

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Bristol</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 34 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory</p>
<p>Title of case study: New research on British art benefits museums and their visitors in the UK and overseas</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research at the University of Bristol on the international contexts of British art has made a distinctive contribution to a renaissance of British art studies that began in the late 1980s. Over the past five years, scholars at Bristol have worked with museums in London, the regions and overseas to engage the widest possible audience in fresh thinking about British art. Exhibitions and catalogue essays informed by their research have raised awareness of individual artists and changed public and critical perceptions of British art as a whole. They have also brought many benefits to the museum partners, attracting visitors, generating income and enhancing the museums’ understanding of their own collections. Some exhibitions have inspired additional collaborations which have fed back into research and further extended audiences for British art.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>British art from the 16th century to the present is a major focus of research at Bristol. The scholars listed below share a commitment to re-evaluating British art in its international contexts – a project they have in common with galleries such as Tate Britain, with its ‘mission to encourage a broader understanding of the international reach of Tate’s historic collection’ [a]. Scholars at Bristol seek to extend their research through curatorial collaborations, encouraging fresh interpretations of objects and reaching new audiences. In 2010, a British Art Research Cluster (BARC) was established at Bristol, funded by the university, to consolidate and further promote the focus on British art (http://www.bris.ac.uk/arhistory/research/barc.html). BARC is managed by a committee of staff (led first by Elizabeth Prettejohn and currently by Grace Brockington) and postgraduate research students. It coordinates symposia, grant applications, postgraduate research and curatorial projects. Its activities include a programme of teaching collaborations with museums and galleries at MA and PhD level, which lead to public exhibitions in their own right.</p> <p>1. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Professor of History of Art, October 2005 to July 2012) Since the late 1980s, Prettejohn has played a leading role in the re-evaluation of Victorian and modern art in Britain. Her work demonstrates the importance of British art in its wider international contexts, impacting on the study of modern art abroad, as well as within Britain. Her research pays particular attention to the vanguard movements of the 19th century, especially Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism. Her publications on these subjects [1, 2] are regarded as the standard works in the field, as shown by the fact that she was invited to give the Paul Mellon lectures in British Art (2011) at the National Gallery, London, repeated at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut, USA. She has advanced her research through the curation of exhibitions and through contributions to numerous exhibition catalogues (detailed in section 4).</p> <p>2. Grace Brockington (Senior Lecturer in History of Art, joined September 2007) Brockington’s research on art, internationalism and the peace movement in the early 20th century has expanded the field of British art studies, both in its discovery of new material and in the case it makes for the cosmopolitan character of modern art in Britain. Her work on pacifism in the First World War [3] was developed through her role as advisor on the exhibition <i>Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops 1913-19</i> (Courtauld Gallery, London, 2009). Her edited collection [4] led to an AHRC-funded research network entitled ‘Internationalism and Cultural Exchange, 1870–1920’ (http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/research/ice/), with Tate Britain as one of several partners. She has designed and supervised AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award projects in partnership with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales (2008–11) and the Imperial War Museum, London (2011–14), both of which include public exhibitions in their processes of research and dissemination.</p>

3. Dorothy Rowe (Senior Lecturer in History of Art, joined September 2006)

Since the late 1990s, Rowe has conducted research on contemporary diasporic artists working in Britain. Her work is informed by feminist methodologies and pays particular attention to marginalised groups such as black, women and transgendered artists. She argues against a reductively sociological explanation of their work, seeking instead to recover a sense of its aesthetic value and responsiveness to the art-historical canon. Her research has led to publications [5] including catalogue essays, and to dialogues and collaborations with curators such as Paul Goodwin (Tate Britain), and the artist-curators Phil Sayers and Rikke Lundgreen on their exhibition *Changing Places* (National Museums Liverpool; Bury Art Gallery, Museum and Archive; The Collection and the Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln; and Leeds City Art Gallery; 2008–9).

4. Tatiana String (Senior Lecturer in History of Art, October 1998 to July 2010)

String's research repositions Tudor art in the wider culture of Early Modern Europe. Her monograph [6] examines the function of art as propaganda, particularly through the medium of portraiture. She developed her work on portraiture through two exhibitions with the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG) and the National Trust, co-curated with Tarnya Cooper (chief curator and 16th century curator at NPG) and assisted by a team of postgraduate students: *'On the Nature of Women': Tudor and Jacobean Portraits of Women* (Montacute House, Somerset, 2008–9); and *Imagined Lives: Mystery Portraits 1520–1640* (Montacute House; The National Portrait Gallery, London; M Shed, Bristol; 2010–13).

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

- [1] Prettejohn, Elizabeth, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Pre-Raphaelites*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 329 pp. Prettejohn contributed the 'Introduction' (1–14), 'The Painting of Dante Gabriel Rossetti' (103–15), and 'Envoi' (265–72). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521895156>. Reviewed in *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, vol. 22, Fall 2013.
- [2] Prettejohn, Elizabeth, 'Waterhouse's Imagination', in Elizabeth Prettejohn et al., *J.W. Waterhouse: The Modern Pre-Raphaelite*, Royal Academy of Arts; Groninger Museum, 2008, 23–35. Prettejohn also contributed 33 out of 59 catalogue entries. Can be supplied upon request. Reviewed in *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol. 10, November 2009.
- [3] Brockington, Grace, *Above the Battlefield: Modernism and the Peace Movement in Britain, 1900-1918*, Yale University Press, 2010, 264 pp. Supported by a British Academy Small Research Grant (£3,707, awarded 2010). Listed in REF2.
- [4] Brockington, Grace, ed., *Internationalism and the Arts in Britain and Europe at the Fin de Siècle*, Peter Lang, 2009, 368 pp. Brockington contributed the introduction (1–24) and one chapter: "A Jacob's Ladder between Country and Country": Art and Diplomacy before the First World War', 297–319. Listed in REF2.
- [5] Dorothy Rowe, 'Retrieving, Re-Mapping and Rewriting Histories of British Art: Lubaina Himid's *Revenge*', in Dana Arnold and David Peters-Corbett, eds, *A Companion to British Art 1600-Present*, Wiley Blackwell, 2013, 289–314. Listed in REF2.
- [6] String, Tatiana, *Art and Communication in the Reign of Henry VIII*, Ashgate, 2008, 157 pp. Can be supplied upon request. Reviewed in *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 50, October 2011.

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

Research at Bristol has contributed to a number of exhibitions, raising the visibility of British art, drawing attention to its international contexts, changing perceptions of individual artists, generating footfall and economic benefit for the host museums and improving understanding of collections. The process of curating has expanded the underlying research and led to further scholarship and exhibitions, building a symbiotic relationship between university and museum. The following takes a selection of these exhibitions as examples of the impact that BARC has achieved.

Prettejohn's work on Victorian art has been key to the development of exhibitions such as: *The*

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Pre-Raphaelites (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 2009); *Edward Burne-Jones: The Earthly Paradise* (Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 2009–10); *The Pre-Raphaelites and Italy* (Ravenna Museum of Art; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2010); *J. W. Waterhouse: The Modern Pre-Raphaelite* (Groninger Museum; Royal Academy of Arts, London; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2008-10); *The Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement 1860-1900* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2011-12); and *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde* (Tate Britain, London; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Pushkin Museum, Moscow; the Mori Art Center, Tokyo, 2012-14). These exhibitions give evidence of the international growth of interest in Victorian art to which Prettejohn's work has been central. They depend heavily on her scholarship, particularly her publications on the Pre-Raphaelites which culminated most recently in her edited collection [1]. In several cases, she contributed essays to the exhibition catalogues [2], extending her research and disseminating it to a wider public readership. She was appointed co-curator of *J.W. Waterhouse*, and sat on the advisory committees for the V&A and Tate exhibitions. *Victorian Avant-Garde* was the second-most popular exhibition ever staged at Tate Britain, with some 243,000 people attending [b]. Sales of tickets and related merchandise (e.g. 32,000 catalogues) delivered considerable economic benefit for the gallery. The lead curator has highlighted the importance of Prettejohn's argument that Victorian art should be reassessed in its international contexts, stating that: 'Prettejohn's essay on the Pre-Raphaelite legacy was praised both in the critical press and on the Tate blog with visitors praising her ability to communicate complex academic issues to a broad audience. The exhibition has been perceived as marking a paradigm shift in scholarship of nineteenth-century British art, especially with regard to the international impact of Pre-Raphaelites, the focus of Prettejohn's essay' [b]. The *Telegraph* (10 September 2010) singled out Prettejohn's essay as 'provocative and surprising', commenting that the exhibition would 'get people thinking'.

Brockington's research on art and pacifism in the First World War [3], and on the cosmopolitan culture which contributed to the peace movement [4], was instrumental to the exhibition *Beyond Bloomsbury*. As a result of her insights, the Omega's pacifist politics became a major theme of the exhibition and its education programme. She advised on the planning of the exhibition and contributed a catalogue essay on the Omega Workshops in wartime, which the lead curator described as 'a cornerstone of the exhibition in the way it was presented to the public' [c]. Some exhibits were included as a direct result of her advice, the curator stating that their interpretation 'was based largely on the research provided by Dr Brockington' [c]. The teachers' resource pack for schools highlighted the context of the peace movement and included Brockington's published work in its sources for further reading [d]. The exhibition as a whole was well attended (close to 44,000 visitors [c]), pulling its weight in a record year for the Courtauld Gallery (179,000 visitors across four exhibitions [e]), and generating income through ticket sales and related merchandise (profits from the shop totalled £94,660 [c]). The show was widely reviewed. The *Burlington Magazine* (vol. 151, September 2009, pp.634–5) stated that 'this timely and well-displayed exhibition will go some way to establishing the Omega's proper place within the wider international field of experimental early modernist art and design', while *Studio International* (22 July 2009) observed that 'this is a key exhibition, a revision that examines an important episode in British art'. It singled out Brockington's essay for comment, and noted that 'the catalogue is excellent - a major contribution to the scholarship of the period'.

Rowe's argument that the work of contemporary artists from marginal groups belongs equally to the mainstream of art-historical tradition [5] led to a commission to write catalogue essays for the exhibition *Changing Places* (2008–9). The project brought recent feminist art to new audiences by integrating it with more traditional collections in popular venues. As the *Lincolnshire Echo* (14 February 2008) noted, it 'reaches parts other exhibitions don't [...] the show provides a new take on both the historic and contemporary works'. The curators' 'Final Activity Report' cites indicators that the exhibitions attracted new audiences [f]. The project was incorporated into Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans (LGBT) History Month in Lincoln (February 2008). It was the setting for an LGBT cabaret event hosted by The Collection, at which 42% of the 180-plus visitors were attending the museum for the first time [g]. The exhibition also had an impact on the presentation of permanent collections: 're-hanging parts of the collection was sometimes so successful that the galleries wanted to keep the new changes' [f]. The collaboration between Rowe, Sayers and Lundgreen was

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developed further in the exhibition *Myth & History* (2009) at The Bristol Gallery, curated by Rowe and including the artist Lubaina Himid, about whom Rowe has also written [5].

Research-based postgraduate teaching in British art has led to several public exhibitions. For example, String's work on Tudor portraiture [6] led to collaborative MA projects with NPG, notably the exhibition *Imagined Lives*. Student research, supervised by String and guided by her published work on the conventions of Tudor portraiture, led to discoveries that informed the exhibition catalogue and wall texts. Eight celebrated authors (including John Banville, Tracy Chevalier and Joanna Trollope) supplied fictional lives to accompany the portraits, leading the *Guardian* (17 March 2010) to comment that 'new life is being breathed into [the] collection'. Their stories have been published on the NPG website (<http://www.npg.org.uk/business/publications/>) and as a book. The authors have also given talks at the gallery and online, such as Chevalier speaking about her story on the website *Technology, Entertainment, Design: Ideas Worth Spreading* (<http://www.ted.com/talks/>). The exhibition proved successful enough to transfer from the National Trust's Montacute House (2010–11) to the NPG itself (2011–12). The NPG press release notes that research undertaken at Bristol 'led to a clearer understanding of the past of these portraits [...] more evidence is now available about the possible identity of the sitters' [h], while the *National Trust Bulletin* welcomed the exhibition as 'a chance to undertake conservation work on these pictures, improving their condition and appearance after many years in storage' [i]. When the show transferred to M Shed in Bristol (2012–13), a new layer was added with the introduction of contemporary photographic portraits of famous Bristolians. M Shed contacted the university for further input, and Dr Peter Dent gave a public gallery lecture (28 November 2012). Dent was appointed as a Renaissance specialist following String's departure and is continuing the teaching collaboration with NPG. Public feedback on his talk stated, for example, that 'I really felt I understood the art/artists better for hearing the talk [...] I'll definitely be back to see the exhibition again' [j]. The exhibition has incorporated extensive opportunities for visitor interaction. For example, visitors were invited to respond by writing their own fictional lives, some of which have appeared on blogs, such as <http://sarah-crawl-space.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/real-and-imagined-lives-at-mshed.html>. One visitor tweeted that 'it's a great exhibition and my grandson spent an hour typing his short story' (<https://twitter.com/mshedbristol/status/271927057913626626>).

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

- [a] Stephen Deuchar, 'Director's Foreword', in Alison Smith, ed., *Symbolist Art in Poland*, London: Tate Publishing, 2009. States Tate's mission to explore the international contexts of British art.
- [b] Head of British Art to 1900, Tate Britain, London. Details Prettejohn's contribution to *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-garde*, and the importance of the exhibition as a whole.
- [c] Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, Courtauld Gallery, London. Details Brockington's contribution to *Beyond Bloomsbury*, and the importance of the exhibition as a whole.
- [d] The Courtauld Gallery, 'Teachers' Resource: *Beyond Bloomsbury Designs of the Omega Workshops 1913–19*', 2009, pp. 7, 14. A school education pack which draws on and cites Brockington's research.
- [e] Courtauld Institute of Art, 'Report and Financial Statements 31 July 2009', p. 6. Cites visitor numbers for the Courtauld Gallery in 2009, demonstrating the success of *Beyond Bloomsbury*.
- [f] Phil Sayers and Rikke Lundgreen, 'Changing Places: Final Activity Report', 5 November 2009, pp. 2, 3. How *Changing Places* attracted new visitors to the museums involved and influenced museum policy.
- [g] 'The Collection: Celebrating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans History Month 2008', pp. 1, 3. Provides evidence that *Changing Places* helped to attract new visitors to The Centre, Lincoln, as part of the LGBT History Month programme.
- [h] National Portrait Gallery Press Office, 'News Release: Famous authors create new identities for mystery portraits', 19 November 2011. Details Bristol's contribution to *Imagined Lives*.
- [i] Catherine Daunt, 'Imagined Lives at Montacute', *The National Trust Bulletin*, July 2010, p. 3. Explains the benefit of *Imagined Lives* to National Trust collections.
- [j] Visitor feedback on Dr Dent's lecture for *Real and Imagined Lives*, M Shed, Bristol. How ongoing university involvement in the exhibition made it more accessible to the public.