

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: UoA17 -Geography
Title of case study: Shaping policy and practice at Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research by Daniels for <i>Picturing Britain</i>, an exhibition about the life and works of the pre-eminent Nottingham-born landscape artist Paul Sandby (1731-1809), shaped the policy and practice of Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery (NCMAG). While NCMAG previously imported exhibitions of international standing produced elsewhere, <i>Picturing Britain</i> reversed this relationship. This exhibition, conceived in Nottingham and based partly on works held at NCMAG, was exported to two internationally important venues, strengthening the city's national and international cultural reputation. Inspired by the success of <i>Picturing Britain</i>, NCMAG re-assessed its permanent collection with a view to securing Arts Council recognition and is currently investigating other 'home-grown' touring exhibitions.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The bicentenary in 2009 of the death of Paul Sandby, a Nottingham-born artist and founder member of the Royal Academy (RA) who worked in both Edinburgh and London, provided an opportunity for the city of Nottingham to re-assess the artistic and cultural importance of this under-researched figure, many of whose works are held by NCMAG.</p> <p>Daniels (Professor of Cultural Geography), whose previous exhibitions include the successful and critically acclaimed <i>Mapping the Landscape</i> (NCMAG, 1990) and <i>Art of the Garden</i> (Tate, 2004), proposed a new exhibition on Sandby in 2005, motivated in part by his research on a newly-discovered Sandby painting in the Yale Center for British Art, subsequently loaned for the exhibition (1). The innovative nature of the exhibition proposal, co-written by Daniels and colleagues from NCMAG, was recognised by a prestigious curatorial grant from the Paul Mellon Centre in London. This allowed Bonehill (subsequently appointed Lecturer in Art History at the University of Glasgow) to research and co-curate <i>Picturing Britain</i> with Daniels and Skinner, then Keeper of Art at the NCMAG, during the academic year 2008-9.</p> <p>Their research, which was organised thematically, uncovered new information about Sandby's working practices, offered novel perspectives on his career as a teacher and printmaker, and provided a fresh interpretative framework through which to consider his vision of 18th century British landscapes and national identity. By examining all aspects of Sandby's career, including his early work as a military draughtsman and cartographer, Daniels was able to develop a number of innovative wider arguments about the mutually constitutive relationship between topographic map-making and landscape art in 18th century Britain. These insights appear in a book-length exhibition catalogue, co-edited by Daniels and Bonehill and part funded by the RA (2), and in a peer-reviewed journal article (3).</p> <p><i>Picturing Britain</i> was the first major exhibition on Nottingham's most famous artist and was shown at the NCMAG from 25 July to 18 October 2009; at the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh from 7 November 2009 to 7 February 2010; and the RA in London from 13 March to 13 June 2010. This is an exceptionally long period for an art exhibition.</p>

3. References to the research

- 1) **Daniels, S.** (2006) Prospect for the nation, in Wilcox, S. (2006) *Papermaking and the Art of Watercolour in Eighteenth Century Britain: Paul Sandby and the Whatman Paper Mill* (New Haven: Yale University Press). Available from HEI on request.
- 2) Bonehill, J. and **Daniels, S.** (2009a) (eds) *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain* (London: Royal Academy). Available from the HEI on request (note this is also returned in REF2).
- 3) Bonehill, J. and **Daniels, S.** (2009b) "Real views from nature in this country": Paul Sandby, estate portraiture and British landscape art, *British Art Journal* 10: 72-77. <http://www.istor.org/stable/41614863> Also available from HEI on request.

Key Research Grants

- Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art Curatorial Research Grant (£40,000) to NCMAG (September 2007 to September 2009) (G1/13).
- Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art Publication Grant (£5,000) to NCMAG in 2008 towards image costs of the exhibition catalogue.
- Royal Academy contribution in 2008 to the costs of the catalogue production.

4. Details of the impact

Research on Paul Sandby's life and work underpinned the exhibition *Picturing Britain: Paul Sandby (1731-1809)*, shown in Nottingham, Edinburgh and London, through picture display and design, captions and storyboards, and a fully illustrated catalogue which disseminated new findings about the artist to a wide audience. The exhibition was designed to reveal the full range of the artist's creative output. Many of the 155 works by Sandby, and his brother Thomas, from the NCMAG collection were combined with material loaned by public and private repositories, including the Yale Centre for British Art and the Royal Collection. More than 105,000 people visited *Picturing Britain* (32,403 in Nottingham, 30,521 in Edinburgh and 42,312 in London). In excess of 5,000 copies of the catalogue were purchased during the period of the exhibition. The catalogue, identified by several reviewers as the definitive publication on Sandby's life and works, remains on sale today (a, b, c). According to two prominent reviewers, the exhibition challenged common understandings of 'topographical' art (a) and "**rescue[d] Sandby from a reputation as a mere, easily comprehended jobbing artist**" (c). The Director of Academic Services at the Royal Academy has confirmed that the exhibition brought new knowledge and understanding of the artist and his social context (j).

By showing in three major venues across the UK, *Picturing Britain* extended knowledge of an important but little-known artist to a national audience, significantly enhancing public understanding of the larger topic of 18th century topographic and landscape art. The inclusion of materials from all aspects and periods of Sandby's career was especially significant in the latter respect. By highlighting the relationship between Sandby the map-maker and Sandby the landscape artist, *Picturing Britain* deepened public understanding of an important though rarely considered theme in the history of geography. As the Director of Academic Services at the Royal Academy noted: "**the spectacle of the Great Map of the Highlands greeted the visitor at the opening of the exhibition, intending to shake any pre-conceptions that they might have about Paul Sandby, the watercolourist**" (j).

The impact of *Picturing Britain* is most readily analysed in Nottingham whose cultural reputation as home to an internationally important art collection was substantially enhanced by the exhibition. The 32,403 people who visited the exhibition in Nottingham, almost a third of the total across all three venues, is the equivalent to one in ten of the city's entire population. Visitor comments in Nottingham were extremely positive (g). NCMAG, the principal beneficiary of the research, also benefitted most directly from catalogue sales. *Picturing Britain* was the centrepiece of NCMAG's 2009 programme and was widely reviewed in the national press before its relocation to Edinburgh and London (c, d, e). This is unusual as journalists generally review touring exhibitions shown initially in provincial cities only after their arrival in London. According to one reviewer: "**this exhibition is very much a Nottingham achievement**" (c). This is confirmed by NCMAG's Exhibitions Manager who has stated that "**[t]he impact of the exhibition was proportionately greater in Nottingham than at the national venues to which it toured**" (h). This was partly because the exhibition was accompanied at Nottingham by a programme of sold-out lectures, guided gallery tours and a conference.

Most importantly, NCMAG significantly modified its policy and practice as a direct result of the exhibition's success. In the words of the manager of Nottingham's museums, the research undertaken by Daniels and Bonehill "**showed the art of the possible**" by considering "**other collections outside of our area and our collection, further afield and over many years, adding layers of knowledge and creating a legacy for the collections**" (i). As NCMAG's Exhibitions Manager also notes, the fact that *Picturing Britain* was a success at prestigious, internationally important venues in Edinburgh and London "**changed perceptions at a senior level within the organisation. Previously, there had been an assumption that such shows had to be imported from outside Nottingham. Now it is recognised that Nottingham's own collection can be a catalyst for, and form the basis of, major exhibitions of national significance**" (h). The success of the exhibition in London, affirmed by RA's Director of Academic Studies, was especially important as the RA rarely collaborates with regional museums and galleries (j).

Following the success of *Picturing Britain*, NCMAG reviewed its policy and practice in relation to public exhibitions and collection management and commissioned an independent review of its Fine Art collection with a view to applying for Arts Council designation. The review resulted in a series of 'Spotlight' displays to highlight key strengths of the collection that began in March 2013. The *Nottingham City Museums and Galleries Forward Plan (2012-15)* also identified the need for touring exhibitions based on the NCMAG permanent collection every three years from 2015 (f). In the words of the NCMAG Exhibitions Manager: "**every three years we should be trying to do a Sandby**" (i). The exhibition was also highlighted in NCMAG's successful application to the Arts Council's strategic development fund on England's Renaissance.

Picturing Britain also reinforced the strong reciprocal relationship between Nottingham City Council and the University of Nottingham. As the NCMAG Exhibitions Manager explains: "**Academic validation of the collections... becomes ever more important at a time when Local Authorities are squeezed. Academic collaboration brings attention to NCMAG and can help the Local Authority to recognise the importance of the collections we hold**" (h).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Reviews

- a) Barrell, J. (2010) Topography versus landscape, *London Review of Books* 13 May 2010, 32 (9), pp. 9-12. Restricted view available at: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n09/john-barrell/topography-v-landscape>. Full version available from HEI on request.

- b) Barrell, J. (2013) The virtues of topography, *London Review of Books* 3 January 2013, 35 (1), pp.17-18. Restricted view available at: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n01/john-barrell/the-virtues-of-topography>. Full version available from HEI on request.
- c) Colley, L. (2009) Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain, *Guardian* 7 November 2009. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2009/nov/07/paul-sandby-exhibition-linda-colley>
- d) Dormont, R. (2009) Picturing Britain: Paul Sandby (1731-1809), Nottingham Castle, review, *Daily Telegraph* 27 July 2009. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/5919200/Picturing-Britain-Paul-Sandby-1731-1809-Nottingham-Castle-review.html>
- e) Jones, J. (2009) Arcadian fire: how British art fell in love with the pastoral, *Guardian* 3 August 2009. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/aug/03/british-art-pastoral>

All of the above corroborate the claim that the research was of high quality and high impact, attracting national journalists to Nottingham and enhancing NCMAG's reputation as a producer of major exhibitions. Additionally, b) corroborates the claim about the exhibition's national reach in demonstrating the importance of topography for art exhibitions.

Copies of all of the above are also available from HEI on request.

Confidential Reports or Documents

- f) *Nottingham City Museums and Galleries Forward Plan (2012-15)* (appendix 7: Museums Operational Plan and Executive summary, 16-17). This corroborates the claim that the research and exhibition informed the formulation of new policies and practices at NCMAG, particularly the re-evaluation of their own collections. Available from HEI on request.
- g) Selection of visitor comments from the *Picturing Britain* exhibition at NCMAG. This corroborates the claim that the exhibition was extremely popular within Nottingham, raised Sandby's profile in his birthplace, and attracted visitors from outside of the city. Extracts available on request from the HEI and the full survey through the NCMAG Visual Arts and Exhibitions Manager.

Individual Beneficiaries

- h) Statement from NCMAG Visual Arts and Exhibitions Manager (details provided on submission system), 25 April 2013. This corroborates the claim that NCMAG changed its practice and policy. Available from HEI on request. The beneficiary can be contacted by the panel if further testimony is required.
- i) Transcript of interview with Nottingham City Museums Service Manager (details provided on submission system) 13 May 2013. This corroborates the claims that NCMAG changed its policy and practice as a consequence of the Sandby exhibition. Available from HEI on request. The beneficiary can be contacted by the panel if further testimony is required.
- j) Statement from Director of Academic Studies, Royal Academy (details provided on submission system), 15 August 2013. This corroborates the claim that the research generated new knowledge and understanding of Sandby and that the RA's collaboration with a provincial museum is unusual. Available from HEI on request. The beneficiary can be contacted by the panel if further testimony is required.