

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: London South Bank University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: Communication, Culture and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>Title of case study: Tate Encounters: Improving Tate’s operational and conceptual definitions of audience through collaborative, interdisciplinary and qualitative research.</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study demonstrates how research has informed and influenced the policies and practices of a leading UK museum group, the Tate; and specifically to (a) barriers to access to publicly-funded culture and (b) responses to cultural policies advocating cultural diversity amongst audiences.</p> <p>Impact includes: (i) repositioning of Tate’s On-Line strategy leading to a more permeable web-site; (ii) recognition and acceptance by Tate Trustees, Management and funding authorities of the significance of longitudinal social science research in shaping the plans and future development of Tate; (iii) informing and influencing the Tate’s Audience Development Strategy, 2012-15; (iv) modelling conceptual categories of audiences to allow for effective audience recognition and engagement; and (v) advising Tate’s learning programmes in relation to the use of new media and making them more relevant to a diverse youth audience.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research underpinning this Impact Case study was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council under its strategic programme, ‘Diasporas, Migration and Identities’ (AHRC Grant No: AH/E508774/1; PI: Andrew Dewdney; £495,197).</p> <p>This 3-year research project, carried out during 2007-10, was led by Professor Andrew Dewdney (Professor of Educational Development, LSBU) in collaboration with Drs Victoria Walsh (Head of Adult Programmes, Tate Britain) and David Dibosa (Senior Lecturer, University of the Arts, London).</p> <p>It is recognised across the UK museum sector and relevant policy-making fields, that despite a significant increase in museum attendance over the preceding decade (supported by free access policies), and despite substantial financial investment by government in targeted education programmes, the demographic representation of minority audiences, primarily classified as ‘Black, Minority and Ethnic’ (BME), remains disproportionately low. The absence of BME audiences, from Tate specifically, comes on top of established research findings that demonstrate that art museum attendance is highest amongst higher income and higher educationally qualified sectors and conversely lowest amongst social sectors with low income and low educational attainment.</p> <p>The Tate Encounters research project sought to identify the barriers to access to publicly funded culture through a greater knowledge and understanding of the encounter with a leading international art museum, of people who fit the demographic of non-attendees, as well as generating new insights into how museum professionals might respond to cultural policies which advocate cultural diversity amongst audiences.</p> <p>A matrix framework of research strands and methodologies was adopted focussing on three areas: (i) Audience, (ii) Collection and Exhibition and (iii) Digital Media. The research sought to develop a more sustained and institutionally inclusive interrogation of the practice and effect of museum activity and of policy-making focused on cultural diversity, curatorship and audience development. A significant body of qualitative data was generated related to participants’ experience of encountering the art museum which formed the basis of the evidential analysis. This included: 300 student questionnaires; 200 student essays on Tate Modern and Tate Britain; 12 student workshops; 12 in depth student research projects; 5 extended participant family edited ethnographic films; 38 Tate staff interviews and interviews with 72 participants through the</p>

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Research in Process events at Tate Britain.

The outputs from the research include: an Executive Report for the Tate Trustees, a major theoretical book, and an archival website containing an edited selection of research data, including 6 on-line working papers.

Key findings/insights from the research were:

(i) Audience:

- no unified, clear understanding of audience in organisational operation exists, neither in policy and strategy, nor in marketing and education practice.
- the language of audience is professionally un-reflexive and in the specific case of diversity practices operates within the Tate as the distribution of risk to what are perceived to be the central and core mission.
- redefining identity in terms of contemporary subjectivities rather than cultural ethnicities and race.

(ii) Collection and Exhibition:

- continued curatorial practices based upon Western Modernism with its aesthetising trope, which limit Tate's exploration of ways in which the historical collection engages with the wider history of British visual culture.

(iii) Digital Media

- the importance of the articulation of the viewing position of the contemporary subject whose sources of cultural authority lie beyond the traditional expertise of the museum specialist.
- the recognition that social media is a major conduit for audience participation and co-production.

Although this research focuses on the Tate case, the findings and insights from this study have important implications for all art museums and for art, media and gallery education in general.

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

1. Report to Tate Trustees (2010) – available on request from LSBU.
2. Dewdney A, Dibosa D & Walsh V, (2013) *Post Critical Museology: Theory and Practice in the Museum*, Routledge, London. Submitted as Output for A. Dewdney in REF2 (LSBU 36/DewA/1).
3. www.tateencounters.org.
4. Dewdney A, Dibosa D & Walsh V, (2011) 'Cultural Diversity: Politics, Policy and Practices: The Case of Tate Encounters' in Nightingale E & Sandell R (eds), *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*, Routledge, London.
5. Dewdney A,(2011), Transmediation: Tracing the Social Aesthetic, *Philosophy and Photography*, Vol4, (1). Submitted as Output for A. Dewdney in REF2 (LSBU 36/DewA/2).
6. Dewdney. A. & Walsh. V., (2013), "From Culture Diversity to the limits of Aesthetic Modernism, in Noack. R. (ed). *Agency, Ambivalence, Analysis*. Milan. MeLa. Submitted as Output for A. Dewdney in REF2 (LSBU 36/DewA/4).

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

Since 2008, the research has had primary impact on the approach to audience recognition, development and engagement at the Tate Museum Group and the operations of its family of museums. It has also had secondary impact on Government departments and bodies engaged with policy for regulation of culture (eg Department for Culture, Media and Sport, The Arts Council) and Action Based and 'problem solving' research on AHRC modelling of methodologies in the Museum and Exhibition Community.

Based upon the research, a number of beneficial changes have resulted within the Tate's operational practices related to perceptions of audience. These include:

(i) According to the former Curator of Tate On-line Collections (1), the research directly influenced the Tate's On-Line Strategy (2010-12) and the redesign of a more permeable website, which recognised the need for social media tools to be involved across the organisation if Tate was to be open and responsive to younger and diverse audiences.

(ii) Influencing key decision takers and modelling of conceptual categories of audience to allow for effective audience development. The Head of Research at Tate has stated "*Tate Encounters has had a considerable impact. It revealed how we understood Government policies on diversity, which research methodologies to use about managing Tate's programme and audience expectations*" (2).

This was also recognised by the Director, Tate National (3), as contributing to the organisation's national audience strategy by highlighting the need for a new audience typology beyond Marketing's socio-economic categorisations and models of cultural deficit in order to build new audiences. In September 2009, the research team was invited to present their findings to the Directors and Chief Curators of all four Tate museums.

(iii) The recognition by the Tate Trustees of the significance of longitudinal social science research to the future of the Museum. The acknowledged impact and value of this unprecedented form of open critical discussion led to the project being invited to participate in a series of working seminars called for by the Tate Trustees to inform Tate's Audience Development Strategy, 2012-15, which included discussions with DCMS, the policy think-tank Demos, and the consultancy group Audiences London. On request from Tate, a dedicated report was submitted and published by Tate and subsequently tabled and discussed by the Trustees in January 2012. Following the Tate Trustees discussion cross-departmental meetings were arranged to disseminate, consider and respond to the projects findings (3).

(iv) In Tate's Learning programmes the project's concept of transvisuality was taken up by youth programming in redefining the ways in which the National Collection of British Art could be accessed through the use of new media and made relevant to a diverse youth audience (4).

(v) The involvement of Dr Walsh and other Heads of Sections at Tate directly in the action research project through to its conclusion in 2010, represented a major departure from the Tate's previous method of commissioning external short term consultancies.

Secondary impacts arising from the research project include:

(vi) The project team was invited by DCMS (2008) to present its emergent findings to an invited audience of senior policy makers and community leaders as part of their 'Black History Month' programme. The research findings featured in generating a debate which fed into a reappraisal of the Labour Government's minority targeting cultural policies as well as European cultural diversity policy.

(vii) In 2008, the project findings and implications for debates on multiculturalism were presented in a closed seminar attended by artists, academics and policy makers led by Arts Council England. The outcomes of this seminar reviewing the status of cultural difference and policy were published in a specially commissioned report by ACE/Third Text (5).

(viii) The Mayor of London's Cultural Advisor and the Chair of the National Museum Directors' Conference Diversity Strategy, took part in a public programme at Tate Britain (2009) which has directly influenced museum professionals and practitioners responsible for audience development in Britain and Europe. For example, the Museums and Libraries Association project, funded by the European Commission, invited the Tate Encounters project team to present a keynote paper at an international conference on the future of cultural diversity policy and programming organised by the

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V&A and Leicester University in March 2010 (6).

(ix) The research approaches employed in Tate Encounters project have been recognised by the AHRC as a particularly appropriate methodology for achieving impact in the arts and humanities. and was selected by the AHRC as a case study of best practice. The project was shortlisted for 'Research Project of the Year' in the 2008 THE Awards in recognition of its innovative modelling (7). The Tate's recognition of the success of the approach adopted in the Tate Encounters project persuaded them to collaborate with LSBU on two on-going pieces of action research (both funded by the AHRC (8)) in the field of audience development; one in Marketing with a further project in Tate Media.

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

(1) Contact: Head of Google Art Project (formerly, Curator of Tate On-Line Collections)

(2) Statement: Director of Research, Tate

(3) Statement: Director, Tate National

(4) Statement: Convenor of Young Peoples programmes, Tate

(5) Dewdney A, Dibosa D & Walsh V, (2010) 'Cultural Inequality, Multicultural Nationalism and Global Diversity' Tate Encounters: Britishness and Visual Culture. *Third Text/Arts Council Special Report*. - available on request from LSBU.

(6) Dewdney. A. Dibosa. D. and Walsh. V. (2012) 'Cultural Diversity: politics, policy and practices. The Case of Tate Encounters' in Sandell, R. & Nightingale, E. (eds.), *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*. London. Routledge.

(7) <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/403650.article>

(8) AHRC-funded projects:

- (i) 'Museology': 'Museum attendance and the public realm: The agency of visitor information in Tate's organisational practices of making the art museum's audience' (2010-13) and
- (ii) 'The Use of Digital Video in the Visitor's Encounter with the Work of Art' (2011-14).