

Institution: University of Bristol
Unit of Assessment: 34 - Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
Title of case study: Enhancing, enriching and extending the public understanding of sport's visual culture and history
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The staging of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London brought the practices and history of sport to the forefront of the public imagination. Dr O'Mahony's research into the visual culture of sport and the Olympic movement has underpinned a number of public events, collaborations with sport museums and schools, and the launch of interactive, public facing projects, such as the 'My Games' image blog. These activities have enabled diverse audiences to explore and engage with the visual history of sport, to deepen their awareness of the impact of visually mediated representations of sport, and also to contribute to the expanding visual legacy of the London 2012 Games.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research that underpins the Impact summarised above initially stemmed from an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded one-year project in 2003-04 entitled <i>Representations of Sport and Physical Culture in Russian and Soviet Art</i>. This project was subsequently developed to cover visual culture internationally, taking specific account of the history of the visual culture of sport and the Olympic movement, in a second project sponsored by a two-year Leverhulme Research Fellowship (2010-12) entitled <i>The Visual Culture of Sport and the Olympic Games</i>. The aim of the research was to highlight the importance not only of sport as one of the most popular and wide reaching of cultural activities, but also to examine how the representation of sport in visual culture has significantly shaped our understanding of sport's history. The study of sport and sport culture has often been marginalised and given little consideration by academic researchers, despite its widespread popularity. In recent years, however, academic interest in sport has grown exponentially as scholars have begun to recognise its importance as part of a global heritage. In an age characterised by the mass dissemination of visual images, however, the extent to which sport's past and present has been mediated by visual culture is only beginning to be analysed and Dr O'Mahony's research is at the forefront of this newly expanding field of study. Both research projects uncovered a host of visual material, much of which has not previously been examined or published. This included material held in the archives at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne and in historical journals. The critical analysis of this material, along with its contextualisation within a broader history of the visual culture of sport, was published in the monographs and articles listed in [3] below.</p> <p>A key aim of this research was to work in a multi-disciplinary way, and to make new material and ideas accessible across disciplinary boundaries and to a broad readership. Here widespread public interest in sport was integral to the projects. This was reflected, for example, in sales figures for Dr O'Mahony's most recent monograph, <i>Olympic Visions</i>, which sold 1132 copies in the first two months after publication. Invitations by the BBC for Dr O'Mahony to participate in a short BBC programme aired globally during the London 2012 Games also reflected the success of these objectives.</p> <p>Dr O'Mahony's research has also been further extended into the wider community as he has established links with sport museums and has sought to create an impact upon the way that contemporary sporting practices are viewed and documented by launching the interactive image blog <i>My Games: The View from the South-West</i> (http://www.bris.ac.uk/my-games).</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>Outputs</p> <p>[1] O'Mahony, M. (2006) <i>Sport in the USSR: Physical Culture – Visual Culture</i>, London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 224pp. Can be supplied upon request.</p> <p>[2] O'Mahony, M., Huggins, M. (2011) 'Prologue: Extending Study of the Visual in the History of Sport', <i>International Journal of the History of Sport</i> 28 (8-9): 1089-1104. DOI 10.1080/09523367.2011.567765.</p> <p>[3] O'Mahony, M. (2011) 'Imaging Sport at the Grosvenor School of Modern Art', <i>International Journal of the History of Sport</i> 28 (8-9): 1105-1120. DOI 10.1080/09523367.2011.567766.</p> <p>[4] O'Mahony, M., Huggins, M. (2011) 'Epilogue', <i>International Journal of the History of Sport</i> 28 (8-9): 1370-1374. DOI 10.1080/09523367.2011.567783.</p> <p>NB. Outputs [2], [3] and [4] also published in book form as: O'Mahony, M. and Huggins,</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

M. (eds) (2011) *The Visual in Sport*, Abingdon: Routledge, 320pp. Listed in REF2.

- [5] O'Mahony, M. (2012) *Olympic Visions: Images of the Games through History*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 176pp. Listed in REF2.
- [6] O'Mahony, M. (2013) 'In the Shadow of Myron: The Impact of the Discobolus on Representations of Olympic Sport from Victorian Britain to Contemporary China', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 30 (7): 693-718. DOI 10.1080/09523367.2012.657628.

Grants

- Dr Mike O'Mahony; *Representations of Sport and Physical Culture in Russian and Soviet Art*; AHRC Matching Research Leave; January 2003-January 2004; £12,035.
- Dr Mike O'Mahony; *The Visual Culture of Sport and the Olympic Games*; Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship; January 2010-January 2012; £31,076.

4. Details of the impact

Dr O'Mahony's research has reached a wide audience through book sales, media reports, school activities, image blogs and public events. It has sought to enhance and enrich the public perception and understanding of the visual culture of sport as part of the much-vaunted Olympic 'legacy' agenda. The research has had impact in the following areas: sport museums; the media; school activities; publicly staged events; and an interactive web project.

Sport Museums

Sport museums are a relatively recent phenomenon, with several such institutions having been founded in the last two decades across the globe. Dr O'Mahony has established close relationships with the Directors of the National Football Museum in Manchester, the World Rugby Museum in Twickenham, and the wider umbrella organisation, the Sports Heritage Network. His research insights and findings into the ways that the visual and material traces of sport's history have contributed towards shaping a wider understanding of sport and its history have been embraced within the sport museum environment as a means to enable and enhance a wider audience's engagement with this too often neglected history. This has enabled his research to have an impact upon visitors to these public institutions.

i. Consultation on acquisition of works for the National Football Museum

Dr O'Mahony was consulted by the Director of the National Football Museum over the loan acquisition of a work by Pablo Picasso entitled *fooballeur* and was invited to the official unveiling to talk to the press. His research into this work was included in a press release and media interviews and was disseminated on several websites [a]. This was distributed to museum and guide staff for dissemination to the public. Dr O'Mahony was further consulted over the acquisition of a loan of a work by Charles Cundell (*A Chelsea Cup Tie*, 1923). His advice contributed to the decision to accept the loan and display the work in the collection. The Deputy Director has stated 'Dr O'Mahony's research into the visual in sport has been very useful and has directly assisted the museum in its public engagement activities'. He has also stated that collaboration with academic colleagues, including Dr O'Mahony, has been a significant factor in the recent award of Arts Council Designated Status for the museum, making the National Football Museum the first sport museum, and the youngest ever museum, to achieve this distinction [b]. Between July 2012 (when it re-opened in its newly located premises in Manchester) and September 2013, the National Football Museum welcomed over 500,000 visitors, and surpassed its ambitious first year visitor target in just nine months.

ii. Research on the History of the Calcutta Cup for the World Rugby Museum

Dr O'Mahony also conducted research into the history of the trophy design for the Calcutta Cup, in collaboration with the World Rugby Museum, for a paper presented at the 2012 Design History Society Conference. The Museum's Director has stated, 'this research has contributed to a wider understanding of this unique item in the World Rugby Museum's collection', and requested a copy of the paper for the Museum library and to inform future exhibition/display information [c]. The World Rugby Museum currently welcomes, on average, more than 25,000 visitors per annum. This is expected to increase dramatically in 2015 when England hosts the Rugby Union World Cup.

Media Activities

Dr O'Mahony's research into the visual culture of sport attracted media attention in the run up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This resulted in the making of a short programme for BBC America/BBC World (*Picture This* series) that explored key moments in the history of the Olympic movement through the images that documented those moments. This included the expansion of women's participation in the Games and the political hijacking of the Olympics from the Berlin

Games of 1936 to the Munich massacre of 1972. The programme was broadcast worldwide and posted on the BBC News Magazine website where it has received over 64,000 hits (June 2013) [d]. Interviews were also conducted with Radio Bristol (17 June and 28 July 2012).

School Activities

As part of a *Visual in Sport* conference/workshop held at White Hart Lane, Tottenham in 2009, students from St Thomas More Catholic School, a mixed, independent academy in Haringey, were invited to work on an art project to produce a poster for the event. This resulted in the production of images of sport in a variety of media. The event was reported in the school's newsletter: 'Pupils from the Art Department at St Thomas More Catholic School in London, recently had the opportunity to present examples of their art works at an academic conference co-organised by Dr O'Mahony from Bristol's History of Art department and Mike Huggins of the University of Cumbria'. Describing these works he continued, 'case studies are now being piloted to show the positive impact sport is making on academic attainment in art and design'. Several of these works were subsequently reproduced in the School Newsletter [e].

'My Games'

Dr O'Mahony has also sought to have an impact upon the way that contemporary sporting practices are viewed and documented in visual terms. Accordingly, his research generated an interactive image blog entitled *My Games: The View from the South-West* (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/my-games>) which sought the submission of photographs from the general public documenting their own unique experiences of the 2012 London Olympic Games. The 'My Games' image blog project has attracted over 150 image submissions from approximately 24 contributors. These individuals range from fellow academics to sport enthusiasts [f]. The project has attracted the attention of the Sports Heritage Network, an umbrella organisation founded in 2006 to build links between academic researchers and sport museums in Britain, and is currently being incorporated into *The People's Record*, an Arts Council funded project established with the objective 'to record the impact of the Games, from 2010-2012, museums, libraries and archives around the UK supported community groups to collect and create material related to the Games, past and present'. Dr O'Mahony intends to use this project as a template for further public-facing projects in the build-up to the Soccer World Cup in Brazil in 2014, the Rugby Union World Cup in England in 2015 and the Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

Other Events

A public Q&A event organised by Watershed RELAYS (Regional Education Legacy for Arts and Youth Sport) in Bristol attracted an audience of 30 to discuss the history and culture of the Games. The event, organised under the title *A Visual Guide to the Olympics*, featured a discussion between three authors of books on the Games (David Goldblatt, Dr Martin Polley and Dr O'Mahony) and contributed towards informing public discourse and shaping discussion of the visual legacy of the Games.

A series of six weekly public lectures at the University of Bristol, and a film screening at Arnolfini, Bristol was also held under the theme *Art and Sport* in Autumn 2011. The lectures were attended by approximately 25-35 people each week.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[a] <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/national-football-museum-nets-a-picasso-801209> 26 October 2012 and

<http://manunianmatters.co.uk/content/26106355-amazing-picasso-football-sculpture-unveiled-manchesters-national-football-museum> 26 October 2012.

[b] Director and Deputy Director of the National Football Museum, Urbis Building, Cathedral Gardens, Manchester M4 3BG. Corroborates academic collaboration with National Football Museum and its link to public reputation and attendance.

[c] Director of the World Rugby Museum, Twickenham Stadium, Rugby Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW1 1 DZ. Corroborates academic collaboration with World Rugby Museum.

[d] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19084494>). Email from BBC confirming 64,000+ hits as of June 2013. Corroborates BBC programme and number of views of this online. Number of viewers for transmission unavailable.

[e] A copy of the School Newsletter. Corroborates school artworks inspired by Art and Sport conference.

[f] <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/my-games>. Corroborates web-based project, My Games.