

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Oxford Brookes University
Unit of Assessment: 30 - History
Title of case study: Objects of Affection: Pre-Raphaelite Portraits by John Brett
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research on John Brett, undertaken by Christiana Payne, was disseminated through an exhibition, held at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, the Fine Art Society, London and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in the summer and autumn of 2010. In total, c.28,000 visitors saw the exhibition. The Birmingham showing was accompanied by a study day and gallery talks, in which Christiana Payne participated. The exhibition had a qualitative impact on visitors, who found Brett’s work uplifting and inspiring, and an economic impact on the local and national economy by attracting visitors to the three venues. The reappraisal of Brett has had an impact on museum policies and practices.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Christiana Payne, who was a Senior Lecturer, then a Reader in History of Art at Oxford Brookes throughout this period, undertook research on the life and work of John Brett between 2004 and 2010. She was assisted by Charles Brett, great-grandson of the artist, who compiled a catalogue of the artist’s work, and Ann Sumner, Director of the Barber Institute, who investigated the reception of his work in Birmingham. Charles Brett’s catalogue was included in the monograph, <i>John Brett, Pre-Raphaelite Landscape Painter</i>. Ann Sumner’s research on his reception in Birmingham was published as a short essay in the exhibition catalogue, <i>Objects of Affection: Pre-Raphaelite Portraits by John Brett</i> (see next section for full details of both publications).</p> <p>Christiana Payne’s research has transformed the reputation of John Brett, previously seen as a minor Pre-Raphaelite artist, a “disciple” of John Ruskin, who painted some significant landscape paintings, including the Val d’Aosta (private collection, 1858). Modern art historians had underestimated Brett’s importance as a landscape painter, especially in the period of his life after 1860. In addition, he was almost completely unknown to the general public (and even to specialists) as a portraitist. However, Christiana Payne was able to show that Brett produced work of high quality throughout his career, and that he continued to be highly regarded by critics in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s. In 1863 he was described as “the head of a school” by the art critic of The Times. Far from being a mere protégé of Ruskin, Brett took a leading role in the development of a distinctive Pre-Raphaelite landscape style and approach. These findings were published initially as a chapter in <i>John Brett: A Pre-Raphaelite in Cornwall</i>, and subsequently in the monograph named above and in the article “<i>John Brett’s Christmas Morning, 1866</i>” (see next section for full details). Amongst the works that had previously been little known were a number of very fine pencil and pen and ink portrait drawings of his family circle and close friends. Christiana Payne’s research also elucidated details of Brett’s life, including his religious views, his activities as an astronomer, his unorthodox “marriage” and his concern for his seven children, of whom he took informal photographs from the late 1870s onwards. This reappraisal of Brett has allowed a new insight into Victorian society and its social morality, and its approach to science, religion and parenting, which was of obvious appeal to the wider public and therefore particularly suitable for dissemination through the vehicle of an exhibition.</p> <p>The exhibition, <i>Objects of Affection</i>, brought together many of these fine portrait drawings, together with selections of the post-1860 landscapes and the family photographs. Christiana Payne initiated the proposal for the exhibition and curated it jointly with Ann Sumner.</p> <p>Much of the research was based on primary sources, many of them still in the collections of the artists’ descendants, including Brett’s diaries, letters, sketchbooks and records of his sales and exhibitions. These were drawn on freely in the exhibition labels and text panels, which were mainly written by Christiana Payne, as well as in the catalogue entries.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Key outputs:</p> <p>Christiana Payne (with a catalogue by Charles Brett), John Brett, Pre-Raphaelite Landscape</p>

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Painter, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-300-16575-3.
Submitted to REF2014, Oxford Brookes University, UoA30-History, REF2, CJER Payne, Output identifier 5999

Christiana Payne and Ann Sumner, *Objects of Affection: Pre-Raphaelite Portraits by John Brett*, Birmingham: the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, 2010 (Christiana Payne wrote one of the two introductory essays and 38 of the 43 catalogue entries). ISBN 978-0704-427-35-8

Submitted to REF2014, Oxford Brookes University, UoA30-History, REF2, CJER Payne, Output identifier 5965

Charles Brett, Michael Hickox and Christiana Payne, *John Brett: A Pre-Raphaelite in Cornwall*, Bristol: Sansom and Company, 2006 (Christiana Payne wrote one of the three introductory chapters). ISBN 1-904537-51-0.

Christiana Payne, "John Brett's Christmas Morning, 1866", *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol 150, no. 1269 (December 2008), pp. 813-820.

Submitted to REF2014, Oxford Brookes University, UoA30-History, REF2, CJER Payne, Output identifier 6440

Evidence of quality (grants awarded to Christiana Payne):

Research Support Grant (£800) from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, to research the life and work of John Brett, 2005.

AHRC Research Leave Award, to complete manuscript of book on John Brett, 2008 (£18,145) (published in 2010 as *John Brett, Pre-Raphaelite Landscape Painter*). AH/G005877/1.

<http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/project/0BCD4798-1BCE-4552-8CB8-8E0E9462764A> *Final report available from Oxford Brookes University Research & Business Development Office upon request*

Research award (£3000) from the Marc Fitch Fund (September 2009) for illustrations to *John Brett, Pre-Raphaelite Landscape Painter*.

Publication grant (£2000) from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (September 2009), for illustrations to *John Brett, Pre-Raphaelite Landscape Painter*.

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

The impact of the research came through an exhibition, *Objects of Affection: Pre-Raphaelite Portraits by John Brett*, which was shown at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, 30 April-4 July, The Fine Art Society, London, 20 July-4 August, and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 14 September-28 November 2010. Christiana Payne's research for her book, chapter and article on John Brett (see above) underpinned the idea behind the exhibition proposal and the list of works to be exhibited. Further research was done on individual portraits and photographs in order to write the exhibition catalogue entries.

The exhibition was a great success. 10,976 visitors saw it at the Barber Institute, with an estimated 800 visiting the Fine Art Society showing and a further 16,386 the Fitzwilliam showing (the Fitzwilliam figure is based on an email from Jane Felstead, Visitor Services Manager: 'the total visitors during the period were 65,545 and it would appear that between 20-30% of visitors seem to visit our exhibitions'). It received very favourable reviews and the entries in the Barber Institute visitors' book are most enthusiastic. The associated events at Birmingham, which included readings from primary sources and dramatic and musical performances in addition to the study day and gallery talks, were well attended and enthusiastically received. The focus group transcript shows that most visitors to the exhibition had not heard of Brett before their visit. This was corroborated by the visitor survey: 139 visitors were surveyed, of whom 80% had not heard of John Brett before their visit. 96% of those surveyed felt that they had learnt new things about Brett and his work after visiting the exhibition. Some were particularly impressed by his seascapes, others by

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his family photographs, with the majority agreeing that the portraits were of high quality and added greatly to their knowledge of Victorian art in general and the Pre-Raphaelites in particular.

The visitor survey analysis showed that 90% of visitors felt that the exhibition, Objects of Affection met their expectations. 98% felt that there was just the right amount of information displayed on the text panels and labels; 96% felt the level of information (i.e. too academic/not academic enough) was just right. Sample comments: “method of providing information was fantastic”, “beautifully presented and informative”, “fascinating how personal information was included”, “[I liked] the information given for each portrait and the way it was presented.”

130 visitors wrote entries in the Visitors’ Book at the Barber Institute showing of the exhibition. Sample comments include the following: “A wonderfully enriching experience”, “enjoyable and illuminating”, “a wonderful discovery for New Yorkers”, “very inspiring”, “absolute delight to discover this talented artist”, “a revelation”, “inspired and uplifted”, “a wonderful revelation”, “I’ve learned a lot”, “inspirational exhibition”, “food for the soul”. The writers included visitors from France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Russia, South Africa and the USA. Assuming that these visitors were representative of the total numbers of visitors, an estimate may be made of the exhibition’s impact on tourism and therefore of its contribution to the local and national economy.

6 from outside Europe (4.6%)
 7 from continent of Europe (5.4%)
 7 from north of England (5.4%)
 4 from Wales (3%)
 6 from Devon, Southampton, Isle of Wight (4.6%)
 14 from London and South-east (10.8%)
 16 (additional to above) from radius of 50-100 miles (12.3%)

Assuming that 40% of visitors came specially to see the Brett exhibition (a reasonable assumption at the Barber Institute, where the temporary exhibitions take up a high proportion of the gallery space and are highlighted in all publicity materials), that average expenditure on travel and refreshments was £50 per head, and that overseas visitors spent an average of £100 on accommodation:

Travel and refreshments £101,198.72
 Accommodation £43,920

The total expenditure boost to local and national tourism generated by the exhibition’s showing in Birmingham, therefore, with 10,976 visitors, may be estimated at £145,118.72. If similar amounts are added for the London and Cambridge showings (with a further 17,186 visitors), the overall economic benefit would be well over £300,000. The sales of catalogues and exhibition-related merchandise will have added to this economic impact.

The success of the Brett exhibition has also had an impact on museum policies and practices. The Barber Institute followed it up with a further exhibition on a relatively unknown artist, Thomas Fearnley, again making use of a partnership with a university academic from outside Birmingham. The British Museum changed two of its entries in its online catalogue as a result of the exhibition. Tate Britain included the Brett portrait of Christina Rossetti in its exhibition, Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde (2012) and another portrait, The Lady with a Dove, which was not previously on show, has been given a prominent place the new Tate Permanent Collection Galleries, which opened in 2013, and an entry in the most recently-published Companion Guide to the collection.

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

Barber Institute(copies available from Oxford Brookes University Research & Business Development Office):

1. Visitors’ Book
2. Transcript of focus group

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3. Visitor survey analysis

Reviews:

4. The Sunday Times, 'Portrait of obsession'-Waldemar Januszczak, 9 May 2010 (read by 2,525,000 adults, or 5% of the adult population (latest survey by Media UK – in 2010 the figures were in region of 3,200,000).
http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/culture/arts/Visual_Arts/article281374.ece
5. Birmingham Post, 'Objects of affection' review, 20 May 2010
6. The Birmingham Press, 'Missing: Brett's priceless legacy'-Don Mayo, 21 May 2010

People:

7. Corroborating contact 1. Former Director, Barber Institute of Fine Art.
8. Corroborating contact 2. Head of Publicity and Marketing, Barber Institute of Fine Art.
9. Corroborating contact 3. Curator, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum.
10. Corroborating contact 4. Curator, British Art 1850-1915, Tate Britain.