

**Institution:** The Open University

**Unit of Assessment:** D34 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

### a. Context

Art History and Design have achieved impacts in a wide range of non-academic domains. Beneficiaries and audiences for research impacts include policy makers in industry, government, education and the creative arts; cultural services, journalists and media programmers; schools and lifelong learners; and a wide range of interested publics ranging from product consumers and local communities to museum visitors. Extending far beyond our 240,000 registered students, the Open University (OU) also uses its broadcast and online resources and infrastructure to engage with the public on a large scale. The global impact of our research has been transformed during the REF period through our large-scale web presence on YouTube, iTunes U and the OU's freely available learning platform OpenLearn, which attracts six million visitors annually.

Art History and Design both exploit the wide use of broadcast media, including TV documentaries with the BBC and Channel 4, and radio and current affairs features. We make use of the OU's presence across all four nations of the UK to transmit our research via diverse engagements with non-higher education partners. We engage with partners locally (for example Milton Keynes Council and Milton Keynes Art Gallery), as well as with national and international partners.

Drawing on research from across our research clusters and periods, and deploying the OU's extensive digital resources, Art History and Design aim to reach and inform a broad non-academic audience. These aims are achieved through a substantial and wide-ranging programme of public lectures; global online dissemination including the Open Arts Archive and iTunes U; curatorial projects with major museums and galleries; collaborations with over 20 galleries and art institutions across the UK; and strategic use of radio and TV (including 10 BBC documentaries).

Research also informs policy makers in national and regional government, such as heritage advisory committees; government departments in transport and environment; and national advisory committees on design and innovation, as well as national bodies in waste management and energy such as The Environment Agency, DEFRA, and the Energy Saving Trust. These influences on 'top-down' policy makers are complemented by impacts on users through our in-house digital archives as well as through user-driven agencies (such as the charity 'The Glass-House', which promotes public participation in the design of the built environment). We are active in framing European and international policy agendas in areas such as complex systems and transport design.

### b. Approach to impact

Our strategy for achieving impacts is focussed on the following three criteria:

1. Disseminating the products of research to public audiences, user groups, museums, curators and designers
2. Changing public policy and informing media, broadcast and TV productions through expert advice
3. Influencing the practices of design and curation.

Design and Art History pursue different interactions with non-academic constituencies in delivering impacts against these broad criteria.

Knowledge exchange, collaboration and dissemination have been central to the research strategy of the **Art History** Department, building on the OU mission to be 'open to people, places, ideas and methods'. A high priority is placed on working in collaboration with cultural institutions, galleries, arts policy makers and the media. This has been exemplified in the strategic development of our gallery partnerships that form the core of the Open Arts Archive founded in 2010, providing open access to events and research projects co-organised and/or produced with 20 galleries and museums across the UK, accessed by a global audience in 105 countries ([www.openartsarchive.org/oa](http://www.openartsarchive.org/oa)). Art History has pursued a strategy of public dissemination of research through curated or co-curated exhibitions with over 5 third-sector institutions since 2008,

including the National Portrait Gallery (Perry), the Royal Society (Perry), Walker Art Gallery (Wainwright), Musée des Beaux Arts, La Chaux de Font (Benton) and CIVA Brussels (Benton); while Department members have given a total of 52 public lectures during the REF period. Art History research has also informed strategy in the Heritage sector: as a member of the London Advisory Committee of English Heritage, McKellar advises on London planning applications, and Taylor has advised National Trust projects on eighteenth century and Chinese wallpaper design. In addition we co-produced an award-winning seven-part BBC documentary series *Saving Britain's Past* in 2009, drawing on Heritage Studies research (West).

In **Design** we have three main approaches to interactions with innovators, policy makers, businesses, communities and the public. First, we organise and contribute to high-level events linking policy makers, users, innovators and designers (e.g. international complexity events (Johnson); All Party Parliamentary Standing Committee on Design (Lloyd); NHS Innovation (Fortune)). This approach is highlighted in the Design Thinking case study (Lloyd and Luck). Second, we work with industry and inform policy as illustrated in the Sustainable Design case study. Specific areas include (a) engineering, where Eckert's industry collaborations serve to improve design processes and develop strategies in product development; and (b) infrastructure design and innovation where our research supports design transitions, including those in electric vehicle technologies (Potter), waste and recycling (Thomas), urban planning (Dewberry and Cook) and global systems (Johnson). HEIF funded work (Caird, Potter and Roy) on 'Low Carbon Living' has provided policy directions for a transition to more user-led sustainable design. Third, we develop methods and tools for collaborative design, through our in-house developments of an 'open design studio' and 'virtual atelier', with particular attention to application in community-led participatory design (Alexiou and Zamenopoulos).

### c. Strategy and plans

Our vision is to develop our multidisciplinary approaches across areas of public engagement, policy making and industrial strategy in order to strengthen connections between these types of impact. For example, policy development and implementation can be enhanced by curated exhibitions, broadcast and social media. Specifically, we expect to deliver impacts on cross-cultural and global themes as well as on the design of 'smart' and 'green' cities. These impacts lie at the crossroads of historical perspectives, public engagement, and policy design. This strategy for multidisciplinary impact builds on the strengths of Art History and Design in digital scholarship, through archives, publication, collaboration and learning. Developing digital scholarship, especially for collaborative working, will be critical in engaging parties and delivering impacts across disciplines and domains. Art History and Design are key members of two AHRC-doctoral training consortia; CHASE (Courtauld Institute, East Anglia, Essex, Goldsmiths, Kent, OU, Sussex) and Design Star (Brighton, Goldsmiths, Loughborough, OU, Reading), so we are well placed to deliver multidisciplinary, collaborative and connected impacts.

The strategy in Design and Art History is focussed on the three criteria set out above that we are using to frame our approach to impact. We aim to have significant impacts on cultural and design consumption by direct engagement with users, industry, community and cultural institutions. Further targets for impact include policy making for the creative and cultural industries where art and design are forces for economic advantage and social wellbeing.

The broad institutional strategy with its public mission for open access and innovation is exemplified by Design and Art History's contributions to the Open University's catalyst for Public Engagement with Research, funded by the RCUK (2012-15), which will embed public engagement in research across the university. Impact at the regional and community level secures a base for wide engagement. For example, Design research has inputs into the Milton Keynes economic development strategic priorities, especially in digital and transport infrastructure and the MK Low-carbon Living Programme. Through the OU's £16m MK: Smart project (£8m HEFCE Catalyst grant and £8m partner co-funding), we will be making leading contributions to the role of Milton Keynes as a national demonstrator for smart city technologies and the Government's aim of the UK gaining a 10% share of the £400bn global smart cities market by 2020 (Department for Business, Industry and Skills media release 2013). In Art History there is close engagement with MK Gallery, and in the commissioning of public art installations across the UK for the 'University of the Air' project (see

below).

### Art History

Digital, curatorial and media activities designed to access a wider public are increasingly being built into Art History's research planning and curriculum development. These activities are helping to shape its research strategy. Both students and public beneficiaries (including schools, curators and the general public) are encouraged to use Art History online resources and benefit from the public programmes and media events attached to each of our curated exhibitions (see, for example the case study 'Portraiture, Gender and Theatre: the first actresses'). The planned development of the Open Arts Archive involves new online initiatives including a series of artists' podcasts and an OpenLearn programme titled 'What is installation art?' We will also increase the number of collaborative events with galleries across all the UK nations, as well as curated exhibitions with multiple outcomes (digital, public lectures, artists' podcasts and media involvement). In addition, Art History was the academic lead for the major OU community engagement project, 'The University of the Air', commissioning four public art installations in Milton Keynes, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast. These have engaged the public and media in themes from the University's research, as well as celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Harold Wilson's 'University of the Air' speech announcing his plans for what became the Open University (also marked by the award of the OU's Regius Chair in Open Education).

### Design

The two Design case studies, in 'Sustainable Design' and 'Design Thinking', result from well established areas of research and user engagement. These areas were highlighted in RAE 2008 and have had significant impact since. The strategy is to develop further impacts in two categories: in policy and practice covering design processes in complex socio-technical systems including transport and infrastructure such as 'smart' cities; and in demand side design, including users and community participation in design decisions. In both categories the potential impact is on transitions between current and future infrastructures and on the management of stakeholder behaviours across government, industry, community and users.

Our access to broadcast media at the OU is facilitated by our faculty Media Fellow who works closely with Design to frame our media collaborations. Since 2008 these have included *Secret Lives of Buildings* (Channel 4, 2010); *Brits who Built the World* (BBC2, due for broadcast in 2014); and *How to Build* (two series for BBC2 2010 – 11). *Design in a Nutshell* is a popular interactive website piece that has registered nearly 400,000 viewings between April and July 2013 and has wide following on social media

### d. Relationship to case studies

The case study from **Art History** 'Portraiture, Gender and Theatre' has actively targeted a wider public audience, particularly in terms of criteria 1 and 2 above. It has involved digital outputs on the Open Arts Archive to extend the visibility of research to a wide public. It has been accompanied by a substantial programme of public lectures within and outside the UK, and has informed public programmes in cultural institutions including the National Portrait Gallery, Chawton House and the V&A Museum. The case study has been accompanied by an extensive programme of media events (including features on radio, BBC and international TV channels) and reviews in local, national and international papers.

The two case studies presented from the **Design** area also align with our strategic aims. First, 'Sustainable Design' describes engagement with policy makers and industry players. This focuses on criteria 2 and 3 above and the main impacts have been in changing public policy and consumer behaviour through user directed design and practice. The second case study, 'Design Thinking', presents the extensive take-up of a core idea by businesses, policy makers and design practitioners across discipline boundaries and includes a significant broadcast media component. This case addresses all three criteria. Both case studies illustrate our focus on the impacts of generic design research across many domains of practice, This is achieved through applying methods from several disciplines, and engaging many constituencies ranging from policy, education and industry, to users of products and services.