

Title of case study:

Collecting New Media Art: Impacts on Art Collecting Policies

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Curatorial Resource for Upstart Media Bliss (CRUMB) has provided a resource for curators of new media art, which in turn has impacted upon the practice and policy of Curators, Museum and Gallery Directors in connection with collecting new media art. Here, the major impact has been upon the practice of a regional, local-authority-funded art museum and gallery, The Harris Art Museum and Gallery. CRUMB researchers worked over some years with curators and Museum staff on exhibitions and symposia, building up to changes in collecting policy.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The research concerns collecting new media art, one focus of enquiry of the research centre CRUMB. The interactive, connected and algorithmic behaviours of new media art means that collecting demands a rethinking of methods for acquisition, documentation, archiving, collecting and conserving.

Beryl Graham has worked full time at the University of Sunderland since 1997, as a Research Fellow, Senior Research Fellow and now Professor. Dr. Sarah Cook was employed full time by the University from 2004 as Research Fellow, then Reader, until 2013. CRUMB staff also collaborate on events with postdoctoral staff and doctoral researchers. In 2002, Graham completed an AHRC research residency at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA). Her research report examined the methods of all aspects of the contemporary art exhibition *010101*, which included new media. A major finding was the importance of adapting collecting methods for new media art, which at SFMOMA involved more people including technical staff in the acquisition process (Graham 2002).

In 2010, Graham and Cook published *A Brief History of Curating New Media Art: Conversations with curators*, which explored models of collecting, including the model of “performing” exhibitions from a collection, and of integrating the audience knowledge of educational curators in order to “animate” documentation. This publication was based upon CRUMB’s research informed by dialogues with leading international curators, collectors and cultural policy makers including: Rudolf Frieling (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art collection); Stuart Comer (Tate); Jon Ippolito (former Guggenheim); and Lindsay Taylor (Harris Museum, Preston); and developed at various symposia and through their commissioning of writing through the CRUMB Discussion List since 2000.

Rethinking Curating (Graham and Cook 2010) includes a chapter on museums and collections, and identifies how documentation, and distributable forms of new media art might be found in museum libraries and archives as well as in collections. As artist Soraya Murray states: “These notable curators and professionals unveil the

practical outcomes, the successes and the failures of actual presentations” (2012, 115). Recent findings have concerned how histories of exhibitions, and audiences, might be archived and ‘collected’ (Graham 2013), and a forthcoming book on collecting edited by Beryl Graham for [Ashgate](#) selects leading professional contributors to share their findings, including Pip Laurenson of Tate on conserving software art, and Louise Shannon of V&A on collecting digital art and design.

The sharing of research has led to invitations to speak at professional conferences such as at the V&A, and the Museums Association, concerning collecting, and invitations to serve on boards including UNESCO Digiarts Virtual Library.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Graham, Beryl and Cook, Sarah (2010) *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Graham, Beryl and Cook, Sarah (2010) *A Brief History of Curating New Media: Conversations with Curators*. Green Box Berlin (ISBN: 978-3-941-644-20-5).

Graham, Beryl (2002) *Curating new media art: SFMOMA and 010101*. [Online]. Available from URL: <http://www.crumbweb.org/getCRUMBReports.php?&sublink=2>

Graham, Beryl (2010) “Curating Behaviours.” *Decoding the Digital*. 4-5 February. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. [Invited conference presentation].

Graham, Beryl (2013) “Exhibition Histories and New Media Behaviours” *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, 2 (2 (summer)). 242-262.

Selected Grants

- 2012 **Arts and Culture Department, Korean Government (Korea)**
Invited guest of government. All expenses paid 1 week research trip award to research collecting new media art in Korea (Seoul-based).
- 2012 **Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK)**
Research Fellowship Grant for £43,110 over 9 months for researching/editing/writing a book on *Collecting New Media Art*.
- 2007-10 **Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK)**
Research Grant for £431,000 over 3 years for curating new media art research.
Final report graded “outstanding” by AHRC.
- 2003-4 **Arts and Humanities Research Board (UK)**
Research Grant for £222,000 over 3 years for curating new media art research.
- 2001 **Arts and Humanities Research Board (UK)**
Research Exchange grant for 4 month residency at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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

The impacts outlined here are upon the practice and policy of arts organisations in relation to collecting and exhibiting new media art, and hence concern the economic impact on artists and the benefits to audiences.

CRUMB has developed a long-term strand of research concerning collecting art. The Exhibitions Officer at **Harris Museum and Art Gallery** has been developing the exhibition, audience development and collection of new media art at a regional art museum for over 10 years, forging a strong national identity for the museum, with ongoing support from CRUMB(1). Graham was involved in developing the *Digital Aesthetic* conference and exhibition at the Harris in 2001, and 2007. In 2010 the Exhibitions Officer attended the *Commissioning & Collecting Variable Media* CRUMB/CAS conference at BALTIC, which specifically aimed to develop the collection of new media art in the UK, and was attended by 100 national and international curators (2). In 2011, the Harris collaborated with digital arts commissioning agency *folly* on *Current: an experiment in collecting digital art* project. Cook was invited to serve on the Board of *folly*, and Graham was invited to be on the exhibition selection panel, and co-chaired with Cook the symposium *Collecting Digital Art* at Harris. The project was an integrated approach informed by the *Commissioning & Collecting Variable Media* event, and the research of the unit, involving an open call for works, selection of exhibition, followed by selection of one work from the exhibition to collect. Importantly, audience views on which artwork should be collected were taken into account as well as expert panels (the audience and the experts agreed, and the work selected was a work by Thomson and Craighead using live data pulled from the internet – a conceptually and technologically complex work). This reflects much CRUMB research on the importance of audience in curating new media art.

The long-term support of CRUMB contributed to changing the collection policy of the museum to specifically include new media art (Harris 2011, p.62): the first moving image piece entered the Harris collection in 2000, and the first new media artwork entered the collection in 2012, by Thomson and Craighead. The institutional structure for acquisition changed by involving a panel of judges, technical staff, and the audience itself, in the selection of works to collect. CAS and The Art Fund supported the *Current* project, and in May 2013 further awarded £30,000 to the Harris to collect more new media art (CAS 2011). Acquisition fees were £10,000 for *Current* alone, and so economic impact was felt by organisations and artists. Graham was invited to chair a panel on new media art including the Exhibitions Officer at the 2010 Museums Association Conference, and the Exhibitions Officer was also invited by Graham to write a chapter for the forthcoming book *New Collecting: Exhibiting and Audiences after New Media Art* (Taylor 2014), in order to share the curatorial knowledge more widely and hence further impact on the policy of other curators. Graham was interviewed by the *Financial Times: How to Spend It* magazine concerning collecting, and highlighted the Harris' policy, including economic impact (Crichton-Miller 2012).

New media art is increasingly being collected by both commercial and museums, and CRUMB has been involved in many events aimed to impact upon this: For example, the *Professional Development Seminar on Documenting New Media Art* in 2008 with curator and archivist Caitlin Jones (formerly of Guggenheim Museum, NY) highlighted that, like live art, documentation of new media art is collected as well as the art itself. The workshop sold out, and included international contemporary art curators, Arts Council England and British Council, as well as academics and artists. Feedback forms from the event stated that 98% of attendees felt that their future practice would be changed by the workshop. In 2011 a New York collector and a UK investor met with CRUMB to consult on setting up a new selling gallery in London: **Carroll / Fletcher** gallery in W1 now successfully sells artworks including Thomson and Craighead's. The **British Council** has consulted with CRUMB concerning national policies for collecting new media art (5). Beryl Graham was an invited member of the **Tate New Media Art Network on Authenticity and Performativity**, which impacted collection of new media art at Tate (2009). She has also advised the Curator of Digital Design at **V&A** on their first exhibition of new media art and design – *Decode*, and was invited to speak at their *Decoding the Digital* national conference (4). Graham is on the Project Advisory Board of EU project **PERICLES** on digital preservation, based at Tate (3).

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

CAS, (2013) "UK museums selected to acquire new media or "challenging" contemporary artworks often missing from public collections." CAS Press Release, May. <http://www.contemporaryartsociety.org/news/press-release-uk-museums-selected-to-acquire-new-media-or-challenging-artworks-often-missing-from-public-collections/>

Crichton-Miller, Emma (2012) "The show must go online." *How To Spend It. Financial Times*. Available from <http://www.howtospendit.ft.com/art/7361>

Harris Museum and Art Gallery, (2011) *Collections Development Policy 2011-2014*. Preston: Harris Museum and Art Gallery. Available at: <http://www.harrismuseum.org.uk/collections/136-collections-development>, <http://www.harrismuseum.org.uk/our-work/74>

Tate, (2009) *The New Media Art Network on Authenticity and Performativity*. Available from: <http://projects.beyondtext.ac.uk/authenticityandperformativity>

Taylor, Lindsay (forthcoming 2014) "From exhibition to collection: Harris Museum and Art Gallery." In: Graham, Beryl (ed.) (forthcoming 2014) *New Collecting: Exhibiting and Audiences after New Media Art*. London: Ashgate. https://www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?page=637&calcTitle=1&title_id=11968&edition_id=12342