

Institution: The University of Edinburgh

Unit of Assessment: 34 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

a. Context

Research in UoA34 at Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) encompasses enquiries into the history of art and design, experimentation through practice and theoretical speculation about their future. This includes research into art and design in contexts such as the environment, the digital, documentary film-making, material production, curation, the mechanics of narrative, and the politics of place and the body. We work with cultural institutions, museums and galleries, professionals in the creative industries, and policy makers in government and beyond. These partnerships benefit consumers of art and design, artists and designers themselves, or publics affected by debates that might appear at first sight to be beyond the scope of the arts.

Our research has, for example, led to changes in policies and attitudes towards derelict buildings, human rights, and terminal illness. It has challenged professional practices in film-making, fashion design, and in the uses of new media. In addition, exhibitions have changed public perceptions about well-known artists and art movements, has transformed the fortunes of some cultural institutions and, indeed, the value and the price of art on the market. Historical and critical researchers (e.g. Fowle, Thomson, Cox, Patrizio, Dimitrakaki) have worked with established museums and galleries, for example the National Galleries of Scotland, the Musée D'Orsay in Paris, the Tate, or Stills Gallery in Edinburgh and the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow. These types of connections enable their research to reach large audiences, for example, the 900,000 people who saw *Monet 1840-1926* (Thomson) in Paris in 2010, or the 21 million who, in association with the Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland, have seen the touring exhibitions of ARTIST ROOMS (Patrizio and Cox, 2012-). This visibility has enabled these researchers to engage the public in reconsidering the value and meaning of the arts. In this respect impacts include a reassessment of the contemporary French landscape (Thomson), changes in the market value of Scottish Impressionist paintings (Fowle 2008-), or, in the case of ARTIST ROOMS, engagement with new audiences for contemporary art, or in the case of *ECONOMY* (Dimitrakaki, 2013) a reassessment of its wider utility.

Practice-based research has been driven by initiatives like the Scottish Documentary Institute (SDI) (Mendelle, Hardie, 2006-), *Beauty By Design* (Burke, 2012-), the *Naked Craft Network* (Macdonald 2013), or *Moving Targets* (Biggs 2010-). These projects work with professionals in the creative industries: film-makers and commissioners, fashion designers, retailers, and campaigners like *All Walks Beyond the Catwalk*, craftsmen and Craft Scotland, the BBC, the digital gaming company Dynamo, and Clash, the music distribution website; and they attempt to question and augment the ways in which culture is produced. They do so through the commissioning and distribution of documentary film, by critiquing the ways in which the fashion industry deals with body size and shape, by engaging culturally and geographically isolated craftspeople in a transatlantic forum to share practice, or by exploring the ways in which new technology companies can harness the creative potential of social media.

Others work with contemporary arts organisations and policy makers to take art and design outside the confines of the gallery. *The Invisible College* (Hollis 2012), for example, has been developed in close collaboration with NVA, the Glasgow-based arts charity, well known for their outdoor, event-based work, as well as partners in Historic Scotland, Creative Scotland, and local communities west of Glasgow; while *ECONOMY* has worked with art-activists Wochenklausur and voluntary groups in Drumchapel, Glasgow. These projects are designed to reach publics with no explicit stake in the worlds of art and design. They include the residents of sites blighted by derelict modernist buildings (*The Invisible College*) or urban deprivation in Glasgow (*ECONOMY*). The documentary film *I am Breathing* (Davie 2012) was developed in association with the Motor Neurone Disease Association to articulate the voices of people with terminal illness or severe disability, while *Unsung Heroes* (Bottomley and Cross 2012) used the art of jewellery to celebrate the achievements of undervalued hospital staff at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary

b. Approach to impact

Our operational approach to impact is diverse. Some projects engage partners beyond the academy from an early stage, to co-produce, share and capitalise on new insights as work progresses. Others use experimental methods of dissemination to ensure that our research has a wide reach and significant impact upon target audiences.

For example, *Moving Targets* was established with external partners (digital media businesses) from the outset. In the case of *Al Khadra* (Mendelle), or *Stem Cell Revolutions* (Hardie), the sensitivities of documentary film-making meant that the projects had to evolve in collaboration with their (non-academic) subjects right from the start.

In contrast, *Monet 1840-1926*, or *Scottish Impressionism* built on pre-existing scholarship, and the task of the partnerships with institutions like the National Galleries of Scotland or the Musée D'Orsay was to create platforms to communicate new insights in an engaging or experimental way. This is also true of the SDI, for whose film-makers innovative distribution methods are key to the success of the films. These influence not just how many people see a film, but who and why. For example, the *New Ten Commandments* (Mendelle) was distributed through schools as part of an education programme.

This means that we make connections with the users and beneficiaries of our research through several different routes. At its simplest, we engage with public audiences – for exhibitions, performances, screenings, and lectures. In cases such as *Moving Targets* or *Design in Action* (Biggs, 2010-), professional partners have been formally integrated into research networks. In the cases of *Monet 1840-1926*, or *Scottish Impressionism*, however, academic staff have acted in a consulting role, embedded in the National Galleries of Scotland and the Musée D'Orsay. In documentary film projects, the SDI has developed a robust, long-term framework within which film-makers can collaborate with academics to experiment with new modes of film production.

We employ a number of strategies to capitalise on these partnerships and learn more about their impact. This involves collecting feedback, at its most immediate in the form of post-event questionnaires, or using social media. *The Invisible College*, or *Designing Alternatives* (Matos, Gieben-Gamal, Macdonald, 2012) used tumblr sites to gather stakeholder reactions to the project, while *I am Breathing* uses a combination of website, blog, and twitter to collect global feedback on the number of screenings held, and in addition, audience response. *ECONOMY* used the consultancy, The Audience Business to collect data on its audiences, not just in figures, but also in-depth interviews with stakeholders, and media coverage. Strategies have also been established to monitor the longer-term impacts of research. *Virtuous Circle*, for example, is a database project currently in progress to monitor the effects of the SDI on film-making in Scotland.

These approaches to impact are supported by institutional systems that enable researchers to integrate potential stakeholders into their research plans as early as possible, and also generate a culture in which our research is publicly shared as a matter of course, leading to greater opportunities for impact in the future.

Organisational Support

New management structures introduced at the merger between ECA and the University of Edinburgh (UoE) in 2011 have enhanced the ways in which we can approach research and impact, especially via the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office (RKEO) which was established at merger as an ECA-wide facilitating body.

Subject area Research Co-ordinators advise staff on how impact might be integrated into projects at proposal stage. They also sit on the ECA Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, and the Deputy Director of Research also sits ex officio on the ECA Exhibitions and Events Committee, all of which are supported by staff in the RKEO, meaning that research, public engagement and impact are closely integrated at an organisational level.

Support is also available within the wider University, notably from the KE Office of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS). This office works closely with ECA on the development of projects, and has been instrumental, for example, in the evolution of the *Diversity Network*, as well as providing workshops held at ECA on funding for knowledge exchange. CHSS also has a

KE and Impact Committee, on which the Deputy Director for Research represents ECA.

Financial support

Financial support for impact exists at several levels and is designed to encourage researchers at ECA to develop research and impact together at all scales, either by helping staff to build relationships with partners old and new, or by funding new forms of dissemination.

The discretionary fund administered by the RKEO within ECA disburses grants of up to £2.5k three times a year for both research and KE activity, ensuring that the two are as integrated as possible in the early development of research proposals. This has seed-funded activities including public exhibitions, workshops to raise awareness about sustainability (*Designing Alternatives*), or the public performance of works that, like *Glitching* (Hood, 2012), address the relationship between our physical bodies and their digital avatars.

The CHSS KE Office makes grant funding available three times a year, and has disbursed nearly £29k to eleven ECA projects since 2010. The ECA Research Directors review applications before they are submitted, ensuring that both the academic and other parties are engaged in the process. This fund has financed projects such as public workshops, for example *Alt Photo* (Ramsenthaler, 2013), which explored the current revival of interest in analogue photography. One £4k grant was used to leverage a further £18k from Creative Scotland to support an artist's residency and outreach activities as part of *ECONOMY*.

ECA has had notable success with the CHSS Challenge Investment Fund, which specifically targets collaborative projects working across different disciplines with potential impact. ECA applications – the majority from Art, Design and History of Art – received £55k during the review period. Funds have been spent on projects that include *The Artist in Palliative Care* (Hardie) which has involved making a musical in a hospice, *Beauty by Design* and *Apes and Angels* (also Burke, 2012-), public exhibition projects which use Renaissance art to challenge modern conceptions of the human body, and *Capital Ruins* (McLanahan), an examination of derelict sites and their potential, in Edinburgh.

In addition, Edinburgh Research and Innovation (ERI) has helped researchers gain external funding to run larger, longer projects devised with an eye to public engagement, knowledge exchange, commercial application and impact. Such projects include *Design in Action*, in which ECA operates as a member of an AHRC-funded KE Hub addressing the value of design across strategic economic sectors, and the ARTIST ROOMS Research Network.

Infrastructural support

ECA's estate, which includes some spectacular spaces, has an important role to play in our engagement with the public. Since the merger in 2011, access to spaces such as these has been considerably enhanced under a single administrative umbrella. The Talbot Rice Gallery, with its tradition of international exhibitions and educational activities has, since 2013, been fully integrated within ECA provision, and is set to participate more fully in the progress of the ARTIST ROOMS research network. In addition, a new UoE facility, Inspace, an innovative, technology-enabled laboratory for public engagement within the Informatics Forum, has played host to ECA events as diverse as performances of *Glitching*, symposia for the *Diversity Network*, CIRCLE, and public dissemination activities for the Centre for Design Informatics. The classical Sculpture Court has, at the same time, played host to events including *Alt Photo*, or the large scale public digital installation of *Reread* (Biggs, 2012).

c. Strategy and plans

ECA already has a well-established tradition of reaching audiences (both directly and via various media), and this is something we aim to consolidate over the coming period. However, reaching audiences is not the same as changing minds, practices, or policies, and our chief challenge relates to the productive harnessing of expertise in this area to the questions and aims of emergent research projects. We have, therefore, identified the following strategic aims for the future.

To better understand how our research activities have impact beyond the arts

A number of monitoring projects have been established to study the ways in which our disciplines make an impact. For example, *ECONOMY* has been granted central ECA funding to engage The Audience Business consultancy to undertake a detailed engagement study throughout the project's duration, with a view to developing innovative ways of measuring the impact of such art exhibitions, and to share these with others. The ARTIST ROOMS Research Network is designed with a similar view in mind. *The Invisible College* uses physical change on a particular site to measure the social impact of new ideas about the practice of spatial design. It has already been granted follow-on funding from the AHRC, (£59,987, 2012) and is in the process of applying for more to study the changes on the site as they develop over the next few years.

To develop partnerships to effect impact on the professional practice of art and design

Other projects have been set up to investigate new ways of affecting the practice of art and design. For example, *Moving Targets*, which will continue until 2014, is designed to develop new relationships between consumers of digital media and producers, seeking sustainable business models in the sector. *Virtuous Circle* (Henrici) on the other hand, has been established to monitor the effects of the long-term work of the SDI on the practice of documentary film-making. The new Centre for Design Informatics will, from 2014, be starting an entrepreneurs-in-residence scheme (already tested in product design, and through our artists in residence schemes) to connect emerging researchers with opportunities for commercialisation and a close connection with current research.

To develop and consolidate institutional partnerships

New bodies with whom we have established partnerships include: the National Museums of Scotland (of which the ECA Principal is now a Trustee) and the V&A in Dundee (upon whose Advisory Board he sits), Scottish Enterprise, the Wellcome Collection, the Edinburgh International Festival, the Edinburgh Science Festival, and the Edinburgh International Film Festival, as well as, further afield, Tate, the Musee D'Orsay, The British School in Rome, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

d. Relationship to case studies

The five case studies presented here highlight the two areas in which Art, Design and History of Art have been particularly strong in terms of impact: exhibition curation (*Rethinking Monet* and *Impressionism, Scotland and the Art Market*) and documentary film-making (*I Am Breathing* and *Changing Minds: Engaging with Science through Creative Documentary*). A fifth case study, *The Secret Lives of Buildings and the Future Life of Cardross*, examines the relationship between theoretical research about design, and its role in changing lives beyond traditional cultural audiences.

In each case, public engagement has a long tradition, is integral to practice, and is evidenced through audience statistics and responses. However, these cases illustrate contrasting approaches to impact – the exhibitions cited being the post-hoc dissemination of previous research, the others displaying the early integration of partners from industry, or the public, in the research process itself.

In the two curatorial case studies, the chief impact is a change in public perceptions about artists, evidenced in changing patterns of tourism (*Monet*), journalistic response, and the price of works of art on the market (*Impressionism, Scotland and the Art Market*). Both film case studies show how film can change public perceptions about its subject – in these cases terminal disease, and stem cell research. *The Secret Lives of Buildings and the Future Life of Cardross* shows how research can influence public policy.

Each of these case studies reflects aspects of our diverse approaches to research at ECA. In the first two examples, research about art and design leads to new insights; in the two film examples, research is conducted through experimental practice; and in *The Secret Lives of Buildings*, research begins theoretically and is then tested against experimental practice.