

Institution: Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama		
Unit of Assessment: D33		
Title of case study: Three international exhibitions showcasing production arts in Wales		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: January 2013-June 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Sean Crowley	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Director of Drama	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1998 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: September 2013-June 2019		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Because of his exceptional work in the field of theatre design over many years, Sean Crowley was chosen to curate and organise three important international exhibitions that showcased aspects of production arts in Wales: World Stage Design 2013 (WSD2013); the 50th anniversary exhibition of the Organisation of International Scenographers Architects and Theatre Technicians in 2018 (OISTAT50); and the Prague Quadrennial Performance Design Festival in 2019 (PQ2019). Through their pioneering volunteer and internship schemes, these exhibitions have had a major impact on the careers of students and young practitioners. The exhibitions therefore served as a platform for the creation of collaborative networks across the design industry, bringing together young artists from around the world. Through these exhibitions Crowley has raised the collective strength of this strand of the creative industries in Wales.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>The underpinning research comprises three exhibitions: WSD2013, OISTAT50 and PQ2019.</p> <p>World Stage Design exhibition 2013 (WSD2013) [1] Sean Crowley is an internationally renowned theatre designer and Director of Drama at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD). On the strength of his professional work across several decades, evidenced by his outputs submitted for the RAE in 2008 [5 and 6], he was invited to curate and organise the 2013 World Stage Design exhibition at the RWCMD in Cardiff. The call for exhibition entries in early 2013 received over 600 submissions from 52 countries covering the fields of set, costume, lighting and sound designs from some of the world's best known and most admired performance companies. Drawing on his many years of working as part of an international community of performance practitioners, Crowley undertook the difficult task of selecting 100 of these proposals for exhibition, designed and organised the construction of exhibition itself, oversaw the awards for exceptional work across all categories and was responsible for commissioning and contributing to the book of the exhibition, edited by Kate Burnett [1]. This important publication records the most innovative and ground-breaking designs from across the world, including original costumes, puppetry, drawings, paintings, photographs and props, alongside interactive exhibits from lighting, video and sound designers. The exhibition was visited by over 10,000 international attendees. A volunteer programme which was established at the Prague Quadrennial in 2007 was expanded for WSD2013 to over 140, increasing the focus on the development of artists in the early stages of their careers.</p>		

OISTAT50 [2]

OISTAT (Organisation Internationale des Scénographes, Techniciens et Architectes de Théâtre) is a worldwide organisation for scenographers, theatre architects, theatre educators and theatre technicians, based in Taipei. It supports a global network of specialist practitioners, researchers, students and associated partners, and enables ongoing knowledge exchange by encouraging the sharing of innovation and experimentation, and promoting international collaboration in the development of live performance technologies. In light of his experience and seniority within the profession, Crowley was invited to curate and organise the 50th anniversary celebration held at the RWCMD in Cardiff in September 2018.

The process of curating and planning the event took eighteen months and involved meetings in Taiwan, USA and South Africa. At the core of the exhibition was a historical time-line, curated and designed by Crowley, featuring the key activities of the previous 50 years, together with an interactive memory board offering attendees the chance to generate an evolving exhibit. A number of workshops were presented by scenographers from around the world, including exploring interdisciplinary performance practice, reimagining baroque theatre machinery and generating weather systems, the latter providing an opportunity for practitioners from a number of disciplines to create an indoor tornado. The volunteer programme continued to form an important strand of activity at the exhibition.

Crowley's personal contribution to OISTAT50 entailed an exhibition of the contents of the late Paul Brown's design studio [2]. Paul Brown was born in Glamorgan and trained in Wales on the Motley Theatre Design course. He became one of the most celebrated and award-winning designers for opera, theatre and film in the world. The entire contents of his studio were left to RWCMD on his death. Crowley carefully recorded, catalogued and relocated the items to Cardiff where he mounted a selection of the work in the Linbury Gallery and built an 'exploded studio' that allowed viewers to understand Paul Brown's process and practice, the systems he used to develop drawing techniques and modelling, and his meticulous research and painstakingly filed image banks that explored everything from hands to hairpieces. Crowley's objective was to recreate the sense of being with the living artist in his studio and he was successful in eliciting the strongest of responses from attendees.

Prague Quadrennial 2019 (PQ2019) [3]

Subsequent to the success of OISTAT50, Crowley was invited to exhibit part of the Paul Brown exhibit at the Prague Quadrennial Fragments exhibition in June 2019. This was a particularly fine accolade for two reasons: for the first time Wales was invited to exhibit in its own right and not as part of the UK; and the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space is the leading forum for exhibiting the best of design for performance, scenography and theatre architecture. Previous exhibitors have included Salvador Dalí, Josef Svoboda, Oscar Niemeyer, Tadeusz Kantor and Renzo Piano. The space available in Prague was considerably smaller than that in Cardiff, but Crowley was able to use his experience of collating and adapting the studio for OISTAT50 to filter that exhibit but still include enough key elements to invoke the essence of the studio and the work.

At least 70,000 people attended PQ2019, with 8,005 of those either professionals or students. The program included over 600 events, with approximately 800 artists representing 79 countries; there were over 17,000 applications through over 40 open calls. At PQ2019 Crowley was asked to lead a flagship internship programme, building on the work of the volunteer programmes at WSD2013 and OISTAT50. The Arts and Theatre Institute has recently published a major book providing details of many of the most important parts of the exhibition, *Fragments* (2020), which includes a section on Crowley's Paul Brown exhibit [4].

The contents of Paul Brown's studio remain at the RWCMD. Students frequently refer to model pieces and mouldings from the studio and they take figures for inspiration as they work on their own versions.

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

1. Burnett, K. (2013) *World Stage Design 2013*. Sidcup: Society of British Theatre Designers.
2. *OISTAT 50* (2018) [Exhibition] Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. 29th August-2nd September. OISTAT50 is listed in REF2.
3. *Prague Quadrennial* (2019) [Exhibition] Prague Exhibition Grounds. 6th-16th June. PQ2019 is listed in REF2.
4. Zieglerová, K. and Fantová, M. (2020) *Fragments: Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space*. Prague: Arts and Theatre Institute.
5. *Of Mice and Men* (2003) [Torch Theatre, Milford Haven] RAE 2008. Available at: <http://www.rae.ac.uk/submissions/ra1/2397/746656.html>
6. *Acqua Nero* (2007) [Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff] RAE 2008. Available at: <http://www.rae.ac.uk/submissions/ra1/2397/746656.html>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)**Impact on Young Practitioners**

Beneficiaries of Crowley's contribution to the three international exhibitions are the international professional community in performance design, and within this a particular community of emerging practitioners and students through innovative internship programs. These internship programs play an essential part in supporting early career development within a global industry, and in securing an environment of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation for the industry, and have now become an embedded feature of these flagship industry events. Further beneficiaries are the theatre, film, TV and screen industries in Wales, where significant growth over the period from 2013 to 2019 has been accompanied by increased demand for outstanding young as well as established professionals in scenic design technologies.

Crowley's involvement in the programming of WSD2009, along with the recently approved building plans at RWCMD, persuaded him to propose hosting WSD2013. This coincided with the College's international ambition, the Design department's growing reputation and the opportunities afforded by a major capital extension to the College campus. It was clear that a door was opening to making step change in Wales' profile and contribution to performance design. The process of applying to host the exhibition allowed Crowley to present the College's facilities and academic programmes to the international industry and to a host of potential collaborators and students. As Markéta Fantová, artistic director of the Prague Quadrennial, writes, "These presentations took place at all international performance design platforms, serving not only WSD's goals, but raising visibility of the college among hundreds of performance design professionals, theorists, educators and students" [R2]. In addition, she notes that the volunteer program at WSD2013 was outstanding, allowing students to play a major role in the running of the event. **Many of these students have since gone on to build significant careers in the industry across many fields, from costume to lighting.** A number of these volunteers graduated from RWCMD, including April Dalton (Welsh National Opera, the Royal Academy of Music, the Theater St. Gallen); Joe Fletcher (Wales Theatre Award in 2016 for *Macbeth*, Honorary associate of RWCMD in 2019); Jen McGinley (National Theatre of Scotland, Royal Lyceum Theatre, Northern Stage); Kie Yamamoto ("Odomo TV" for the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), "Attamaru Utopia" for NHK); Gregory Rostek (Royal Opera House, Welsh National Opera); Nate Gibson (LAMDA, Longborough Festival Opera); Brad Lee (now the Programs Coordinator for PQ);

Hristo Takov (Music Theatre Wales, National Dance Company Wales) [text removed for publication].

The success of the volunteer program at WSD2013 was a prime instigator for the inaugural PQ-OISTAT Internship, introduced at PQ2019. Crowley was chosen to lead this pilot and design its structure. As Markéta Fantová indicates “All of his previously gained experiences and methodologies played their role in the development of our new internship that was focused on the training of a small, diverse group of qualified students rather than attracting large numbers of participants” [R2]. The program received 316 applications, of which only 16 were selected, reflecting the desire of the organisers to focus on the training of top students. From their selection in November 2018, these interns were engaged in the project, and arrived in Prague two weeks prior to the opening in June 2019.

One of the interns, Aziza Kadyrova, has written extensively about her experiences at PQ2019. She said that the internship program “managed to create a bridge for emerging artists to access the previously unreachable resources” [R5]. She also “met potential collaborators from various performance backgrounds...found support for a project on the migrant crisis in Mexico; received invitations to participate in design education forums and academic events,” and said that the internship program “will remain an excellent way to encourage young practitioners to keep running the marathon that is a career in performance design” [R5]. Sean also managed the International Volunteers at PQ2019. Markéta Fantová adds that **“both programs will continue to have a long-term impact on careers of the participating students** and plans are set to bring some of them back in more permanent roles for PQ2023” [R2]. The significance of this programme is further evidenced by the decision that the Prague Quadrennial 2023 internship programme will launch in June 2022 and reconnect in Canada in August 2022 (at the delayed WSD2021), with Crowley continuing as project leader [R3].

Crowley has also played an important role in the development of PQ Studio, the educational wing of PQ. Having been formed in a modest way for Scenofest 2003, the internship programme has grown from a very small initial size to nearly 1000 students in 2007 and finally into **a major project that in 2019 involved over 3500 students from around the world** in PQ itself as well as in other PQ-led work.

Markéta Fantová sums up the international impact that Crowley’s work has had on performance design practice: “There are very few practice-oriented events internationally connecting performance designers, scenographers, technicians and industry professionals. Among the most important are the Prague Quadrennial, OISTAT/World Stage Design and USITT. Sean has been both an active participant and a leading force behind many projects organized by the above-mentioned international events. In discussing Sean’s contribution to PQ 2019, we should see it in the long-term context of his participation. For over two decades Sean has been an active member of the international design community championing the work of emerging designers. **His push to create experiences of significant value to young artists by empowering them to make meaningful contributions has undoubtedly altered the lives of countless professionals and has helped shape the industry into a more supportive global community.** Sean has spent many years building professional and student networks, developing international education methodologies and, over time, gained access to many design communities around the world” [R2].

Impact on Creative Industries

The impact of Crowley’s work in **raising the profile of scenic design technologies and supporting the development of outstanding young industry professionals has been tangible across the creative industries in Wales, with the resultant economic and reputational benefits.** The creative industries sector is one of the fastest growing in Wales, with an annual turnover in excess of £3.5bn [[Komorowski, M and Lewis, J \(2020\) The Size and Composition of the Creative Industries in Wales](#)], and with internationally acclaimed work such as *Doctor Who*, *A Discovery of Witches*, *Craith*, and *His Dark Materials* bringing

global attention and reputational benefit for Wales. Creative enterprises comprise 8.25% of the total number of Welsh enterprises, with 98% of these being small and micro businesses, and film, TV, and the performing arts employ over 15,000 people across Wales. The design sector itself has seen above average employment growth rates of 5.1%. WSD2013 had a direct economic impact of £741,690 [R6].

The impact of Crowley's research on the development of students and young practitioners, and on the profile of the creative arts in Wales, as detailed above, has made a significant contribution to the development of this sector. Alongside evidence of the professional success of RWCMD graduates previously involved in the WSD2013 internship program, the impact of his research on teaching within the College is also indicated by successes in the Linbury Prize, the UK's most prestigious prize for stage design for graduating designers which offers winners a professional commission and cash prize. Of 28 winners since 2007, 10 have been from RWCMD [R7].

The particular impact of Crowley's work on the Creative Industries in Wales is described by Ed Thomas, CEO of Threecliffs Productions Ltd and Production Designer for blockbusters such as *Doctor Who*, *Sherlock* and *Da Vinci's Demons*: "Sean's connections and his understanding of the events, theatre, film and television industries along with his ability to inform, nurture and develop have led to his graduates becoming a major contributor to the success of the Film and television industry in Wales and beyond. The design for performance course at the RWCMD is without doubt the premier of its kind in the world. The impact that Sean has had and the part he has played in that success cannot be overstated. Sean's continued contribution and the excellence of the design for production course is critical to the future of the industry in Wales" [R4].

Internationally acclaimed designer, Pamela Howard, writes, "I believe that Production Arts in Wales generally is perceived as being a new and potentially innovative player on the World Stage. Wales has a strong tradition of actors and singers and since Sean Crowley has been at RWCMD, bit by bit he has been raising the profile nationally and internationally of Production Arts, which its graduates then filter through the professional profile in Wales and other countries. There are many new questions on the agenda, politically and with the Pandemic, but Wales is emerging with its own strong identity within the international world, and Sean has a vision of that" [R1].

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

R1. Pamela Howard OBE – Leading UK design educator and author.

R2. Fantová Markéta – Artistic Director and Curator of the Prague Quadrennial.

R3. Fantová Markéta – Artistic Director and Curator of the Prague Quadrennial (2021) Email to Sean Crowley, 18 February.

R4. Ed Thomas – Vice President of RWCMD, leading production designer for film and TV.

R5. Kadyrova, Aziza (2019) 'The Prague Quadrennial is a little universe with its representation of the whole outside itself'. *Emergence* blog available at:

<https://www.emergence.pq.cz/kopie-christopher-daniel-about-emer>

R6. World Stage Design (2013). *Final Report to Welsh Government Major Events Unit*. December.

R7. *The Linbury Prize*. Available at: <http://www.linburyprize.org.uk>