Art (CENDEAC), Murcia.

The research led to Osborne being included as one of two international participants in the Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation research project application 'The Crisis of Contemporary Art' (ref. 12-133911 – graded 6 out of 7, in round 1: 'Excellent: internationally excellent... meets all scientific standards and excels in some of these.' The International Reviewer's Assessment described Osborne as 'for almost two decades... one of the most important voices in the development of aesthetics, art theory, and cultural theory – with an emphasis on the ontology of contemporary art.')

The research also led to Osborne being invited to become a member of the European Research Council (ERC), 'Cultures and Cultural Production', Ideas Specific Programme, Start-Up Grants Panel (SH5), on which he has served since 2011.

4. Details of the impact

The impact of the research on the education and curating programmes of three international art institutions in the UK, Norway and Italy, and on associated public discourses, has been via a sustained process of both public engagement (through public lectures and catalogue essays) and institutional engagement (via consultancy and curation). Insofar as the modes of public and institutional engagement involved represent innovations in the educational and artistic programming of the institutions concerned, they constitute impact on those institutions themselves. These impacts occurred between January 2008 and July 2013.

The beneficiaries

The main non-academic beneficiaries of the research have been:

- (i) the Adult Programmes Department of Tate Britain, 2008–10;
- (ii) the Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA), 2009–11;
- (iii) the Norwegian Representation at the 54th Venice Biennale, 2010–11;

What changed?

(i) Adult Programmes, Education Department, Tate Britain, 2008–10

The research influenced adult educational programming at Tate Britain through the introduction of a focus on the philosophical aspects of contemporary art, including specifically, (a) the conceptual character of contemporary art, and (b) an enrichment of the understanding of the importance of broader intellectual contexts – philosophical and cultural-theoretical – to the understanding of contemporary art. This represented a break with previous programming practices, which were focused more narrowly on art history, connected to Tate Britain's collection, and more general introductory topics.

The main means through which this was effected were: (a) *consultancy* (Osborne was a consultant to Tate Britain, Adult Programmes for the international conference, 'Global Modernities', connected to the Tate Triennial, 2009, and for the talks series that he subsequently designed, 'Anthropologies of the Present', 2009–10); and (b) *public lectures* at Tate Britain in 2008 & 2009. After the delivery of his lecture to the October 2008 'What is British Art?' conference ('To Each Past, Its Own Prehistory'), he was invited to conduct an in-house seminar for Tate Britain Adult Programming staff on its significance for their programming. The lecture had an impact on the institutional self-consciousness of the programming team.

(ii) Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA – a foundation created by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 2009–11

The research influenced the curatorial programme at OCA in 2009, through its effect on its director and main curator. Osborne has a history of collaboration with OCA dating back to consultancies for its education programming and publishing in 2006 & 2007, based on their interest in his research. In 2009, he collaborated with its director on the exhibition, *Sol LeWitt, Sentences on Conceptual Art: Manuscripts and Draft Materials 1968–69* (21 Oct.–19 Dec. 2009) – visiting the collector Herman Daled in Brussels and helping to conceptualize and to select manuscripts for the show. Osborne gave the public lecture on the occasion of its opening, published as the catalogue essay. The exhibition of these manuscript texts as works and their connection, via the catalogue, to German philosophical Romanticism of the late 1790s, was a practical public enactment of arguments from Osborne's research.

OCA is the body that commissions the Norwegian Representation at the Venice Biennale, historically, the world's leading regular international art exhibition. In Sept. 2010 Osborne was appointed by OCA to a 9-month contract as Consultant to 'The Representation of Norway at the 54th Venice Biennale. The main impact of the research in the philosophy of art has been via this consultancy.

(iii) Norwegian Representation at the 54th Venice Biennale, 2010–11

Norway's representation at the Venice Biennale 2011 was the first by a participating country to have replaced the centrality of a conventional national artistic representation by a visual artist, or artists, with a philosophically based talks programme, framed in terms of the critical role played by art within the philosophical discourse of modernity and the emphasis within contemporary art on the primacy of diagnoses of the historical present. Following on from his role as a consultant for the representation, Osborne acted as co-curator of the Norwegian programme, defining the theme ('The State of Things') and selecting the speakers for the public lectures in Venice, running June–November 2011. He introduced the series at the Instituto Veneto di scienze Lettero ed Arti, in

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Venice, 1 June 2011, during the opening of the Biennale.

This curatorial decision subsequently caused considerable controversy in Norway, regarding the public policy on national representation and art funding (problematizing OCA's relationship with the Ministry of Culture and the Foreign Ministry). It was the subject of a public debate in Oslo, with the Head of the Section of Visual Arts of the Arts Council Norway and other senior members of the Norwegian arts community, regarding OCA's policy, the funding of the Norwegian Representation and the autonomy of the foundation (20 November 2012). Its effects continue to resonate within public debates on cultural policy in Norway. Osborne has been invited to address the topic in his lecture at the event celebrating the 10th anniversary of *kunstkritikk*, the online art journal, in Oslo on 22 November 2013.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Tate Britain, Adult Programmes, programmes Spring 2009–January 2010.
2. Office of Contemporary Art Norway, programmes, 2008–2010; its journal, *Verksted*, no. 9, 2008: Special issue on Populism and Genre (co-ed. by Osborne); consultancy contract.
3. *Sol LeWitt, Sentences on Conceptual Art: Manuscripts and Draft Materials 1968–69*, catalogue special issue of *Versted* no. 11, 2009, Office for Contemporary Art Norway.
4. *The State of Things*, programme of the Norwegian Representation at the 54th Venice Biennale, 2011.
5. Video of Osborne's introduction to the talks series, at Instituto Veneto di scienze Lettero ed Arti, Venice, 1 June 2011: <http://www.oca.no/programme/audiovisual/the-state-of-things-introduction-by-peter-osborne>
6. *Illuminations*, Catalogue of the 2011 Venice Biennale, pp. 412–13.
7. Publicity material for the Norwegian representation at the 2011 Venice Biennale [available on request].
8. Marta Kuzma, Pablo Lafuentes and Peter Osborne, eds, *The State of Things*, Walter Koenig/Office of Contemporary Art Norway, London/Oslo, 2012, 289 pp. – the book of the lectures from the Norwegian representation at the 2011 Venice Biennale.
9. *Hope of the Hopeless: 54th Venice Biennale*: A Film by Hamed Yousefi, BBC World (available as BBC/Clan Productions DVD); also in a Farsi edition for the BBC Persian service – includes interview with Osborne on the Biennale.
10. Details of public meeting to debate OCA and Norwegian representation at: <http://www.oca.no/press/releases/6848/norways-official-representation-within-la-biennale-di-veneziavisual-arts-sectionthe-future>

Corroborating contacts:

1. Head of Curating Contemporary Art, Royal College of Art, London (former Head & Deputy Head of Adult Programmes, Tate Britain, 2006–2010): Impact on Adult Programmes, Education Department, Tate Britain, 2009–10.
2. former Director of Office of Contemporary Art Norway (2007–2013): Impact on Office of Contemporary Art, Norway, and Norwegian representation at the Venice Biennale 2011 and subsequent controversy.