

Institution: The University of Edinburgh
Unit of Assessment: 34 Art and Design: History Practice and Theory
Title of case study: Impressionism, Scotland and the Art Market: Changing the Profile of Scottish Impressionist Painting and Patrons
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Shifting Impressionist studies to Scotland for the first time, this research (2005-12) stimulated debate about Impressionism and Scottish national identity. Setting the work of neglected Scottish artists in a European context, it experimented with the exhibition of Impressionist art. Reuniting lost collections, it created a precedent for cultural institutions to research, and communicate, the role of the commercial art market in the formation of taste. It enhanced the market value of some Scottish Impressionist art by a factor of as much as 800%, ignited popular interest in the collector Alex Reid, and also in The Glasgow Boys (with a record-breaking 105,000 people visiting one exhibition about their work).</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>In the late nineteenth-century, Impressionism was a term applied to a far wider range of artists than those living and working in France. A century later, however, both popular and academic interest in Impressionist art was firmly centred on Paris and its environs.</p> <p>In 2005, Dr Frances Fowle was appointed as a Lecturer in History of Art at the University of Edinburgh. As part of a partnership between the University and the National Galleries of Scotland, she was seconded half-time to the Scottish National Gallery as a Senior Curator; employed for her knowledge of nineteenth-century French art and Scottish collecting and dealing in that period.</p> <p>It was a time of increasing interest in, and debate on, Scottish national identity, both publicly and within academia, as the country moved towards electing a Scottish National Party-led government for the first time. In 2006, Fowle began working on a research project, drawing the two strands of her expertise together to challenge the following assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the common perception of Scottish art as parochial, inward-looking and independent of any international context or influence; • the neglect suffered by a specific group of artists, The Glasgow Boys, who, in comparison to the Scottish Colourists, for example, were virtually unknown outside Scotland; and • the accepted notion of Paris as the focus of French Impressionism and the general impasse reached with regards to the originality and scope of Impressionist studies. <p>The aim of the research was to examine the Scottish taste for French Impressionism c.1870-1935 and to reassess Scottish art in its European context c.1880-1914. There were three main outputs: the <i>Impressionism and Scotland</i> exhibition (19 July-12 October 2008); a two-day conference (9-10 October 2008), the proceedings of which were published in the <i>Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History</i>; and the publication <i>Van Gogh's Twin</i>, a monograph of the Glasgow art dealer, Alex Reid, published by the National Galleries of Scotland in 2010.</p> <p>Primarily through reuniting lost collections of Impressionist art, the research provided new insights into the importance of Scottish industrialists as artistic patrons and collectors, especially of Impressionism, and the significance of Scottish taste at this period, not only for the cultural</p>

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development of nineteenth-century Scotland, but for artists, dealers, collectors and critics elsewhere in the UK and Europe. Studying the work of The Glasgow Boys and the Scottish Colourists in its wider European context, displayed side by side with French paintings in the exhibition, the research also demonstrated the need, and historical precedent, for a broader definition of Impressionism; raising the status of Scottish art of the period and stimulating heated debate in both the press and the public realm.

3. References to the research

3.1 Edited Book: Fowle, Frances (ed.) *Impressionism and Scotland* National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh. ISBN 978-1-906270-07-0 (REF 2 Output Submitted)

3.2 Edited Journal: Fowle, Frances and Wenley, Robert, (ed.) *Taste and Travel: Scottish Mercantile Collectors and Artists Abroad*, *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History*, Vol.14, 2009-10 ISSN 1362-248X

3.3 Authored Book: Fowle, Frances *Van Gogh's Twin: the Scottish Art Dealer Alexander Reid 1854-1928*. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2010. ISBN 978-1-906270-29-2. (REF 2 Output Submitted)

3.4 Chapter in Edited Book: Fowle, Frances 'La Délicieuse Couleur Décorative: Van Gogh, Alexander Reid et l'Influence de Monticelli en Ecosse' in Georget, Luc and Vial, Marie-Paule (ed.) *Van Gogh et Monticelli* p. 103-128 (Marseilles, 2008-9). ISBN 978-2711854189

3.5 Chapter in Edited Book: Fowle, Frances *Peploe in France: a suitable milieu* in Strang, Alice, Cumming, Elizabeth, Fowle, Frances and Peploe, Guy (eds.) *S.J. Peploe* p. 43-65 (Yale, 2013). (REF 2 Output Submitted) ISBN 978-0300189766

4. Details of the impact

The exhibitions curated by Fowle as part of this research were popular successes, visited by large numbers. Their innovative methods, particularly the hang of the paintings, sparked debate about Impressionism, Scottish art, and Scottish cultural identity. However, in addition, Fowle's research into collecting and dealing sparked a renewed interest in Scottish art of this period, and precipitated a rise in the value and price of these works on the commercial art market.

a) Challenging assumptions: Impressionism and Scotland

Initiated in 2006, with two of its main outputs dated 2008, this research spanned an important period in Scotland's history. Raising the status of Scottish nineteenth-century art and patronage by placing it firmly on an international stage, the work stimulated media, critical and public discourse on Scotland's identity in the wake of the 2007 election, which had returned the country's first Scottish National Party-led government.

Impressionism and Scotland was opened by Linda Fabiani MSP, then Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, on 17th July 2008. A review by Moira Jeffrey in *Scotland on Sunday* (27th July 2008) (5.1) commented on its 'riveting...underlying social history', the academic importance of its 'complex arguments' and its success in 'reminding audiences of the strength and depth of the Glasgow collections that are national assets in everything but name.'

The most original aspect of the installation of *Impressionism and Scotland* was the pairing of Scottish paintings with French nineteenth-century works. This innovative curatorial practice, a visual way of communicating one of the main themes of the research, was noticed and praised by

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the viewing public, with comments in the visitors' book (5.5) including: 'Fabulous contrast / comparison of pictures – really enlightening!' (UK visitor)

In his five star review in *The Scotsman* (18th July 2008) (5.3), Duncan Macmillan wrote 'This show makes no wild claims for Scottish art, but it does an excellent job of putting it in context.' In the polarised debate about broadening the meaning of Impressionism, which the research initiated, his position was that 'the map has to be redrawn. How welcome then that *Impressionism and Scotland* is a major exhibition that does just that.'

Writing in *The Telegraph*, however, Richard Dorment resisted the exhibition's thesis and hang, questioning the right of 'loony art historians' (5.4) to reinterpret the meanings of 'Impressionism' and 'Scotland' (a stance which he abandoned by the time of *Impressionist Gardens* at the National Galleries of Scotland in August 2010). In response, *The Telegraph* received letters of objection from the public and art professionals, including the Director of the Fine Art Society in London. Retorts were logged in the visitors' book (e.g. 'The Telegraph got it wrong') (5.5) and Fowle received notes of support from globally-renowned critics and experts, including Sister Wendy Beckett. (5.6)

b) Exhibition uptake: economic impact in the museums sector

The Edinburgh-based Global Investment Managers, Baillie Gifford, offered £150k in sponsorship to *Impressionism and Scotland* (5.10). 80,000 people visited the show in Edinburgh (with entry charged at £8 per person; £6 for concessions), spending an average of one and a half hours inside; an additional £82k was generated in catalogue sales during the period July-October 2008 (5.10). Well-attended education events and workshops received excellent feedback (5.5)

In addition, *Impressionism in Scotland* affected the public reception of other exhibitions on this subject. The Kelvingrove Art Gallery's 2010 show – *Pioneering Painters: The Glasgow Boys 1880-1900*, whose catalogue drew on many of the themes and exhibited some of the works explored in *Impressionism in Scotland*, toured to the Royal Academy of Arts in London; and broke box office records at the Glasgow venue, with visitor numbers of 105,000 surpassing the previous record set by a 1948 retrospective of Vincent Van Gogh (5.11).

c) Economic impact: studying collecting and influencing the art market

Prior to this project, few exhibitions and publications had explored the role of private collectors in cultivating taste and encouraging artists in new directions by exposing them, at home, to international trends. By undertaking detailed research into the influence of collectors like the Cargills and Alex Reid, and by providing an inventory of Scottish collectors and art dealers in the *Impressionism and Scotland* catalogue, Fowle showed an interest in the workings and influence of the art market that was subsequently included in other exhibition catalogues, such as *Picasso and Modern British Art* (Tate Britain, 2012) (5.7). Writing in the *Guardian*, Ian Jack (5.2) called *Impressionism and Scotland* 'particularly instructive' in this area, noting that this was 'unusual for a picture show' and that Frances Fowle's catalogue was 'excellent' for its inclusion of sales records.

Since the publication of *Van Gogh's Twin* in 2010, Alex Reid has been the subject of particular media attention, from the Culture Show (interview with Frances Fowle broadcast in March 2013). The BBC's ArtWorks Scotland was the first to redress the neglect of The Glasgow Boys by commissioning and broadcasting a documentary on the group by Hunter Films aired on BBC 2 Scotland in June 2010 and on BBC 4 in November 2010 (and again in January 2011). With Fowle as Research Advisor and interviewee, the programme highlighted the influence of French painters on The Glasgow Boys and was seen by over one million viewers (5.9). In February 2013, ArtWorks

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Scotland again interviewed Fowle about the research, this time for a Kirsty Wark-presented documentary on *The Man Who Collected the World: William Burrell*, broadcast 29th May 2013 (BBC2); 21st, 22nd, 23rd August 2013 (BBC 4).

Perhaps most significantly, around the time of *Impressionism and Scotland*, there was a steep rise in the market value of The Glasgow Boys pictures, with George Henry's *Playmates* selling at Sotheby's for £400k (eight times its estimate) and William Kennedy's auction record rising from £17k to £237k. Prices have continued to climb and, in November 2012, Sir James Guthrie's *In the Orchard* was sold at auction, jointly, to Glasgow City Council and the National Galleries of Scotland for £637k (5.8).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Copies of these web page sources are available at
<http://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/REF2014REF3B/UoA+34>

(5.1) Review of *Impressionism in Scotland* by Moira Jeffrey in *Scotland on Sunday*, 27 July 2008 (published online 26.07.08). <http://tinyurl.com/kpk8tdh>

(5.2) Review of *Impressionism in Scotland* by Ian Jack in *The Guardian*, 30 August 2008
<http://tinyurl.com/k87p6zq>

(5.3) Review of *Impressionism in Scotland* by Duncan Macmillan in *The Scotsman* 18th July 2008
<http://tinyurl.com/no4bhc9>

(5.4) Review of *Impressionism in Scotland* by Richard Dorment in *The Telegraph*:
<http://tinyurl.com/m7t8xzq>

(5.5) The visitors' book for *Impressionism and Scotland* can be made available, on request to corroborate statements on public impact.

(5.6) Private correspondence available on request to corroborate claim of her support for Fowle's approach.

(5.7) Picasso and Modern British Art (Tate Britain, 2012) catalogue available to corroborate claim re influence of Fowle's curatorial approach

(5.8) Details of the sale of Sir James Guthrie's *In the Orchard* by Sotheby's in 2012
<http://tinyurl.com/kkpgp2o>

(5.9) The Glasgow Boys documentary on the BBC ArtWorks Scotland website
<http://tinyurl.com/67tvgsr>

Contact details for individual sources provided separately:

(5.10) The Director, National Galleries of Scotland: to corroborate claims re. sponsorship of exhibition by Baillie Gifford, and exhibition income

(5.11) Senior Research Manager (art) Glasgow Museums: to corroborate claims re. figures of *Glasgow Boys* exhibition at Kelvingrove.