

<p>Institution: The Courtauld Institute of Art</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UOA34</p>
<p>Title of case study: Web project <i>Gothic Ivories</i>, led by Professor John Lowden</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact The Gothic Ivories Project is an online research resource which aims to provide detailed information and high-quality images of all Gothic ivories. This database has been constructed in a collaborative venture with over 260 museums and collections in 19 countries to date. It is accessible at www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk. Despite being work in progress, the site already attracts over 2,000 users per month. It has transformed the possibilities and practicalities of ivories research. The principal beneficiaries are scholars, students, museum staff, the art market and the wider public.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research <u>Introduction</u></p> <p>The Project began by building a database of all ivories sculpted in Western Europe in the Gothic period, c.1200-1530 (including neo-gothic [19th-century] works). It supersedes Raymond Koechlin's monumental <i>Les ivoires gothiques français</i>, published in three volumes (Paris 1924). Whereas Koechlin's study had 1,328 entries and approximately 500 illustrations, the Gothic Ivories Project by end of July 2013 had in its database more than 4,300 objects, and more than 10,000 images. Every item is accompanied by a detailed catalogue entry and unprecedented photographic coverage, much of it consisting of newly executed high-resolution digital images.</p> <p><u>Catalogue information: questions of authenticity</u></p> <p>The proportion of Gothic ivories whose date and circumstances of production or early provenance are securely documented is very low. As a result, the issue of the authenticity of many Gothic ivories is uncertain. This is a matter of great interest (and some concern) to all those who work on or curate Gothic ivories. A further complicating factor is the number of neo-gothic copies of what are assumed to be medieval models, in some cases utilizing plaster casts of which some thousands of examples were made between the late 18th and 20th centuries. The Project is thus important for the history of collecting as well as for the history of the physical material. It records all dates and origins that have been proposed in the literature along with the opinion of the curator at the museum in question.</p> <p><u>Photographic resources</u></p> <p>An essential element of the Project is the commissioning and sourcing of high-resolution photographs, which provide multiple views of the objects. In addition, old photographs are reproduced when they supply information subsequently lost: for example, because the object was stolen (or destroyed) during the 20th century, or polychrome decoration was added or removed.</p> <p><u>Basic functionalities of the website</u></p> <p>Rules governing metadata input have ensured a high level of consistency throughout the database. The user can conduct simple or multi-criteria searches. A simple search will find specific words from any field. An advanced search can be made across many fields together: for example, you</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

can search for the left wing of a diptych, 11-12 cm tall, with a single register of images under an architectural frame comprising four arches. Given that many ivories survive as fragments, this type of advanced search promises to be especially useful in bringing such fragments together.

Additional functionalities

Powerful research capability is provided by specialist software. Up to four objects can be viewed side by side on a single screen, and closely compared by zooming in on each one individually.

Timetable for completion

Research on the Project has been underway since October 2008. Funding is secured to October 2014, after which it is planned to maintain and update the Project.

Key Researchers (all at The Courtauld Institute of Art)

Prof. John Lowden, faculty, Principal Investigator
 Dr Catherine Yvard, Gothic Ivories Project Manager
 Dr Sarah Guérin, Post-doctoral Researcher, 2011-13

3. References to the research

1. 'Gothic Ivory Sculpture: Old Questions, New Directions'. International conference co-organised by the Courtauld Institute of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 23rd-24th March 2012.
2. S. Guérin, 'An ivory Virgin at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in a Gothic sculptor's oeuvre', in *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 154 (June 2012), pp.394-402.
3. C. Yvard, 'Koechlin, Raymond', Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press. Accessed 13 November 2012, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2226707>
4. Two-year post-doctoral fellowship of Dr Sarah Guérin at The Courtauld, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSRC), 2011-13.
5. PhD Studentship 2012-15 (AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award 'Gothic Ivories: Evidence from the Collections of the British Museum') jointly supervised at The Courtauld Institute / British Museum.
6. John Lowden and John Cherry, *Medieval Ivories and Works of Art: The Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario* (Toronto, 2008).

Research Grants:

Competitive public funding was secured for items 4 and 5

Between 2008 and 2013 the Gothic Ivories Project was additionally funded by the following grants:

- Phase one of the Gothic Ivories project (2008/09 - 2010/11): Thomson Works of Art, at a rate of £80k per annum amounting to £240,000 over three years.

Impact case study (REF3b)

- Phase two of the Gothic Ivories project (2011/12 - 2013/14): Thomson Works of Art and Ruddock Foundation for the Arts, London, at a rate of £40k per annum each, with a further contribution of USD\$10,000 from The Audrey Love Foundation, New York (yielding £5,887.35 via AFCIA).

4. Details of the impact

The Gothic Ivories Project was devised following a widely publicised display at the Courtauld Gallery (*Ivories from the Thomson Collection*) and a resulting catalogue by John Lowden (2008). It was decided to establish collaborative relationships with all institutions and individuals known to possess Gothic ivories; to provide information and at least one image per object, and, most important, to make all this material available to a wide public as well as a scholarly audience via a website, free to the user. This site, www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk, went online in December 2010 with 749 ivories and approximately 4,000 images. Since then there have been regular uploads from the database to the website, so that currently there are more than 3,100 objects with nearly 10,000 photographs online. Initially impacting primarily upon institutions and curators, the Project is now attracting attention from anyone seeking to research Gothic ivories. This pattern of impact will change again once the main body of database material is fully accessible online (October 2014).

Impacts 1 - 3: Research collaboration with institutions, their curators and their collections

The earliest impact of the Project saw the creation of a new international network linking key contributors: museums, galleries and private collections. Of particular importance were curators from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Louvre and the Musée du Cluny in Paris, and the V&A, British Museum and Wallace Collection in London, together representing the largest holdings of Gothic ivories. In turn, their support reassured smaller institutions as to the bona fides of the Project. Further crucial collaborations were with the *Réunion des Musées Nationaux* and the *Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine* in France, both of which provided the Project with high resolution images of ivories from numerous French public collections without charge for their reproduction. This represented a crucial financial saving.

The second impact saw participating museums gain a deeper knowledge of their own objects. Previously unknown details of provenance, and citations in the scholarly literature, were brought to light. The Project has already revealed numerous previously unpublished ivories allowing a much more complete picture of the production of this category of objects. Many collaborating institutions have also agreed to new digital photography, made to standards set by the Project. Where no alternative was feasible, the Project has shared the cost of new photography. Museums, recognising the value of the site, have begun to undertake the production of fresh catalogues of their ivories: the Courtauld Gallery (John Lowden), 2013, and the Victoria & Albert Museum (2 vols., Paul Williamson, Glyn Davies), forthcoming July 2014, are the first two.

Third, the research has had an unprecedented impact by bringing to light numerous hitherto unknown or overlooked ivories, some of them of the highest quality.

Impact 4: Individual scholarly research:

Visitors are encouraged to register as users of the Gothic Ivories website. Currently there are more than 330 registered users— a surprisingly large number for such a specialised research field.

Impact case study (REF3b)

We know from web-based data that these users are spread all over the world. The functionality of the website encourages users to become part of a Gothic ivories dialogue, be it through the online forum or through their ability to create and share sets of images.

Impact 5: Art and commerce: the art market, dealers, and collectors

Many Gothic ivories are still in private collections. Exceptionally important ivories - previously entirely unknown - still come to light on a regular basis in the sale rooms of London, Paris and New York. The most important of these private collectors are linked in various ways to the Gothic Ivories Project as advisors, and especially as financial supporters. Sotheby's and Christie's too are formal collaborators and have made their archives accessible to the Project.

Impact 6: Public interest in Gothic ivories

Since the site was launched, the number of users and the extent of their use have both grown enormously. The most recent month (July 2013) saw 80,977 pages consulted. In addition, the number of users has grown steadily to an average of 2,300 unique visitors per month. This demonstrates that the site has already greatly increased the number of researchers in the field.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

The following five names and five websites can corroborate the claims as to the impact of the project. For the creation of a new international network, and collaboration with sources in France in particular, see 1-10. For the use of the site by participating museums, see 1-2, and 4-8. For the impact on individual scholarly research, see 1-10. For the impact on collectors, the art market and dealers, see 3. For the impact on the broad public, see 6-10.

1. Keeper of Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass
Victoria & Albert Museum of Art, London

2. Curator of Medieval Art and The Cloisters
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

3. Private collector/patron of the arts
Ruddock Foundation for the Arts, London

4. Conservateur en chef au département des Objets d'art
Musée du Louvre, Paris

5. Universitätsprofessorin
Heinrich Heine Universität, Düsseldorf

6. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_Projects/all_Projects/gothic_ivory_carvings.aspx

7. <http://www.louvre.fr/collaboration-au-gothic-ivories-Project-2008-2011>

8. http://www.palazzomadamatorino.it/pagina3.php?id_pagina=614

9. <http://chi.anthropology.msu.edu/2010/12/27/the-gothic-ivories-Project-a-digital-museum-exemplar/>

10. <http://medievalhistories.com/gothic-ivories>