

Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: Leeds Metropolitan University**Unit of Assessment: Unit 34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory****a. Context**

The research strategy for the Unit encompasses diverse and interdisciplinary approaches and material enhanced by the coming together of several disciplines into the new School of Art, Architecture and Design (AAD). Our Unit has a progressive interdisciplinary approach and much of the research crosses boundaries impacting upon cultural life, education, and public discourse. The overall profile of research is made up of outputs that range in scope from those which are of international significance to local projects; often collaborative and events based that have distinctive and deep reach in our regional community. The reach and significance of our work is further contextualised by the historical context of our School's considerable reputation for practice.

The interdisciplinary process-based approach that characterises much of the research in question is firmly located in the historical tradition of the school, which has developed from the Leeds School of Art, itself a constituent part of the founding of Leeds Polytechnic formed in 1970 which became Leeds Metropolitan University in 1992. This tradition began with Harry Thubron basing his famous Leeds 'basic research' course on the principles of the Bauhaus and turning the school into one of the most revolutionary in the world. In 1969, art publication, *Studio International* compared it to the nomadic Living Theatre and in 1972 the ICA gave the entire college a show in their galleries: *Leeds in London*. Fluxus members Robin Page, Robert Filliou and George Brecht taught at Leeds, helping establish the experimental, innovative, interdisciplinary and progressive approach to practice, research and education that is continued by many examples evidenced in the present submission.

The majority of the research in the Unit is practice based; academic staff are predominantly artists, designers and architects working across a broad spectrum of project types and levels. Our approach has been to emphasis and support collaborative work, particularly in the contexts of art curating, events and festivals.

b. Approach to impact

Our approach to impact and dissemination strategies are broad ranging. At one end of the spectrum there are staff contributing to books and published journals. However, a strength within this Unit is that we also have a significant number of staff working in performance, film and video. Many of these are national and international standing and include practice based outputs. Examples include: Mellors, N. (2010) *British Art Show 7, In the Days of the Comet*, Hayward Gallery, London; Charnley, C. (2009) *Northern Art Prize Exhibition*, Leeds Art Gallery. Finalist; Offeh, H. *Copyright Christmas*, Performance, 10 - 31 December 2011. Barbican Theatre, London, UK.; Kill, R., O'Grady, A. and Urban Angels (2010) *The Heavenly Court of Madame Fantaisiste*.

This Unit also houses several international collaborative curatorial projects of critical significance.

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For example; Bloor, C. & Mellors, N :*HYPERCOLON*: Exhibition, The Statement Series SMART Project Space Amsterdam 3/9/2011-13/11/2011; Lewis, P. (2010) *Intensive Surfaces*, curatorial collaboration with Shezad Dawood, Aarhus Kunstbygning – Centre for Contemporary Art, Aarhus, Denmark.

Collaboration is a central theme in our work and much of our research has engagement with our wider communities at its core. We regularly work with schools, community groups, charities and not for profit organisations across the city region. We believe that projects involving staff, and our students, that impact on the local environment and culture of the city of Leeds enrich the learning and teaching experience, develop breath to our practice and research and expand our academic territory in a productive and ethical way. We aim to construct a space for Art and Design in the city that involves other institutions, community initiatives and alumni at a deep level. The longer term aim of this is to impact on the creative life and wellbeing of Leeds. But we are also working to improve graduate retention and we are now seeing a greater number remaining in the city setting up studios and agencies for professional practice. These include The Woolgather Art Prize, Mexico Art Space and Duke Studios.

Some evidence of broader civic engagement, and status, are our involvement with the Art & Science Network, the CD projects, Liverpool Art Prize nomination and sound Art initiatives of Alan Dunn. Nathaniel Mellors was invited to give the annual Artists Lecture 2011 at the Henry Moore Institute, with whom significant relations have developed through new director Lisa Le Feuvre. The Curatorial projects of MA students with Peter Lewis, Plaza Principle and other combined exhibitions of staff, student, alumni and guest artists. Growing international contacts and opportunities for students have been evidenced by exhibitions and events and a recent regional postgraduate opportunity has been developed in partnership with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

c. Strategy and plans

Our strategy is to retain and build upon existing strengths in practice, collaboration and community, whilst identifying and supporting new areas of strong potential within the context of the aims of the Unit and the University. Several new PhD bursaries are to be strategically targeted at areas of strength, building on and exploiting relationships with other local and national institutions.

The Unit has a number of fractional staff with significant national and international standing as artists. We also have a very rich diet of visiting staff. Overall our goal is to maintain sustainable research that connects with the growing creative profile of the city of Leeds and the region Yorkshire. We are working with both small and large arts and community organisations with the dual aim of providing support for our region and its communities and contributing to the enhancement of the regions international standing in art and design. Our aims can be summed up very simply. We want to build our permeability. We want more people coming in to work with us and we will further develop projects where we go out to work with communities and organisations.

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There are two key University policies that will support this. One is our commitment to catalyse progress in the Region and secondly our “work related learning” promise to undergraduates. We are, as a Unit, in an excellent position to push forward with ethically engaged, research informed teaching and collaboration that has high impact regionally, nationally and internationally.

We will focus on the following:-

- Support for staff engaged with high level innovative practice outputs nationally and internationally. This will be done through our PDR process, by encouraging more staff to undertake PhDs by practice and also PhDs by published practice, and by retaining and supporting our fractional and part time staff.
- Continuing to support media profiling of these artists.
- Supporting community, student and staff collaborations. In particular those that benefit our region’s art and design infrastructure and those that have innovative, world leading community impact.
- Staff development and dissemination within the Unit on mapping and recording impact.
- We will increase the opportunities for artists, architects and designers to come into our buildings and collaborate with us – through events, professional development, partnership working, residencies, exhibitions, seminars etc.
- We will develop our repository so that it is able to accurately reflect the range and breadth of our activities.

d. Relationship to case studies

Our strategic approach to case studies was to focus on groups of researchers with similar aims. Our case studies focus on our two main themes.

- Experimental Practices
- The Expanded Field of Performance Art

There are, however a number of key concerns that cut through these case studies. First, much of our work exemplifies our universities aim “to be a catalyst for various progress indicators, including economic, social and cultural activities in our region.” Secondly, central ideas include valorising practice as a method of meaning-making, inter-disciplinarity, collaboration and community, identity, language and place.