

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Southampton</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 30 History</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> 30-03 Rediscovering Forgotten Landmarks in Arts Broadcasting for New Audiences</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Through public engagement across print and broadcast media, and a series of high-profile collaborations with world-leading arts institutes, our research has stimulated new thinking about the purpose of arts broadcasting over the past 40 years. It has refocused attention on two neglected TV landmarks, <i>Civilisation</i> (1969) and <i>Ways of Seeing</i> (1972), encouraging broadcasters and cultural institutions to consider beauty and civilisation as inclusive rather than elitist concepts, a debate that succeeded in engaging new public audiences. There was economic benefit to the National Gallery and the British Film Institute and, not least, interest in the research findings led to the BBC rebroadcasting <i>Civilisation</i> in 2011.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>A widespread lack of understanding about arts television coupled with an absence of academic studies prompted the University of Southampton's research into two previously iconic television series, with the aim of promoting informed discussion, debunking myths and clarifying audience responses and viewer figures. Dr Jonathan Conlin (Senior Lecturer, History, 2007-) selected <i>Civilisation</i> and <i>Ways of Seeing</i> as the basis of his research, as both were approaching their 40th anniversaries (in 2009 and 2012 respectively).</p> <p>Presented by art historian Kenneth Clark, <i>Civilisation</i> was a 13-part series which considered the culture of western man from the Dark Ages to Concorde's first flight. Three years later, art critic John Berger's four-part BBC2 series <i>Ways of Seeing</i> (<i>WOS</i>) pioneered the 'talking head', with music, special locations and rapid cutting between details. That set of conventions which Clark and others had formed was thought to have been subverted by Berger (a Marxist) to question the values of the capitalist male elite associated with <i>Civilisation</i>. From the 1970s, the films and books of <i>Civilisation</i> and <i>WOS</i> became highly influential in teaching art history and visual studies in the USA and UK. In arts broadcasting they became touchstones: <i>Civilisation</i> as a cautionary example of impenetrable elitism, while <i>WOS</i> was supposedly political and cutting edge.</p> <p>The underpinning research by Conlin subjected these phenomena to critical analysis. It consisted of oral history interviews and viewings of the programmes in France, Britain and the USA, between September 2008 and December 2011. Archival research included work in the BBC and Public Broadcasting Service archives, as well as the private archives of <i>Civilisation</i> producer Anne Turner and <i>WOS</i> director Mike Dibb. Through this, it was possible to understand how each series had been conceived, scripted, filmed and edited. The analysis of art historiography and cultural stewardship which Conlin had used in his first monograph, <i>The Nation's Mantelpiece: A History of the National Gallery</i> (2006), was employed as the framework for the resulting study written for the British Film Institute (BFI): <i>Civilisation</i> (2009) [3.1].</p> <p>The key research insights were that Clark's <i>Civilisation</i> had been pessimistic (rather than celebrating 'western man's progress') and, rather than elitist, had influenced many viewers who had few educational qualifications. On <i>WOS</i>, it was found that Berger, rather than arguing for all artefacts to be interpreted in Marxist terms, had in fact encouraged audiences to use the images held 'captive' in museums to construct their own visual language to tell their stories. In short, the research radically corrected traditional views of <i>Civilisation</i> and <i>WOS</i>, demonstrating their shared emphasis on common ideas of beauty and humanism.</p> <p>Analysis of viewing figures also allowed conflicting claims to be settled. These research findings were disseminated widely to mark the 40th anniversaries of both programmes. Practitioners and public audiences were directed towards a less political, more humanist yet inclusive approach to</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

arts broadcasting. The research has expanded public understanding of art television's history, and has fostered ongoing discussion in national and international forums about its future.

### 3. References to the research

3.1 Jonathan Conlin, *Civilisation* (BFI TV Classics, BFI Palgrave, February 2009). [REF output].

3.2 Jonathan Conlin, "'An irresponsible flow of images": John Berger, Kenneth Clark and the Art of Television, 1958-1988', in Ralf Hertel and David Malcolm (eds), *Dialogues Between Parts Gone Adrift: Essays on John Berger* (Amsterdam, 2013).

#### Keynote Lectures

Jonathan Conlin, 'Back to *Civilisation*', National Gallery of Art Notable Lectures 183

<http://itunes.apple.com/podcast/national-gallery-art-notable/id262840395?mt=2>

Jonathan Conlin, "'An irresponsible flow of images": John Berger, Kenneth Clark and the Art of Television, 1958-1988', *Ways of Seeing John Berger*, British Library, 4-6 September 2012.

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### 4. Details of the impact

The University of Southampton's research was instrumental in bringing arts television to the forefront of popular discussion in the UK and the USA, reaching a wide demographic of audiences via a series of successful public events and raising over £20K for the National Gallery and the British Film Institute. The findings helped to shape policy formation at leading arts institutes, directly impacting on the way they presented arts programmes and reflected upon programmes of the past.

Marking the 40th anniversaries of *Civilisation* and *Ways of Seeing*, the research was disseminated at 28 public events, attended by 4,695 people, at the British Film Institute (BFI) and the National Gallery (NG) in London, at the University of York, and the National Gallery of Art (NGA) in Washington DC.

#### **(a) A symposium for broadcasters**

'After *Civilisation*: The Past, Present and Future of Art on TV' (50 attendees), *Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past (IPUP)*, University of York, 27 May 2009 (roundtable discussion including BBC4 commissioner Janet Younghusband)

#### **(b) Events for the general public**

1. 'Celebrating *Civilisation*' (200 attendees; free event)  
NGA, Washington DC, 17-18 October 2009
2. 'Back to *Civilisation*' study day (330 tickets sold, making over £8,000; 2,550 attendees at free screenings)  
NG, London, 21 February to 6 May 2010
3. '*Ways of Seeing*: Kenneth Clark, John Berger and the Small Screen' (50 attendees; free event)  
Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 28 February 2012
4. 'Art and Exploitation: *Ways of Seeing* at 40' study day (150 tickets sold, making £3,500)  
NG, London, 23 May 2012
5. '*Ways of Seeing*' (275 attendees; free event)  
NGA, Washington DC, 4 August 2012

**(c) Two seasons of screenings for film enthusiasts**

1. 'Lord Civilisation: A Celebration of Kenneth Clark' (540 tickets sold, making £5,000)  
BFI, 23-26 February 2010
2. 'Broadcasting the Arts: *Ways of Seeing* and John Berger' (550 tickets sold, making £6,000)  
BFI, 3-17 April 2012

At the National Gallery of Art events, audiences comprised 20% tourists, 30% under-35 professionals, and 50% over-35 professionals (including several ambassadors). British National Gallery audiences mirrored these, while at the BFI there were younger arts enthusiasts from a wide scope of economic backgrounds. The BFI's Television Programmer Marcus Prince described the WOS season as "exceeding all expectations both in terms of its tremendous audience reach, achieving a staggering average occupancy of over 90%, and in terms of pure box office success" [5.3]. These events in the UK and USA, coupled with the research findings, further sparked a discussion among respected public broadcasters (Simon Schama, David Attenborough), art historians (Grizelda Pollock), producers (Clare Beavan, John Wyver), critics (A.A.Gill) and museum curators (Nick Penny) in York, London and Washington DC. Within Television Studies, the *Civilisation* monograph was viewed as having challenged existing narratives of arts broadcasting. David Attenborough hailed it as "the first of a new genre", while Simon Schama urged the BBC to rebroadcast WOS after *Civilisation*. Kevin Flanagan noted that "this nuanced reading of the series goes a long way towards properly historicizing its importance for contemporary viewers of differing backgrounds, geographical locations, and levels of education" [5.4].

Extra media coverage of the public events, in March/April 2009 (for *Civilisation*) and January 2012 (for WOS), ensured that the discussion was disseminated to new audiences, including many who were not alive when the programmes were originally broadcast. The media included BBC TV (Newsnight), radio (Radio 4's Today programme), print media (Guardian, Financial Times, Sunday Times, Spectator, New Statesman), as well as blogs and Twitter [5.1].

The events had a further impact in terms of ongoing policy formation at the BFI, the NG and the BBC. Anonymous feedback after the NG's WOS study day commended its "innovative format", dubbing it "revelatory" [5.3]. For the NG's Head of Adult Learning Gill Hart, it "presented a case for the Gallery engaging a younger audience, including students", as well as demonstrating "that events of this scale could work in terms of audience participation, [something] we know we need to work on". The BFI had previously ignored arts television, but subsequently its Television Programmer saw the events as "the perfect launch pad" for a new programming strand called Broadcasting the Arts [5.3]. From 2008, the BBC had resisted the idea of rebroadcasting *Civilisation*, with the BBC4 Commissioning Editor (David Okuefuna) assuring Dr Conlin that there would be little interest. By 2011 however, the series was being hailed by Mark Bell, BBC Arts Commissioning Editor, as "a treasure worth preserving, celebrating and making available for future generations". It was given coverage on Newsnight and the Today programme, and finally rebroadcast from February 2011 [5.2].

It was clear that the IPUP symposium and other events involving a BBC contribution encouraged programme makers to rethink how they might present the art of the past: less in terms of tortured geniuses or political interventions, more in terms of rediscovering concepts of beauty and civilisation. Broadsheet reviews of the monograph and the public events chose them as starting points for a wider discussion of aesthetic value in contemporary art (that of Damien Hirst for instance). As the Wall Street Journal observed in 2009, thanks to this research project "people are talking about civilisation again" [5.1].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

### 5.1. Evidence that the research fostered a national conversation about civilisation, arts television:

- A. A. Gill, Television Column, *Sunday Times*, 1 March 2009
- BBC Radio 4, Today programme, 21 February 2009 (discussion featuring Conlin, broadcaster Laurence Rees, and host Evan Davies)
- BBC Radio 3, Night Waves, 17 February 2009 (discussion featuring Conlin, presenter Waldemar Januszczak, and Chairman of the Arts Council Sir Christopher Frayling)
- Terry Teachout, 'Now people are talking about civilisation again', *Wall Street Journal*, 31 October 2009.  
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703399204574505170999959800.html>

### 5.2. Evidence that the York and London events produced a discussion of broadcasting trends and encouraged the BBC to re-broadcast the series:

- 'BBC Remasters Civilisation for HD', *Media Guardian*, 20 January 2011
- Blogposts by John Wyver, head of television production company Illuminations  
[http://www.illuminationsmedia.co.uk/blog/index.cfm?start=1&news\\_id=247](http://www.illuminationsmedia.co.uk/blog/index.cfm?start=1&news_id=247)
- IPUP's own report of the event: <http://www.york.ac.uk/ipup/projects/packaging/arhistory/events/index.html>
- BBC press release:  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2011/01\\_january/20/civilisation.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2011/01_january/20/civilisation.shtml)

### 5.3. Evidence that the events in the BFI and NGA sold out, audience response and audience make-up:

- Can be obtained from Gill Hart (Head of Adult Learning, NG) and Marcus Prince (Television Programmer, BFI)

### 5.4. Evidence that the research challenged existing narratives of arts broadcasting:

- Paul Kerr (London Met), Review, *Critical Studies in Television* 6.1 (2011): 124-127.
- Kevin M. Flanagan (Pittsburgh), Review, *Film and History* 42.1 (Spring 2012).
- Professor Vanessa Schwartz (USC), can corroborate that the book *Civilisation* is required reading on USC's 'Introduction to Visual Studies' course.
- Sir David Attenborough, advance praise quoted on back of *Civilisation* monograph.