

Institution: Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)
Unit of Assessment: UoA 29: English Literature and Language
Title of case study: Exhibiting cultures: Renaissance Studies research and its impact on museums and galleries
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Queen Mary's research in Renaissance Studies has informed curatorial practice at cultural institutions in the UK and abroad, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Cini Foundation in Venice, producing displays that have reflected new conceptual approaches to the Renaissance and that have captured the imagination of large, general audiences. Their success was due, in part, to the close synergies between curators and Queen Mary scholars, including shared PhD student supervision through the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme and through co-curation. Novel research ideas influenced the conceptualisation and approach to exhibits on Renaissance topics, manifested in new ways of presenting images and objects and their accompanying interpretative materials, such as catalogues, wall texts, events, and engagement with the media.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research underpinning this case study reflects the English Department's long-standing strengths in early modern and medieval research, highlights of which include Welch's work on Renaissance art and consumption (<i>Shopping in the Renaissance</i> 2005, <i>The Material Renaissance</i> (ed.), 2007), Jardine's <i>Worldly Goods</i> (1996), Jardine and Brotton's <i>Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West</i> (2000), Brotton's <i>The Renaissance Bazaar</i> (2002) and his catalogue for <i>Penelope's Labour</i> (2011). This work has been developed in extended and in-depth archival engagement with libraries, archives and museums, and also through the articulation of new theoretical paradigms. This body of scholarship has been at the forefront of the cultural and material turn in the history of the Renaissance. The significance of the work is not simply shown in the intellectual and commercial impact of these books, but also in their methodological concerns with document, image and object, and their approach to revising our understanding of the Renaissance text. In the case of Welch and Jardine's work, for example, this is evidenced in the revaluation of the importance of consumption alongside questions of production and reception. Jardine's <i>Worldly Goods</i> was an early example of the turn in Renaissance studies to objects and the consumer, demonstrating how early modern philosophy facilitated global movement of knowledge and objects. These arguments are refined in more particular cases in her later work on Anglo-Dutch cultural relations in the seventeenth century. Welch's <i>Shopping in the Renaissance</i> is a cultural history of consumerism in Italy between 1400 and 1600. In extensive research in literary sources, family account books and diaries, as well as criminal records, statutes, and auction price lists, the work demonstrates how buying and selling were acts of embedded social behaviour. The influence of their approach is such that 'the shopping spree, conspicuous consumption, and showy materialism have come to seem as Renaissance as Neoplatonism', as an overview of Renaissance scholarship argued in 2007 (<i>Renaissance Quarterly</i>, 60:1, 1-24). The research of Welch and Jardine demonstrated that the high achievements of Renaissance fine arts were embedded in cultures of commerce and trade; they developed an enhanced understanding of that mercantile context, and the popular forms of consumption that went with it. Jardine and Brotton, both individually and together, have contributed an important new understanding of the Renaissance as a historical concept with global significance: especially exploring the relationship between the worlds of Islam and Christianity in the early-modern period. Brotton has furthered understanding of Renaissance art collecting and mapmaking, and has examined, in <i>Global Interests</i>, and <i>Penelope's Labour</i>, material and intellectual exchange between cultures in the case of tapestries and other textiles, together with weaving practices and technologies. Together the publications of the Renaissance research group at Queen Mary has influenced curatorial and design decisions, encouraging institutions to display the material objects in their collections in more challenging social and historical contexts.</p>

Key researchers employment at submitting unit:

- (i) Evelyn Welch, 2004-2012: Professor of Renaissance Studies, QMUL 2004-10; Vice Principal for Research and International Relations, QMUL 2010-12;
- (ii) Jerry Brotton, 1993-present: Doctoral research 1993-1996; Lecturer in English, QMUL, 2000-2002; Senior Lecturer in English, QMUL, 2002-2007; Professor of English, QMUL, 2007-present;
- (iii) Lisa Jardine, 1989-2012: Professor of Renaissance Studies, QMUL, 1989-2012.

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

1. Jerry Brotton, 'Penelope's Labour: weaving words & images' in *Penelope's Labour*, ed. by Jerry Brotton and Adam Lowe ([London]: Factum Arte for Cini Foundation Venezia, 2011), 7-21. ISBN 978-8461516421 — book chapter, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: submitted for REF2014.
2. Jerry Brotton and Lisa Jardine, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West* (London: Reaktion; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 224pp. ISBN: 978-1861891662 — monograph, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for RAE2001.
3. Jerry Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 256pp. ISBN: 978-0192802651 — monograph, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for RAE2008.
4. Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (London: Papermac, 1996), 496pp. ISBN: 978-0333638101 — monograph, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for RAE2001.
5. Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 256pp. ISBN: 978-0300159851 — monograph, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for RAE2008; co-winner of the Wolfson Prize for History, 2006.
6. Evelyn Welch, *The Material Renaissance*, co-edited with Michelle O'Malley, (Manchester University Press, 2007), 304pp. ISBN: 978-0719076572 — edited collection, can be supplied by the HEI on request; quality justification: publication peer reviewed, submitted for RAE2008; research based on peer-reviewed grant awarded by AHRB and Getty Foundation.

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

In their contributions to the curatorial process of exhibition conception and design, as evidenced in the redisplay of the V&A Medieval and Renaissance Galleries, these scholars were conscious of several principles guiding English research at Queen Mary, including: diffusion of research outcomes in accessible, non-technical form; development of contexts for encounters between researchers and the general public to explain the significance of ground-breaking research; and clearly defined programmes of public education in areas where the specialist data is confusing or difficult. Opportunities for impacts have been designed into the fabric of Queen Mary research centres such as the Centre for Editing Lives and Letters (QMUL 2002-2012) and the Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies (QMUL 2007-), supported by institutional and external research funding.

The impact described here has a twofold structure: an impact on the intellectual base of the exhibition through advice and institutional collaborations and an impact on the public understanding of the Renaissance through public engagement with the exhibition itself. The model for this impact strategy was established in the redisplay of the V&A Medieval and Renaissance

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Galleries (opened 1 December 2009). Impact was made on the museum and its curators in developing, conceptualising, planning the exhibition, and writing the supporting materials (catalogues, wall texts), for both the exhibition and gallery redisplays between 2000-2009. Welch's work on consumption and the material object, and Jardine's approach to the 'world of goods', underpinned in part curatorial decisions about how to present the museum's collection to the public. This occurred through the direct use of Jardine and Welch's publications, through Welch's AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award with the Senior Curator, Kirsten Kennedy, which supported research for the redisplay; through advice provided by Jardine in her role as trustee of the V&A; and through Welch and Jardine's service on the Medieval and Renaissance gallery's advisory board from 2005-2009 where they commented on and contributed to display decisions. In addition, Welch and Jardine were explicitly named as having offered 'extensive consultation' in 'Case Study Seven: Recreating Renaissance Interiors at the V&A' in *Past Present and Future* (2010). In demonstrating the relevance of consumption to European Renaissance culture, these Queen Mary scholars supported a shift away from monographic displays around artists to themes on consumption, splendour, dining, and other forms of domestic behaviour. In the V&A's new Renaissance galleries, this is visible through the conceptual shape given to the exhibition space, and the title given to the name of the accompanying catalogue for the new Galleries, whose subtitle is 'People and Possessions'. Evidence of the reach and significance of this is primarily shown by a combination of high visitor numbers (and associated statistical data on spend) and continued public involvement with the issues raised. The Medieval and Renaissance Galleries, which were opened by Ben Bradshaw MP, Minister for Culture in 2009, represented a £31 million investment of private, public and Heritage Lottery funds. The V&A new galleries received 359,000 visits in the four-month period December 2009-March 2010 (44% of total visits to the museum). Subsequent evaluation of the galleries in this period by Matthew Petrie (Fusion Research+Analytics) found that two-thirds of visitors strongly or somewhat agreed that the gallery themes were important in their experience. The new galleries were widely reviewed and highly praised in the press (*Telegraph*, *Observer*, *Time Out*).

The model for academic-curatorial collaboration was taken up by the next generation of Queen Mary researchers. Research into the history of weaving and tapestry published by Brotton in collaboration with Jardine (*Global Interests*, 2000) inspired *Penelope's Labour: Weaving Words and Images*, an exhibition at the Cini Foundation, San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice in April-Nov 2011, which Brotton curated in collaboration with Adam Lowe of Factum Arte, an independent art fabrication and digital conservation workshop. The exhibition assembled a collection of recent woven artworks by internationally-acclaimed artists (including Grayson Perry, Marc Quinn and Craigie Horsfield) to exhibit alongside selections from the Cini's private collection of Renaissance tapestries. Brotton edited the catalogue and contributed a substantial introduction establishing the connection to early-modern tapestry research. The exhibition innovated by displaying historical tapestries alongside contemporary artistic examples of weaving, to tell a story of how this medium is newly important to a range of contemporary artists. The exhibition involved employing a team of six people to assemble it (hanging, lighting, laying floors, etc), and the assistance of four members of the Cini staff who were responsible for press, publicity, and artist liaison. The Cini exhibition *Penelope's Labour* ran from April-September 2011 as part of the Venice Biennale, the world's most prestigious contemporary art event. It attracted over 20,000 visitors, a record for the Cini Foundation, was reviewed positively in the press (*Domus*, *The Art Newspaper*, *The New York Times*, *The Sunday Times*), and was widely blogged.

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

Individual:

1. Head of Research, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Corroboration of the involvement of QMUL researchers (Welch and Jardine) in the conception and design of the redisplay of the V&A Medieval and Renaissance Galleries, and the public reception of the galleries.

2. Direttore Comunicazione e Marketing, The Giorgio Cini Foundation, San Giorgio, Venice.

Corroboration of the involvement of QMUL researcher (Brotton) in the conception and co-curation

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of the exhibition *Penelope's Labour* at the Cini Foundation in 2011 and the accompanying exhibition catalogue.

3. Artists, exhibition fabricator and curator, Factum Arte, Madrid. <<http://www.factum-arte.com>>
Corroboration of the involvement of QMUL researcher (Brotton) in the conception and co-curation of the exhibition *Penelope's Labour* at the Cini Foundation in 2011 and the accompanying exhibition catalogue.

Other sources

4. Matthew Petrie, *Case Study Evaluation of FuturePlan: Medieval and Renaissance Galleries*, March 21 2011, Fusion Research+Analytics for the V&A Museum London <http://www.vam.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/178790/med_ren_galleries_summative_evaluation_2011.pdf>.

Corroboration for visitor data and analysis of redisplay of the V&A Medieval and Renaissance Galleries.

4. British Academy, 'Case Study Seven: Recreating Renaissance Interiors at the V&A', *Past Present and Future: The Public Value of the Humanities* (online pdf publication, British Academy, 2010). <<http://www.britac.ac.uk/templates/asset-relay.cfm?frmAssetFileID=9608>>.

Corroboration of QMUL researchers (Welch and Jardine) involvement in the conception and design of the redisplay of the V&A Medieval and Renaissance Galleries.

5. Reviews of V&A new galleries:

Stephen Bayley, 'Reviews: The Medieval and Renaissance Galleries', *The Observer*, Saturday 5 December 2009. 'For the first time, the museum's astonishing treasures from these defining moments of European civilisation are rationally and beautifully displayed. And the effect is exalting, transcendental. It is an entirely new museum-within-a-museum. If these galleries were a standalone in any other country, it would immediately become one of the world's great museums.'

Richard Dorment, 'The V&A's Medieval & Renaissance Galleries, review', *The Telegraph*, 30 Nov 2009.

Ossian Ward, 'Medieval and Renaissance Galleries V&A: Rating: *****', *Time Out*, Thu Jan 14 2010.

Paula Weideger, *The Wall Street Journal*, January 18, 2010. 'The V&A's Medieval and Renaissance Galleries will be thrilling people for decades to come.'

Corroboration public reception of the redisplay of the V&A Medieval and Renaissance Galleries.

6. *Penelope's Labour: Weaving Words and Images*, San Giorgio Maggiore, Centro Espositivo, Le Sale del Convitto, Cini Foundation (June 1-18 September 2011)

Reviews of *Penelope's Labour* exhibition:

Simona Bordone, '[Review of] *Penelope's Labour*', *Domus*, 08 Aug 2011'.

Anna Somers Cocks, 'Penelope's labour: Tapestries ancient and modern are the toast of Venice', *The Art Newspaper*, 03 June 2011 <<http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Penelope%27s-labour/23955>>. 'One of the best shows in the Venice Biennale. [...] Tapestries ancient and modern are the toast of Venice. *Penelope's Labour* is highly intelligent and beautifully displayed by the artist Adam Lowe for the Fondazione Cini. [...] Don't miss it'.

Roderick Conway Morris, 'Special Report: Contemporary Art: Show Highlights the Return of the Loom', *The New York Times*, June 13, 2011.

Waldemar Januszczak, *The Sunday Times*, 01 June 2011, pp. 6-7. *Penelope's Labour* is 'the best of the biennale's peripheral exhibitions'.

Corroboration public reception of the exhibition *Penelope's Labour* at the Cini Foundation in 2011.