

Institution: University of Gloucestershire

Unit of Assessment: 32

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

This is the first REF submission from the School for Art and Design since RAE2008. In 2014, we made the strategic decision to prioritise creative practice research and have systematically developed a strong community over the last six years. Our REF2021 submission includes contributions from 14 researchers, many also prominent practitioners in their fields, and represents an increase from 3.4 FTE, at the start of this REF cycle in 2014, to 7.8 FTE in 2020.

This growth in capacity has been enabled by an investment of £1.8 million in our new Hardwick Gallery. In addition, we have made a series of strategic hires and introduced development initiatives designed to recognise new potential, as well as nurture and support the research aspirations of existing staff. We have prioritised a specific focus on, and developed expertise in, practice as research along with scholarship about contemporary creative practice.

The success of this approach is evidenced by the range of high-profile practice and scholarly outputs generated over the last six years, including:

- Over 30 exhibitions and public commissions across the UK and internationally, as well as 50 exhibitions and events at Hardwick Gallery.
- A diverse range of internationally acclaimed and disseminated creative practice, including a feature film and graphic novels.
- A local and regional community engagement programme that brings contemporary art to hard-to-reach and marginalised audiences.
- Scholarly monographs, edited collections, exhibition catalogues, academic journal articles and conference presentations on aspects of contemporary practice.

Unit Context and Structure

The School of Art and Design has its roots in the Cheltenham School of Art, which was founded in 1852 and became part of the University of Gloucestershire in 1990. Our research heritage evolved from the field of drawing, notably through the work of Prof Anita Taylor from 1991 to 2003. Highlights of this period include initiating the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize (formerly Jerwood Drawing Prize) in 1994 and the establishment of strong discourses around practice research in drawing, including collaboration with leading authorities such as Deanna Petherbridge. This heritage continued through *Drawing Projects* (Black Dog, 2011) co-authored by current staff member, Jack Southern, and now on its fourth reprint.

Our cross-cutting research expertise now extends across both practice-based research and scholarship. Our researchers examine the nature of contemporary creative practice across several disciplines and specialisms. Our REF2021 submission details contributions to practice and theory in the following areas:

- **Fine Art:** Bick, Brennan, Cullinan, Fisher, Geddes, Pryor, Southern, Wood
- **Lens-based media:** Billingham, Murray, Nevill, Peck
- **Illustration:** Obata

- **Curation:** Bick, Bowden, Boyd, Cullinan, Fisher Geddes, Pryor
- **Twentieth century art history:** Bick, Cullinan, Geddes, Pryor, Wood

The range of our contributions, and associated cultural or societal impacts, is a direct result of our strategic decision to develop practice as research more systematically across the entire School and embed it in our approach to leadership and management. This strategy has guided our staff recruitment and development policy over the past six-year period and is now integrated into the wider culture of the School. During the same period, this also became recognised as a broader institutional priority through the Creative Practice as Research priority area. Our Head of School (Angus Pryor) and Director of Research (Andrew Bick) are both high profile practitioners who also make significant scholarly and theoretical contributions, as evidenced in their submitted outputs:

- **Angus Pryor** undertakes practice-based research on the role of the arts in biblical interpretation, in partnership with leading theological scholars, as well as through his own practice as a painter and his curatorial projects. He also documents his research processes through conventional academic publication routes and, additionally, publishes on creative practice as research.
- **Andrew Bick** is a prominent figure in contemporary abstract painting and curating who exhibits internationally, attracts high profile commissions and makes theoretical contributions on constructivism, concrete art and Systems through leading journals and scholarly publishers.

Our PhD Director (Julia Peck) and the Director of Hardwick Gallery (Sarah Bowden) are also fully research active in their fields and included in the submission:

- **Julia Peck** combines her own practice with a strong academic publication track record on landscape photography and is active in the discipline through her membership of the advisory board of the journal, *Photographies*.
- **Sarah Bowden** is an early career researcher who directs Hardwick Gallery and has won multiple external grants to support innovative public engagement projects. These initiatives all encourage residents of deprived local communities in Cheltenham to become actively involved with the contemporary arts.

Across the School of Art and Design, research potential or an established track of record of scholarly outputs is now a key criterion for staff recruitment and promotion. In order to attract practitioners who are fully engaged in their fields, we facilitate fractional contracts for research-active staff in order to combine the benefits of a secure academic post with an ongoing commitment to creative practice. Most of our submitted staff (11 out of 14) are on fractional contracts that range from .2 to .8 FTE. Our research community is further enhanced by:

- our cohort of 14 research students
- a group of emerging researchers (especially in landscape architecture) being supported to develop research independence over the next REF cycle
- a wider community of practice researchers across the University, most notably from the Schools of Media and Performing Arts

Research and Impact Strategy

We recognise the additional value that a deep professional engagement with the creative sector brings to the School of Art and Design, the University of Gloucestershire, our local community, and wider region. Given the emphasis we place on creative practice research, our research and impact strategies are fully integrated. It is a core part of our strategy that outstanding scholarship should routinely underpin all of our creative practice outputs, and that our research should also engage a range of non-academic audiences – locally, nationally and internationally.

Practice-based research that achieves this level of reach and impact is time, space and labour intensive, and needs investment. Our aim is to maintain a flexible and productive interface with our researchers, who frequently lead their fields in an independent capacity. Such researchers see the academic institution as a partner that recognises the distinctiveness of their knowledge production. We achieve this through a variety of mechanisms, which were all introduced as part of our 2014 research strategy:

- A £1.8 million investment in our Hardwick campus including **Hardwick Gallery** and associated website (both launched in 2014), which nurtures and supports practice-based projects; hosts critical and social events; maintains online research resources, and acts as a hub that facilitates local community engagement with contemporary arts.
- An invigorated **PhD programme**, with a new practice pathway (introduced in 2017), and an international community of research students (including some with external funding) which has grown from two to 14 students over the last six years.
- Leadership of the University of Gloucestershire's **Creative Practice as Research Priority Area**, established in 2014, which guides this specialist form of research development by managing and distributing resources to support practice-based research across the University's wider academic community.
- Strategic partnerships with local and regional organisations to bring contemporary art to residents of Gloucestershire and the surrounding areas.

This means that most of our submitted outputs also demonstrate direct engagement with a range of non-academic audiences, via routes that range from prestigious public galleries with an international standing to activist projects in partnership with marginalised communities.

Underpinning this is a commitment to equality, inclusivity and diversity that means the examples of research cited below also focus on issues of identity and inclusivity in a wide range of contexts. As well as important contributions to cultural heritage and the creative industries, we have developed specialisms in forms of social engagement, which directly address issues such as the environment, poverty, gender, and religion. Some indicative examples follow:

- **Jessie Brennan's** year-long residency with Metal to support *The Green Backyard* community garden in Peterborough, as volunteers campaigned for its survival. The project resulted in an exhibition of cyanotypes, oral recordings of those involved in the campaign, an installation, and an edited collection of essays to accompany the project (2015-2016).
- **Fumio Obata's** illustrated reportage on environmental disasters (particularly the 2011 Fukushima disaster) was published regularly in an Italian national periodical and was the focus on exhibitions in France and Cumbria (in deliberate proximity to the Sellafield nuclear plant) between 2014 and 2019. Obata has recently been awarded a sabbatical

through the Creative Practice as Research priority area to support a full-length graphic novel based on this project.

- Study leave for **Richard Billingham** helped generate a Leverhulme Fellowship worth £23,000 and supported development of his critically acclaimed and award-winning feature film *Ray & Liz* (2018), which provides an authentic account of urban poverty and marginalisation in the UK. His pilot project, the gallery installation *Ray*, was also shown at Hardwick Gallery in 2015. Also see *ICS Glos 32.1*.

The success of this strategy and its associated investments is evident in the increase in our externally funded research projects and prestigious commissions. Some highlights include:

- **Contemporary arts exhibitions and events** that are international in scope for our local area and region. These have been conducted in partnership with: the RWA (Bristol); the Wilson (Cheltenham); the We Create initiative (Cheltenham), and our own on campus Hardwick Gallery.
- Contracts with **prestigious publishing houses** including Jonathan Cape (Obata), Hatje Cantz (Bick, Wood) and Sternberg Press (Cullinan).
- **International awards** for Murray (*Saddleworth Moor: Responding to a Landscape*) and Billingham (both for *Ray & Liz* and his gallery-based work).
- Multiple public **commissions and residencies**, including: Cullinan (Cooper Gallery Summer Residency, Dundee; Bick (Crown Estates, London), and Brennan (Metal, Peterborough).
- **External funding** from Arts Council England, Leverhulme Trust, National Lottery and Cheltenham Borough Council for a range of practice-based projects.
- Disciplinary and arts **leadership** roles including the Cheltenham Sculpture Trust (Bowden), Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust (Bowden), Tannery Arts Board/Drawing Room Advisory Board (Bick) and the academic journal, *Photographies* (Peck).

Within the University of Gloucestershire, we are also active contributors to the institutional research priority area, Being Human, Past Present and Future, which supports some of our more traditional scholarly activities, such as academic conference attendance.

As we move into the next REF period, we continue to build our academic community and develop existing staff on the same basis, with increasing emphasis on supporting:

- emerging practice researchers to develop rigorous dissemination strategies, with equivalence to academic peer review, through exhibition, curation, film and alternative publishing.
- all staff to secure external funding from arts, charitable and research funding sources.
- a growing cohort of research staff and research students from diverse backgrounds with research speaking directly to under explored cultural interfaces.

Through the Creative Practice as Research priority area and within the School of Art and Design, we will develop tailored support packages for individual researchers, depending on their needs. For example:

- **Mentoring** by experienced practice researchers with an outstanding track record in specific areas, such as PhD supervision, fundraising, community engagement, academic publication, or securing commissions.
- Encouraging some practitioners to formalise their knowledge and research skills by undertaking **research degrees**.
- Providing specialist **professional support** for both grant-writing and engagement strategies.
- **Research students** will be encouraged to participate in and contribute to staff research projects in order to build their own practice and experience

While our research outputs are diverse in terms of creative focus, we have established collective expertise across four cross-cutting themes over the last six years, which we will develop (and formalise where appropriate) over the next REF cycle:

- **Socially engaged practice and scholarship** addressing the impact of creativity in contexts such as marginalised communities, poverty and environmental activism. Bowden's public engagement projects in the St Peter and St Paul's neighbourhood of Cheltenham are a strong example of this and the subject of an impact case study (see *ICS Glos 32.2*).
- **Interdisciplinary projects** with scholars and researchers from different fields with strong emphasis on creative practice as a tool for interpretation. This continues the legacy of Brennan's environmental activism in contested urban sites or Pryor's collaboration with theological scholars.
- **Curatorial projects** that bring world-class contemporary visual arts to the South West and re-contextualise legacies in relation to contemporary understanding, such as Fishers' forthcoming curatorial project on Ken Kiff for the RWA in Bristol in 2023.
- **Overlooked or neglected forms and artists**, notably Bick's ongoing re-examination of the legacies of underknown female artists, such as Marlow Moss and Gillian Wise.

The success of our current research strategy, as evidenced by our submitted research outputs and the activities described in this narrative, ensures a strong basis for growth over the next REF cycle.

2. People

As a point of comparison, our submission has grown from 6 (3.4 FTE) in January 2014 to 14 (7.8 FTE) on 1st August 2020. This leaves us with a community of creative arts researchers, who are active across a range of disciplines and collaborate widely within academia and across the arts and creative industries.

Since 2014, we have developed our hiring, staff development and promotion strategies to create a distinctive community of 14 fully independent researchers, as follows:

- Five members of our REF2021 UOA have been hired directly onto research contracts since 2014 (Brennan, Fisher, Peck, Cullinan, Nevill and Wood).
- Four members of our UOA have transferred to contracts that recognise their status as independent researchers since 2014 (Bowden, Boyd, Murray, and Obata).
- Two members of our UOA were promoted during the REF2021 cycle (Bick and Billingham).

- Active researchers whose outputs were not part of any University of Gloucestershire submission to REF2014 formed the core of a new research community in the School of Art and Design (Bick, Billingham, Pryor, Southern).

The strength of our submission is linked to our deliberate policy of offering secure fractional contracts to deeply engaged practitioners with an established research track record or intellectual component to their creative practice. This allows individuals to continue their creative practice while holding an academic post, which includes a 20% research allowance. These fractional staff are also given full access to all research resources, encouraged to apply for promotion and take on leadership roles that help develop the capacity and skills of emerging researchers.

As a parallel initiative, we actively identify research potential in those members of staff on teaching contracts and facilitate their research development with a view to moving across to research contracts. In addition, we have recognised the need to develop leadership capacity among female researchers and enhance the diversity of our community across a number of dimensions.

Included in our submission are two researchers at 0.2 FTE, Professor **Charlotte Cullinan** and Dr **Jon Wood**, each with international reputations, for Cullinan in exhibiting and curating, for Wood as a writer and curator. Cullinan and Wood both have longstanding research relationships with members of our existing staff and add a breadth of insight and range of institutional connections that have brought fresh impetus to our community. Cullinan also brings additional value as our only female professor and as a researcher who focuses on the *feminine* as a concept. Our submission also includes an output by Stewart Geddes, a 0.2 FTE Senior Lecturer who withdrew from a permanent University contract during the census period but remains involved as a visiting lecturer.

Key outcomes of our staffing policy include:

- Leadership roles for female staff, notably Sarah **Bowden** and Julia **Peck**, adds considerable energy and insight to our research culture.
- Support for **Boyd** and **Obata** to move to research contracts in this REF cycle and Dr Ying **Li** to work towards independent research status (with a view to inclusion in the next REF) represents small but significant progress towards a more diverse research community.
- Promotion of Richard **Billingham** to Professor (2014) and Andrew **Bick** to Reader (2015) brings research leadership in Film and Photography and Fine Art respectively, as well as across the School more generally.

Since 2014, we have introduced a number of specific mechanisms that support our aim to develop research potential and capacity amongst our existing community of academic staff. A School-level research steering group supervises the internal project bidding process and provides formal internal peer review as well as guidance, mentoring and feedback. Depending on which projects take root (by generating external commissions, funding or conference invitations), staff are invited to transfer to a research contract.

Firstly, we identify and develop promising new projects through an open process of application for seed funding to support initial research development. This is particularly useful for early career researchers. Secondly, selected advanced projects are internally funded through research priority areas, with time bought out of teaching as well as material or production support where required. Open calls for study leave of up to six months have facilitated extensive research projects with international reach, which require a sustained time commitment and travel. Successful projects are identified through their potential to attract external funding. Bidding, particularly for Arts Council England project grant schemes, has enhanced and developed several of our key research outputs. Some notable successes have included:

- **Bick:** Creative Practice as Research priority area funding to produce a monographic survey of his recent work with publisher, Hatje Canz, based on three exhibitions (including at Museum Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich) as well as an Arts Council England grant for a survey exhibition on *Systems* art at The Wilson, Cheltenham.
- **Billingham:** Being Human priority area funding for the completion of the internationally acclaimed and award-winning feature film, *Ray & Liz* (see *ICS Glos 3.1*).
- **Peck:** Creative Practice as Research funding to produce a chapter for the edited collection, *Northern Light: Landscape, Photography and Evocations of the North* (Goldie and White 2021).
- **Southern:** seed funding for *Drawing an arc through our digital lives*, in partnership with Dryden Goodwin at The Slade School of Art.
- **Brennan** Creative Practice as Research funding for developing a work at *Sound Camp 2019*, which linked London Bridge Station with Stave Hill Ecological Park, London through a relay of dawn chorus birdsong.

Our postgraduate programme has kept pace with the upward trajectory of staff research. Five PhDs (one international) and one Masters' by Research candidates have successfully completed their programmes over this REF cycle and we currently have 14 PhD students in progress, including two of our own research staff. Twelve of our current PhD students sit within the School of Art and Design, with a further two collaborative students supervised in partnership with Creative Writing (in the School of Humanities) and the Countryside and Community Research Institute. Our cohort of PhD students is diverse, with recent completing students from Delhi and new recruits from China in both Fine Art and Design. Parsons (supervised by Bick and Pryor) has received an external bursary of £18,000 from The Mike Holland Trust and continues to be an active contributor to externally-supported projects.

Several new initiatives have facilitated the success of our research degree programme:

- In 2017, we made changes to the University Research Degrees regulations to allow for a clearer route to Practice as Research Degrees and the PhD by Publication routes.
- Under the leadership of **Julia Peck** as PhD Director, we have matched experienced and high-profile post-graduate research supervisors with earlier career researchers, in order to develop our supervision capacity.
- Recent hires all have a strong record of supervision, notably **James Fisher**, who completed a PhD with us in 2006, went on to lead Fine Art at the University of Worcester, and is now supervising and examining PhD students at Gloucestershire. Our academic staff are also co-supervising at the University of Worcester and Kingston University and we have a strong record of external PhD examination, including the University of Oxford, the Royal College of Arts and The Slade School of Art.

The School of Art and Design, often in partnership with Hardwick Gallery, offers a series of symposia, workshops and research events that are open to staff and research students alike. Some indicative examples follow:

- *Bad Ideas* is a monthly interdisciplinary study group for staff and students, organised by Hardwick Gallery, with topics including migration, feminist texts, intersectionality, capitalism, post-colonial thinking, and the climate crisis.
- *Revising History* (2015) a programme that included exhibitions of new moving image work (including Richard Billingham's *Ray*), a symposium with external speakers and a panel discussion at The Wilson, Cheltenham.
- *Speculative Art School* (2019) led by Sarah Bowden and Jean Boyd took a critical look at the materials used in creative practice and included field trips, screenings, talks and workshops.

In summary, our combined strategy of strategic hires; recognising the research potential and achievements of existing staff; providing appropriate and targeted investments and building our PhD programme has paid dividends in creating the community of 14 researchers and 12 research students that underpins this submission.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Before 2014, the School of Art and Design had no track record in attracting research funding, compared to the £48,000 in eligible research income reported as part of our REF2021 submission. Since 2014 we have received a series of prestigious grants, which have facilitated some of our outstanding research outputs as well as our highly effective impact and engagement activities. In addition to reported income, our creative practice outputs have attracted approximately £600,000 in additional investment, awarded directly to our researchers as individuals or via museums, film production companies or publishing houses etc. An important aspect of our growth strategy has been the use of internal seed funding or study leave to generate significant levels of external investment. We have also used Hardwick Gallery and website, part of a £1.8 million investment programme during this REF cycle, as a springboard for emerging research projects.

A summary of the awards made directly to the School of Arts and Design within the REF period follows (some wholly or partly reflected in the research income reported with this submission):

- Multiple grants, including awards from the **National Lottery** and **Arts Council England** for Sarah Bowden to support community arts projects in the deprived Cheltenham wards of St Peter's and St Paul's (worth almost £50,000 in total) as well as a recent award from **Cheltenham Borough Council** to support the redevelopment of the Honeybourne line footpath over the next three years (worth £23,750). See *ICS Glos 32.2*.
- **Leverhulme Fellowship** of £23,000 for Billingham to support development of his critically acclaimed feature film *Ray & Liz*, released in 2018.
- **Arts Council England** project grant for Andrew Bick to curate *The Order of Things* in 2017, a survey exhibition based around the Systems art movement at The Wilson, Cheltenham (£10,000).

- **Arts Council England** finding for Fumio Obata to support public engagement for his second graphic novel, *The Garden*, published in 2020 (£10,000).
- £18,000 bursary from the **Mike Holland Trust** to support a PhD for artist Jonathan Parsons, supervised by Andrew Bick and Angus Pryor.

Every creative practice output included in this submission received external financial support in the form of commissions, exhibitions, publications or residencies. Some highlights include:

- Billingham's feature film *Ray & Liz*, was supported by a production budget of around £350,000 from a range of sources, including the **British Film Institute** (also see *ICS Glos 32.1*).
- Bick's **Museum Haus Konstruktiv** exhibition in Zurich (2017) was supported by a budget of £70,000 while his public commission in Piccadilly, London (2018) for The Crown Estates, was supported by a £130,000 production budget.
- **Cullinan's** project with Cooper Gallery, Dundee was supported by a budget of approximately £10,000 from sources including Henry Moore Foundation, Creative Scotland, and Dundee City Council
- Pryor's research trips to Ethiopia for *Enoch: God's Messenger* were funded by a **British Academy/Leverhulme** grant awarded to his collaborator, Prof. Phillip Esler.
- Obata's first graphic novel was commissioned by **Jonathan Cape** in the UK with a further seven editions and/or translations published in other countries from 2014 onwards.

Our success in building and extending our research culture and engagement activities has been strongly underpinned by a £1.8 million investment in our infrastructure, principally Hardwick Gallery, which opened in 2014. This flexible on-site gallery and associated website acts as a platform for external exhibition programming, experimental staff practice research and post-graduate research. Hardwick represent an important resource that permits careful dissemination and documentation of projects and research processes. Almost 50 separate events and exhibitions led by staff, students and visitors have taken place from 2014 onwards including:

- *Enoch - Heaven's Messenger*: Angus **Pryor** (2020) – an online exhibition and online catalogue hosted by Hardwick Gallery, which replaced scheduled exhibitions in Gloucester and Canterbury Cathedrals during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- *Studio Models Part 2*: Dr James **Fisher** and Kate McLeod (2019-20) - a collaboration that forms part of Fisher's ongoing interrogation of the nature of authorship in creative practice. Fisher made character models, relating to the Japanese phenomenon of kigurumi. These were mailed to McLeod's studio in Scotland, where she made second versions in ceramic. The suite was then organised into a series of diptychs, setting up conversations between the models and their 'ghosts'.
- *Nature Electric*: Julia **Peck** and Stephen Bear (2017) - a thirty-minute film about Dungeness in Kent, which examines our relationship with (and consumption of) electricity as part of a complex human relationship with ecologies.

Hardwick also hosts a series of research events and symposia and acts as a community hub for local residents. The most notable of these is the *We Create* initiative led by Sarah **Bowden**. Hardwick hosted the *Museum of St Peter's and St Paul's*, created by local schools, in 2017.

Meanwhile online editions of community newspaper, *Mudlarking*, produced and edited by artist collective, Paam (2020) are available for download on the website. See *ICS Glos 32.2* for more details.

Creative practice research in art and design is space, time and labour intensive and we have made considerable investment in materials and production costs through at least 30 internal seed funding grants and three study leave packages over the REF cycle. These investments have all helped generate the outcomes reported in this section.

As a parallel initiative, we have also expanded the capability of the University's research repository (eprints.glos.ac.uk) to accommodate the complex sets of images, video, audio and text that best represents creative practice. This provides open access formats and functionality that allows time and site-specific visual research content to reach a variety of audiences.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Our strategy of hiring and promoting staff who are deeply embedded in a community of artistic and creative practice means that our research has both collaboration and engagement with non-academic audiences at its heart. We see creativity as a key factor in increasing social inclusion and a catalyst for greater equality. We have placed an emphasis on supporting research led by women and those of different ethnicities. Museum or gallery exhibitions, non-academic publishing, school workshops, film and broadcast media, activism, public art commissions and community initiatives for hard-to-reach groups are amongst the diverse ways we engage with a wide range of audiences.

Collaboration

Our collaborations cut across different disciplines and academic institutions as well as arts organisations, museums, galleries and the creative industries – at local, regional, national and international levels.

In terms of cross-disciplinary collaborations, our staff work with scholars from a range of disciplines and integrate creative practice investigations with more conventional empirical and theoretical contributions to knowledge. For example:

- **Pryor** has a longstanding collaboration with **theologian**, Prof. Phillip Esler (also University of Gloucestershire) that resulted in both an exhibition of twentieth century biblical art at The Wilson, Cheltenham (2015) and a British Academy funded project leading to a series of paintings and academic publications based on *1 Enoch* (2020).
- **Brennan** works closely with researchers in **environmental studies** and **urban planning** (Birkbeck and UEL) on activist and community engagement projects in contested urban sites, such as The Green Backyard in Peterborough and Robin Hood Gardens in London.
- **Southern** has collaborated with Kate MacFarlane, of Drawing Room, London, has a sustained research dialogue with Dryden Goodwin (UCL), and has published with Dr Gill Gibbon (Leeds Beckett University).

In terms of non-academic collaborations, we have a formal partnership in place with the Wilson, Cheltenham, which has resulted in three exhibitions and a series of symposia, outreach programmes and public lectures themed around the contemporary arts. During this REF cycle

we also enjoyed a productive relationship with the RWA in Bristol through Stewart Geddes (as the Academy's President). This resulted in the highly successful show, *Albert Irvin and Abstract Expressionism*. We also work closely with local organisations, such as the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust, the Cheltenham Public Sculpture Trust and Cheltenham Borough Council, including through formal consultancy contracts and board memberships.

Research Base

As a relatively small UOA making its first REF submission since 2008, we have provided some significant contributions to research and scholarship across the fields of art and design, both nationally and internationally. Although our submission is diverse, we have developed expertise in distinctive areas of creative practice research, including socially engaged and activist practice (e.g. Billingham, Bowden, Brennan, Cullinan and Obata) and championing neglected areas of the visual arts (e.g. Bick, Fisher Obata, Pryor).

Since 2014, we have developed research partnerships across a range of other institutions, nationally and internationally. Some examples of our key collaborations include:

- Dr Mike Toobey, **Bath Spa University**: keynote for the symposium at RWA for *Albert Irvin and Abstract Expressionism*
- Sabine Schaschl, Director, **Museum Haus Konstruktiv**, Zurich: co-curator with Bick of his solo exhibition and interviewer for the accompanying publication with Hatje Canz
- Pryor developed links with the **Capuchin Franciscan Research and Retreat Centre**, Addis Ababa in Ethiopia and with academic theologians at **Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität München**, Germany, and the **University of Aberdeen** through his collaboration with theologian, Prof. Philip Esler
- Ongoing collaboration with **RWA**, Bristol, where **Fisher** is working on a major retrospective of Ken Kiff. This project emerged from his collaboration with the **Sainsbury Centre of Visual Art**, University of East Anglia, and the estate of Ken Kiff.

Although we focus on creative practice research, most members of our research community also publish theoretical contributions in more conventional scholarly contexts. We see this as an important component that brings rigour to our research outputs and is fully integrated into creative practice investigations. An overview of these contributions follows:

- Authoring scholarly monographs for prestigious publishers such as Hatje Canz and Walter Koenig (e.g. Bick, Wood)
- Editing catalogues and collections of essays with contributions from other academics and practitioners (e.g. Brennan, Geddes, Murray)
- Publishing in peer-reviewed academic journals on topics as varied as photography and theology (e.g. Peck, Pryor)
- Invited contributions to edited collections and catalogues (e.g. Billingham, Boyd, Cullinan, Peck, Pryor)
- Academic conference and festival talks or presentations in the UK, Europe and US (e.g. Billingham, Boyd, Brennan, Fisher, Murray, Obata, Southern)
- Organising symposia and conferences (Bick, Bowden, Boyd, Geddes, Murray)

Our growing PhD programme and new practice as research pathway allows us to help build UK research capacity in key areas. Our academic staff also co-supervise students with other institutions (e.g. Worcester and Kingston) and have acted as external examiners at a range of institutions including the University of Oxford, the Royal College of Arts, Leeds University and The Slade School of Art.

The scope of our practice as research activity has extended greatly since 2014 with a series of projects that bring our researchers' work to international audiences. For example:

- **Bick's** own work was the focus of a solo exhibition at Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich (2017) and linked monograph with international publisher, Hatje Canz (2020).
- **Billingham** participated in 65 festival question and answer sessions globally to support the release of *Ray & Liz* (2018) including Ficunam (Mexico), Jeonju (South Korea) and Sevilla Festival (Spain). For more information, see *ICS Glos 32.1*
- **Obata's** graphic reportage images were exhibited at the Fumetti Comic Art Festival in France (2019) while his first graphic novel, *Just So Happens* was published internationally (UK, US, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Serbia and Taiwan) from 2014 onwards.

Economy and Society

An important part of our strategy is to champion the visual arts, locally and regionally. We have achieved this through almost 50 public exhibitions and events at our own Hardwick Gallery alone, since 2014. We have also developed strong links with regional visual arts organisations including the **Wilson**, (Cheltenham), the **RWA** (Bristol), the **Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust** and the **Cheltenham Public Sculpture Trust**.

Our exhibitions in partnership with local and regional galleries have developed new audiences, boosted attendance and enabled widespread public engagement with our research. For example:

- **Still Small Voice** at the Wilson (co-curated by Pryor) brought a world-class private collection of twentieth century biblical art to the UK and achieved visitor numbers of 10,859 during its run in 2015. The accompanying catalogue included a series of scholarly contributions (including an essay by Pryor) and sold out. The exhibition also involved an outreach programme for local schools, led by Pryor in person.
- **Albert Irwin and Abstract Expressionism** at the RWA, Bristol (2018), was curated by Stewart Geddes and accompanied by a catalogue and a ticketed one-day symposium on contemporary abstract painting. The project brought important abstract expressionist works to the region on loan from both Tate and US private collectors. It was the gallery's most successful show ever with visitor numbers of almost 13,000 and catalogue sales of almost 9,000.
- **The Order of Things**, at The Wilson, Cheltenham, was a survey exhibition based on Systems arts, curated by Bick together with PhD candidate Jonathan Parsons and independent researcher Katie Pratt. The show was supported by a £10,000 Arts Council England grant, in recognition of the project's aim to engage local communities with the work of major, international contemporary artists, such as Rana Begum, Edith Dekyndt and A.K. Dolven.

Further afield, most members of our community of practice-based researchers have also shown or curated work in partnership with prominent public galleries across the UK or internationally, including:

- The Cooper Gallery, Dundee: *Of other Spaces* (Cullinan, 2016-17)
- mac, Birmingham: *Saddleworth – Responding to a Landscape* (Murray, 2017-8)
- Towner, Eastbourne: *Panoramic* (Billingham, 2015)
- City Gallery, Peterborough: *The Green Backyard* (Brennan, 2016)
- Glynn Vivian, Swansea: *Ray* (Billingham, 2015) and *Wakelin Award* (Billingham, 2018)

We also encourage staff to reach new audiences by placing their work in contexts outside the conventional gallery space. A few examples follow:

- The culmination of Pryor's collaborative project *Enoch: God's Messenger* was an installation of the series at **Gloucester** and **Canterbury Cathedrals** during 2020. These scheduled exhibitions have both been postponed, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Bick designed a canopy for the historic **Prince's Arcade, Piccadilly** in London as a homage to cross-dressing female constructivist artist, Marlow Moss, installed in 2018.
- Brennan's installations are typically sited in contested urban sites with architectural or ecological relevance, such as *If This Were to Be Lost* in a **threatened community garden**, The Green Backyard, Peterborough in 2016.
- Obata sited an exhibition of his graphic reportage on the Fukushima nuclear disaster at a venue in Whitehaven, Cumbria in 2017 – chosen for its proximity to the **Sellafield nuclear power station**.
- Fisher exhibited at **Blyth Gallery, Imperial College** London in 2017, a context specifically designed to bring contemporary art into direct dialogue with scientific research and learning.

As detailed in *ICS Glos 32.2*, another key focus is supporting the visual arts in the deprived residential area of St Peter's and St Paul's that immediately surrounds two of our Cheltenham campuses. This is an ongoing research programme led by Sarah **Bowden**, which has attracted Arts Council England and National Lottery funding. We also work closely with local organisations on developing public and community arts projects, such as a recently awarded consultancy for Sarah Bowden from Cheltenham Borough Council to enhance the Honeybourne Line walking and cycle route in Cheltenham over the next three years.

The cultural importance of our practice contributions is further evidenced in those works by our submitted staff that were acquired by museums and public collections over the last six years. For example:

- Bick, Haus Konstruktiv (Zurich)
- Billingham, Towner (Eastbourne) and Glyn Vivian (Swansea)
- Brennan (Victoria & Albert Museum)
- Cullinan, as Cullinan Richards (Arts Council Collection)
- Murray (Victoria & Albert Museum)

Further external recognition for our researchers has come through awards that recognise an important contribution to their field. **Billingham's** feature film debut *Ray & Liz* won 15 international film awards and gathered a further 23 nominations including two *British*

Independent Film Awards in 2018, as well as a *BAFTA* nomination in 2019 for 'best debut feature'. Meanwhile, **Murray**'s first landscape photography project won awards at *The International Photography Awards, Tokyo* (2018) and *International Photography Awards, New York* (2018). **Billingham** received the Wakelin Award in 2018 from the Glynn Vivian Gallery in Swansea.

The emphasis on creative practice in our research strategy means that public engagement, and societal and cultural impact, are already fully embedded in how our research engages with the public. The challenge for everyone who explores research questions through creative practice is to help non-academic audiences engage with both the work and the research that underpins it. This was our priority from 2014 to 2020 and remains a core principle of our research strategy as we enter the next phase of our development. Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity is represented directly in our leading researchers and in those who will emerge through the next REF cycle.