

Institution: University of Liverpool		
Unit of Assessment: Modern Languages and Linguistics (26)		
Title of case study: The Legacies of Empire: Changing Public and Practitioners' Understandings of Globalization, Culture and Identity		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005–2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Kate Marsh	Professor of French Studies	2005-2019
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Kate Marsh's historical research into French metropolitan representations of colonialism and the relationships between competing European imperial powers in the eighteenth century has directly influenced artistic practice. A four-year long collaboration with the Singh Twins, inspired by her 2009 monograph, has resulted in the creation of a substantial new body of work [text removed for publication]. This included an initial set of eleven 'digital lightbox artworks' and nine 'hand-painted works' created for the jointly-conceived exhibition <i>Slaves of Fashion</i>. Linking colonial trade and Atlantic slavery with current global practices, the exhibition has improved public understanding of and community engagement with the legacy of imperialism in Britain, prompting self-reflection and the capacity for behavioural change, particularly in relation to consumer choices. Beneficiaries include: artists, museum curators, and the wider public.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>The underpinning research was conducted by Marsh, who joined the University of Liverpool as a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in 2005 and was appointed Professor of French Historical Studies in 2014. Funded initially by her Leverhulme ECF, 'Representations of India in French Texts 1754–1815', and subsequently by an AHRC project grant, 'Peripheral Voices and European Colonialism: Representations of India in French Literature and Culture 1750–1962', on which Marsh was CI, the early research was motivated by the lacuna in the existing historiography, both Anglophone and Francophone, regarding the French presence on the Indian subcontinent until 1954, seven years after the end of the British Raj.</p> <p>Through extensive archival research in Paris and London on the French <i>Compagnie des Indes</i>, and by tracing published works on India across genres, the project revealed an intellectual and textual exchange between India and France, frequently via Britain, in the eighteenth century.^{3.1} It highlighted not only an imperial rivalry played out, literally and textually, in India between the traditional <i>frères ennemis</i>, but also active collusions that were temporally and geographically contingent. <i>India in the French Imagination</i>^{3.2}, exploring French representations of India between the recall of Dupleix in 1754, which effectively curtailed French ambitions in India, and the Treaty of Paris in 1815, which reduced the French Indian empire to a rump of five <i>comptoirs</i> or trading posts, examines the British conquest of India as seen through French eyes, emphasizing global connections as a constitutive element of local and national histories. The focus of the work on the declining fortunes of the French <i>Compagnie des Indes</i> in the eighteenth century also reached innovative conclusions concerning periodizations and geographical categorizations of French 'colonial' projects, stressing the links between the slave plantations of the Caribbean and trade with the East. From the outset, the French East India trade was only intermittently as successful as that of France's competitors, the English and the Dutch, and tended to run at a deficit which was regulated by the exportation of precious metals to India. This exportation linked East Indian trade with the West Indies and the slave plantations on Saint-Domingue, as <i>piastres</i> were imported to France from the trade in enslaved Africans in the West Indies and then exported to India and exchanged for cotton, calicoes and painted <i>indiennes</i> — highly prized luxuries from the East. The transatlantic slave trade is generally accepted as following a triangular</p>		

route, but this simple and useful geometric analogy elides the interdependence of trade and the ways in which trading in luxuries, muslins and *indiennes* linked France and Europe with India and the plantations in the Caribbean. Subsequent research has interrogated the influence of Indian ideas on French literature and French fashions in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries^{3.4, 3.5}, the experiences of indentured Indians who travelled from the British Raj to the French sugar-growing colony of Martinique^{3.3} and, more recently, how British Indians exploited imperial rivalry to advance the Indian Nationalist agenda.^{3.6}

In 2014, Marsh was approached by internationally renowned artists The Singh Twins after they read her 2009 monograph^{3.6}. The Twins were planning a series of artworks that would explore the story of Indian textiles and its relationship with transnational cultures, politics and economics, with a focus on the Indo-British relationship, and were interested in the wider connections between Indian and European trade outside the well-known story of the British Raj. Following a discussion of the key findings of Marsh's research — specifically, the neglected story of French control of the Deccan region of India in the early eighteenth century, and the role which trade with India played in financing the sugar plantations in Saint-Domingue — Marsh and the Twins co-devised the *Slaves of Fashion* project aimed at exploring neglected global histories and the legacies of imperialism and the slave trade.

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Kate Marsh, 'Writing Indian History: French Authors and the Story of *les grandes Indes*', in *History/Stories of India*, ed. by Catherine Delmas and Chitra Krishnan (New Delhi: MacMillan India, 2009), ISBN 9780230637092, pp.27–42.
- 3.2 Kate Marsh, *India in the French Imagination: Peripheral Voices, 1754–1815* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), ISBN 9781851969944, 224 pp.
- 3.3 Kate Marsh, "'Rights of the Individual", Indentured Labour and Indian Workers: The Slavery Debate in the French Antilles post-1848', *Slavery & Abolition*, 33 (2012), pp.221–31; DOI: [10.1080/0144039X.2012.669900](https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2012.669900)
- 3.4 Kate Marsh, *Narratives of the French Empire: Fiction, Nostalgia, and Imperial Rivalries, 1784 to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2013), ISBN 9780739176566, 150 pp.
- 3.5 Kate Marsh, 'Les paradoxes de la commémoration de l'Inde française', *Outre-mers: Revue d'histoire*, 338–339 (2015), pp.117–34
- 3.6 Kate Marsh, "'The Only Safe Haven of Refuge in all the World": Paris, Indian "Revolutionaries", and Imperial Rivalry, c. 1905–40', *French Cultural Studies*, 30:3 (2019), pp.196–219. DOI: [10.1177/0957155819841271](https://doi.org/10.1177/0957155819841271).

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4. Details of the impact

Marsh's research on comparative imperial histories has inspired artistic practices and supported curatorial interpretation of the global histories of objects; in turn, this has influenced public understandings of how cross-cultural encounters in the past have shaped place and society in the twenty-first century.

4.1 Inspiring Artistic Practices and the Creation of New Art Works

Marsh's research inspired new forms of artistic expression through the creation of a substantial new body of work by The Singh Twins [text removed for publication].^{5.2} The Twins are distinguished for their artworks that deal with socio-political issues surrounding heritage and identity, and they continue to have work exhibited in public and private collections around the world. Amongst many other prestige appointments, the Singh Twins, were awarded an MBE by the Queen in 2011 for services to art, and appointed official Artists in Residence at the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002. They have had numerous exhibitions across the UK and internationally, including at major galleries in Mumbai, New Delhi, Toronto, California, and Texas. The co-designed *Slaves of Fashion* project resulted in the Singh Twins'

ongoing creation of a new body of work, as well as the joint delivery of a major new exhibition and associated events for public audiences

Marsh's research was key support to the successful completion of an initial set of twenty new artworks with historical themes. As The Twins stated, 'Kate provided historical insight, references and sources from her own research, stimulating our thinking ... inform[ing] our creative practice and directly shap[ing] and influenc[ing] it'.^{5.1} For example, in the artwork *Coromandel: Sugar and Spice, not so nice*, key elements such as the Dutch costume and the inclusion of images of Coromandel birds and a tree bearing fruit are inspired and drawn from the collaboration and Marsh's research. Symbolism and Interconnectedness informed by the research are even more explicit in *Indiennes: The Extended Triangle*, with the ambivalence of the piece underlining how far wealth in mainland Europe stemmed from trade overseas, and evoking the ending of slavery on Saint-Domingue. These artworks are currently part of The Twins' private touring collection [text removed for publication]. In addition to this, the artists have created a series of ten large scale tapestry interpretations of the original artworks, also informed by Marsh's research, that have already generated international interest [text removed for publication].^{5.1}

Following the *Slaves of Fashion* exhibition, Marsh's inspiration generated longer-term benefits for the artists. The exhibition at the Walker led to a new commission for the Twins from the Royal Collection Trust, which was displayed as part of the *Splendours of the Subcontinent* exhibition at Buckingham Palace, and the Twins' work *Rule Britannia: Legacies of Exchange* now has a lasting presence on the Royal Collection Trust website.^{5.3} Additionally, the exhibition led to a collaboration with Manchester Museum in 2019, and a new triptych (now part of the original series) that commemorates the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.^{5.1} [text removed for publication].^{5.2}

4.2 Informing Exhibition Practices and Curatorial Understanding

The resulting exhibition of The Twins' work, entitled *Slaves of Fashion*, was staged at the Walker Art Gallery (National Museums Liverpool) and Wolverhampton Art Gallery (WAG). It presented twenty new artworks by the twins, displays of objects from the collections of National Museums Liverpool (NML), and a series of video installations in which Marsh provided unprecedented insights. The latter revealed how everyday historical objects contain hidden histories of imperial conquest and exploitation. The exhibition attracted thousands of visitors to the galleries, 105,520 at NML and 39,400 at Wolverhampton, more than doubling the target audience.^{5.4} In evaluating this achievement, the project curator at NML explained, 'there is no doubt that the academic rigour of the research underpinning the exhibition, provided by Kate Marsh, was an important aspect of its success'. The extensive scholarly work of Marsh provided curators with the confidence to explore new curatorial strategies as well as enabling institutional engagement for the first-time with ways in which items in the museum's collections are linked to Britain's colonial past, histories of conflict, enslavement and empire. The NML curator noted that Kate's involvement 'enabled us to build on our commitment to confronting challenging issues in our exhibitions and displays' explaining that this was 'the first time that we had put on an exhibition of this scale, focusing on these topics'. In light of seeing the exhibition at Wolverhampton, the curators of the Norwich Museum and Art Gallery have now scheduled an exhibition of *Slaves of Fashion* for 2022.^{5.1}

Moreover, Marsh's work with NML and WAG in the context of the exhibitions offered a fresh model for interpreting historical objects alongside new artworks to tell histories of cross-cultural transfer and translation, which have influenced future curatorial work. Indeed, the NML curator explained that '[Marsh] heightened my own awareness of how objects in our collection are linked to Britain's colonial past in ways that are not always immediately obvious'.^{5.4} The curatorial approach modelled by Marsh also received much attention in reviews of *Slaves of Fashion* and was particularly highlighted by visitors as an enjoyable element of the exhibition which challenged them to think differently.^{5.4} The Heritage Lab highlighted that 'a touch screen featuring academic responses by Prof Kate Marsh [...] reveals the fascinating hidden histories behind selected objects'.^{5.7} Visitors to the Wolverhampton gallery praised the research-

informed videos in which Marsh explains the significance of the artworks, with one visitor stating that the histories embedded within these interactive features, not only 'provided a narrative to the exhibition but allowed the wider viewing audience to better understand the journey of the artefacts and craftsmanship depicted. Making the whole exhibition an educationally enriched experience of better understanding history and heritage'.^{5.9} Marsh's collaboration with The Singh Twins and gallery professionals resulted in enhancements to the interpretation of the exhibition, and in turn, this contributed to the quality of the visitor experience.

4.3 Influencing Public Understanding of Cross-Cultural Encounters and Consumerism

At the Walker Art Gallery, the exhibition's examination of how far Indian culture has shaped 'British' identity stimulated capacity for self-reflection and understanding of prejudice in twenty-first-century society: one visitor remarked that it provided a 'different perspective on the British Empire to that which I am accustomed' and another said that it provided 'many historical details not taught' in schools.^{5.5} Marsh's research-led engagement with diverse audiences through the exhibition and a corresponding workshop at the Wolverhampton Art Gallery (WAG) increased interest in and understanding of the heritage themes and issues at the centre of The Twins' artwork. This generated changes in individual perspectives and enabled community engagement with the legacies of cross-cultural encounters, consumerism, and imperialism. Visitor feedback to the exhibition and workshop revealed that explicit parallels drawn between slavery and current global practices had encouraged people to reflect on historical and contemporary cross-cultural encounters, and also inspired changes to consumer habits.

The workshop at WAG led by Marsh in August 2018 was attended by 100 delegates and resulted in changes to participants' perception of global problems. The event changed the way participants thought about their own buying habits. Attendees stated that they were now aware of 'ethical manufacturers/suppliers/organisations', and also acknowledged that in making their own clothes, they would be 'much more aware about buying my fabric' and 'will now think and ask more about [...] "who made my fabric"'.^{5.8} The symposium evoked reflection on environmental impact(s) of consumerism and buying choices, for instance, one participant was 'concerned by the impact of palm oil plantations on the environment', and was encouraged to 'look at what I buy more carefully'.^{5.8} Moreover, others claimed that the event had encouraged them to 'shop/buy more sustainably', and that it had reinforced their 'commitment to making a difference through [...] daily choices'.^{5.8} This research-led event enabled new ways of thinking amongst this audience, leading them to consider how their habits were (and continued to be) part of a global network of cross-cultural encounters. The *Slaves of Fashion* exhibition also received much media interest, engaging broader audiences with the interrelated themes of Empire, colonialism, conflict, slavery and luxury lifestyle, with *Slaves of Fashion* profiled on BBC Television's 'North West Tonight', 'Inside Out' and 'The One Show', and one of the regional documentaries commissioned for the BBC's 'Civilisations' series.^{5.3}

4.4 Inspiring Diverse Community Engagement with the Legacies of Imperialism

Marsh's role in foregrounding the topical issues at the heart of the *Slaves of Fashion* exhibition influenced secondary civic and community encounters with the artworks and subject matter. Her research-led engagement enhanced cultural participation with the exhibition amongst marginalised and diverse audiences, with particular resonance for female audiences from a variety of backgrounds. As the NML anonymized visitor feedback to *Slaves of Fashion* shows, diverse and specific audiences found inspiration in the exhibition's content, and its modern-day relevance stimulated further engagement beyond their initial visit; for instance, a teacher who visited stated that they would 'be showing this to my students as inspiration for all, but in particular our Asian women students'; whilst another visitor was inspired to 'use ideas raised from this [exhibition] in the Processions Suffrage Project'.^{5.5} Take for example, the teacher who stated that a Year 9 art student had been so inspired by *Slaves of Fashion* that they decided to focus their EPQ project on 'whether fashion could be sustainable and ethical', using ideas on 'slave labour, politics and consumerism' from the exhibition in order to create a dress

from recycled plastics.^{5.10} A teacher at the Khalsa Academy, Wolverhampton, attended the exhibition and workshop, and used the material Marsh provided 'to organise educational visits to the exhibition for marginalised groups such as E.A.L. young people and retired elderly Asian women'.^{5.9} They also found that 'Kate's research findings helped [...] deliver a real narrative to the exhibition, bring the visual art to life and giving each piece a meaning for the groups that visited the exhibition'.^{5.9} In particular, they reported that 'the group of retired elderly Asian women were especially moved by hearing the research/ story behind the symbolic artistic interpretations created by The Singh Twins and gave these women a link to their past heritage'.^{5.9}

The collaboration on *Slaves of Fashion* continues to have a lasting impact on the artists themselves, their future plans, and audiences. The Twins have plans for a coffee table fine art book that will feature Marsh's essay response to the series. Furthermore, the artists aim to find a permanent home for this work: '[o]ur vision is to have this as a dedicated gallery and educational resource which honours Kate's contribution and memory: a place to engage with and enjoy art but also to encourage debate and raise public awareness about hidden histories of Empire and Colonialism that have universal relevance to diverse communities and continue to impact on modern society. [...] We envision creating something [...] which delivers the aims that we originally shared with Kate to create a cultural offer that is accessible in its presentation and interpretation: adopting an interdisciplinary approach (combining artistic, curatorial and academic perspectives) to exploring history and historical artifacts'.^{5.1}

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Confidential testimony from The Singh Twins describing how Marsh's research influenced their creative practices as artists (2017-2020).
- 5.2 Confidential statement of estimated monetary values for *Slaves of Fashion* artworks.
- 5.3 *Slaves of Fashion*: Selected Publicity Profile and Public Feedback. Document provided by The Singh Twins demonstrating the lasting effect of the collaboration with Marsh and future commissions.
- 5.4 Testimony from Curator at the Walker Art Gallery (NML), explaining how the insights offered by Marsh's research changed curatorial practices.
- 5.5 Visitor numbers and feedback from the Walker Art Gallery, showing influence on public opinion and awareness, and changes to individual behaviours.
- 5.6 Visitor numbers and feedback from Wolverhampton Art Gallery, showing influence on public opinion and awareness, and changes to individual behaviours.
- 5.7 Online reviews of the exhibition by [The Heritage Lab](#) and [Ellipsis](#).
- 5.8 Anonymous audience feedback from a workshop at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.
- 5.9 Testimonial from an exhibition visitor and teacher as an example of those influenced by Marsh's research beyond the exhibition.
- 5.10 Emails sent to The Singh Twins describing how the artworks, inspired by Marsh's research, influenced visitors' thinking.