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| Institution: University of Brighton | | |
| Unit of Assessment: D32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory | | |
| Title of case study: Shaping new archival practices and design histories | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012 – 2020 | | |
| 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: |
| Sue Breakell | Archivist /Senior Research Fellow (2015 – to date); Archive Leader/Senior Research Fellow (2019 – to date). | 2009 – to date |
| Catherine Moriarty | Curator/Principal Research Fellow (2008 – 2013) Professor and Curatorial Director (2013 – 2018). | 1996 – 2018 |
| Lesley Whitworth | Deputy Curator/Senior Research Fellow (2008 – to date). | 1996 – to date |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013 – 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact <p>Archival and curatorial research by the University of Brighton Design Archives (UoBDA) has provided national and international leadership that has influenced the interpretation and use of contemporary archives. In collaboration with diverse cultural heritage partners, it has shaped archival practices, developed innovative forms of digital access and engagement with archival content, and extended discourses on design history. A new UK Archives Hub service model, co-designed and enabled by UoBDA research, has benefitted 330 archives with archive content viewed 3,000,000 times per annum. Combined with embedded outreach and curatorial activity, including collaborations with the Design Museum and the Jewish Museum, UoBDA research has enhanced engagement with the archive and transformed understandings of the place and content of archives in design and public histories.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research <p>In collaboration with academic and professional partners, including national and international heritage and government bodies, the research leaders of UoBDA have built the work of the archive around a principle of research-led engaged stewardship. This encourages critical reflection on a diverse range of archive practices, leading to the production and co-production of high-quality research outputs and influential approaches.</p> <p>Led by Moriarty with partners from Jisc and the Design Museum, the AHRC-funded project <i>Exploring British Design</i> (2014 – 2015) challenged conventions in the presentation of design historical sources. The project broke down barriers between information professionals, curators and researchers by presenting data non-hierarchically as network points for design activities. It created new routes to discover materials about designers, institutions and events through building and linking detailed biographical authority records. This evinced new relational understandings within design history, rather than conventional hierarchies or linear chronologies [References 3.1, 3.8]. The project produced new insights into user behaviour and used them to examine how digital data structures and presentation can enable archive users to develop new research questions and strategies [3.2].</p> | | |

Breakell's interdisciplinary research has developed connections between disparate and sometimes contradictory discourses, bridging archives, creative practice and art and design history. An edited special issue on visual arts archives for *Archives & Records*, the leading UK Archive Studies journal, foregrounded approaches under-represented in discussions of 'the archive' by bringing together papers from practising archivists, academics and curators on equal terms. Breakell's work incorporates archivally-inflected art historical research, grounded in an archivist's particular material engagement, to inform creative approaches to 'archiving' and the use of the archive as a site of creative practice [3.3].

Research on émigré designers by Breakell and Whitworth responds to current public debates about migration, highlighting the contribution made by European designers to the development of the profession in this country and to the evolution of distinctive post-war material environments [3.4]. Re-framing design historical and archival understandings for academic and public audiences, this work has embraced complementary activities to extend engagement with archival content, including a livestreamed panel on *Borders are for Crossing: Design, Art and Migration in the 20th and 21st Centuries* at the De La Warr Pavilion's *New Line* exhibition (2016 – 2017); close collaboration with the Jewish Museum on the *Designs on Britain* exhibition and catalogue (2017– 2018), and co-organisation of a related symposium at the V&A; and contributions to the *Insiders/Outsiders* online festival (2020). Breakell and Whitworth also contributed to *Designing Transformation: Jews and Cultural Identity in Central European Modernism*, University of the Applied Arts Vienna (2019), a partnership event between UoBDA, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Austrian Museum of Applied Art/Contemporary Art.

UoBDA's longstanding commitment to the interrogation of women's praxis has resulted in Darling and Whitworth's *Women and the Making of Built Space* (2007), Moriarty's re-staging of Barbara Jones' *Black Eyes and Lemonade* (Whitechapel, 2013) [3.5], and Breakell's co-produced short film *Prunella Clough* (2017) for Tate Media, as well as the development of a suite of related new digital assets on UoBDA's web pages. Whitworth's curation of the 2016 exhibition *Design Research & Its Participants* [3.6] traced the evolution of a new form of professional enquiry from its beginnings in the 1960s and through the constant re-shaping of design research agendas, including environmental and social contexts for design. Commissioned by the Design Research Society in association with its fiftieth anniversary international conference, it brought to light new interrelationships, and critically examined the contributions of key, highly networked and invested individuals, and the nature of involvement in the design profession during this period.

3. References to the research

- [3.1] Moriarty, C., Stevenson, J., Johnston, P., Kisby, A., and Hart, T., (2015). *Exploring British Design* [Research dataset]. [Quality validation: Research supported by AHRC funding].
- [3.2] Moriarty, C., (2016). Monographs, archives, and networks: representing designer relationships. *Design Issues*, 32(4): 52-63. https://doi.org/10.1162/DESI_a_00416 [Quality validation: article in a leading peer-reviewed journal].
- [3.3] Breakell, S., (Ed.) (2015). Archival practices and the practice of archives in the visual arts. *Archives & Records*, 36(1): 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2015.1018151> [Quality validation: edited special issue of an established peer-reviewed journal].
- [3.4] Breakell, S., and Whitworth, L., (2013). Émigré designers in the University of Brighton Design Archives. *Journal of Design History*, 28(1): 83-97. ISSN 0952-4649. [Quality validation: article in an established peer-reviewed journal].
- [3.5] Moriarty, C., (2018). 'Popular art, Pop Art, and "the boys who turn out the fine arts"', in Massey, A. and Seago A., (eds.) *Pop Art & Design*. London: Bloomsbury. [10.5040/9781474226226](https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474226226) [Quality validation: Chapter in a Bloomsbury Design Library edited collection].

[3.6] Whitworth, L., (2016) *Design Research & Its Participants*, exhibition for the Design Research Society, University of Brighton. [Quality validation: Exhibition supported by the DRS and coinciding with its 50th anniversary conference].

Key research grant

[3.7] Catherine Moriarty [PI], AHRC, 2014 – 2015, Exploring British Design: developing research competencies by connecting archive content, GBP62,891.

4. Details of the impact

4.1 Establishing a position of influence in archive research and practice

UoBDA's research, engaged stewardship, curatorial practice and innovations in digital practices have influenced the usage of the archive, the expansion of its content and its representation in public and cultural histories. UoBDA has become a model and a reference point for other archives, cultural organisations and individual artists, designers, curators, historians and researchers. Since 2014, more than 1,600 national and international researchers, designers and practitioners, spanning five continents, have consulted with staff at UoBDA. The significance of UoBDA was recognised in the competitive national review of the HEFCE Museums, Galleries and Collections Fund in 2016, resulting in an award of GBP300,000 [Source 5.1]. In 2018, the impact of UoBDA was endorsed by the prestigious Sir Misha Black Award for Innovation in Design Education. The Awards Committee cited UoBDA's '*pioneering use of digital technologies since the 1990s*' and commented that the University is '*at the forefront of the history and interpretation of design in this country*' [5.2]. Key funding bodies including the Getty Institute, the Higher Education Funding Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council have recognised the international significance of UoBDA's work, notably in the areas of access and digitisation, for debates on '*the very nature and significance of archival work today*' [5.2]. UoBDA's collecting policy has expanded categories of representation within its holdings, making them intellectually and creatively relevant to professional and academic researchers from around the globe.

In 2019, UoBDA contributed as expert partners to The National Archives' (TNA) award-nominated project *Safeguarding the Nation's Digital Memory*, with Breakell interviewed for an advocacy campaign for TNA's new digital strategy: 'Plugged In, Powered Up'. In March 2020, TNA announced that UoBDA had been awarded Archive Service Accreditation, the UK standard for best practice in archive services. TNA stated that '*the place of the Design Archives within the University offers a model that other specialist archives within the higher education sector might find useful*'. Acknowledging the pre-eminence of UoBDA collections, the award also reflected that since 1996 UoBDA has been producing and supporting innovative, collection-driven research, teaching and public engagement activities [5.3]. Between 2014 – 2020, findings and content from UoBDA appeared in more than 150 publications, websites and exhibitions, and 350 items on loan were seen by over 400,000 people in countries including Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Spain.

4.2 Shaping professional archival practice worldwide

Through the development of long-term partnerships, UoBDA's team of researchers and practitioners have forged strategic research-based alliances with professional beneficiaries, shaping professional archival practice worldwide and extending engagement with and interpretation of design's histories. Research from UoBDA drives the development and practices of other design archives and the wider heritage sector. *Exploring British Design*, a project conceived and run in collaboration with the UK Archives Hub, made a specific, practical contribution to archival practice based around the power of creating structured and semantic data, and upscaling connectivity across collections. The findings of the research enabled a non-linear approach that challenged traditional methodologies for archival description, the principles of which were then embedded within a re-design of the Archives Hub service and data model, launched in December 2016, with benefits now being felt '*across the UK archives community*' [5.4, 5.5, 5.6]. The expertise provided by UoBDA researchers was '*vital*' to the development of a service now built upon an entity-relationship

model, which has benefitted 330 archives, and users making 3,000,000 annual page views of the Hub's new resource worldwide [5.5, 5.6, 5.7].

UoBDA has been consulted on policies and practices at a national level, for design archives internationally, and within other public-facing heritage institutions. UoBDA advice has shaped how national institutions in a number of countries develop archive policy. Building on earlier consultancy by UoBDA that led to a report by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism on the development of design archives in 2012, there have been additional advisory initiatives, including a further related South Korean Report (2016), consultation by Japanese government and a report by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, *Model Project for the Development of Design Archives* (Kyoto, 2016) [5.8]. Further strategic archival advice has been sought by institutions in China, India, Malaysia, Italy, and Sweden. Breakell's published research on artists and archives generates invitations to contribute to public-facing events exploring the relationship between archives and art practice at major national museums (eg Whitechapel Art Gallery, Hayward Gallery), alongside co-organised events through the ARLIS (Art Libraries Society) Committee for Art and Design Archives (2013 – 2017), which developed interdisciplinary audiences for ARLIS and encouraged critical reflection among archive practitioners.

4.3 Connecting design histories with public audiences

UoBDA continues to engage ever-wider audiences by opening up and sharing spaces that facilitate proactive public engagement. Research on the archive's collections has enabled the sharing of expertise with public-facing partners to enrich the content of exhibitions, digital resources and the presentation of the past in urban material culture. This is exemplified in Breakell and Whitworth's work on émigrés and on women designers that has shaped public exhibitions, events and publications, including the major *Designs on Britain* exhibition at the Jewish Museum, London (2017 – 2018), an associated public conference co-organised with the V&A, and a public event at the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea. Insights into how émigré designers contributed to the formation of new professional networks were also shared with audiences of Whitworth's curated exhibition *Design Research & Its Participants* (2016) for the Design Research Society's 50th Anniversary Conference (650 delegates from five continents). UoBDA work on émigrée Natasha Kroll led to her representation in two recent exhibitions: on the Bauhaus at Nottingham Contemporary (2019 – 2020), and in the Atelier E.B show at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery (2018 – 2019), touring to France and Russia (the first time Kroll's work had been displayed in the country of her birth).

The *Designs on Britain* exhibition helped escalate knowledge of the influence of continental modernism on design in Britain, enabling public audiences to appreciate the significant contribution émigré designers have made to national identity [5.9]. UoBDA was the largest loan contributor to this exhibition which helped public audiences understand how much iconic British design was produced by migrants to this country [5.10, 5.11]. The Chairman of the Jewish Museum noted this exhibition as a personal highlight due to its representation of the story of European designers who radically transformed British design [5.12]. The exhibition garnered critical acclaim and substantial national coverage in the press and media as well as feedback from visitors on its inspiring nature, showing Britain as '*blessed by the influence of these excellent designers*' [5.12]. The Chief Curator and Head of Exhibitions at the Jewish Museum noted that the exhibition would not have been possible without the institutional collaboration between the museum and UoBDA. This collaboration was embedded through UoBDA's early stage input into the conceptualisation of the exhibition's design and through all stages of its development, with the '*scholarly rigour and expertise in the study of émigré designers critical to the development and success of the exhibition*' [5.13].

Research at UoBDA has shaped how organisations engage with their publics in relation to their own architectural and cultural histories. Head of Collections and Research at the Design Museum used research carried out at UoBDA to build a new narrative on the Museum's history that moved away from reliance on existing histories of the building to situate it within the wider politics of representation and Empire. This has been embedded within the Museum through the development of a heritage trail running through the site

explaining the history of the building to members of the public, and in the production of *The Story of the Design Museum* (2016), which included a chapter on the troubled legacy of the former Commonwealth Institute. Approximately 40 newly-hired Visitor Experience staff were trained in this narrative and now share the knowledge of the museum's history with the public. This has resulted in a wider discussion within the museum about how it can diversify its exhibitions, collections and learning programmes. To this end, the research with UoBDA has been acknowledged as an important factor influencing the recent establishment of an internal cross-departmental steering group called DEMAND (Design Museum Anti-Discrimination Group). This group is taking forward the museum's aims to diversify exhibitions, collections and learning programmes, and to review the museum's use of language and imagery as part of its anti-discrimination action plan [5.9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Vickers, H., (2017). Brighton Design Archives to Receive £300k. *University Business: The business of Higher Education*. <http://universitybusiness.co.uk/Article/brighton-design-archives-to-receive-300k> [Accessed on 25th January 2021]. Confirmation of award from HEFCE Museums, Galleries and Collections Fund.

[5.2] Sir Misha Black Awards. Citation for the award: Sir Misha Black Award for Innovation in Design Education (2018). www.mishablackawards.org.uk/award-ceremonies/2018/award-presentation [Accessed on 25th January 2021]. This includes the transcript of the oration by Professor Sir Christopher Frayling, Sir Misha Black Award to UoBDA, 22 November 2018.

[5.3] Accredited Archive Service. (2020). University of Brighton Design Archives Accreditation outcome report. PDF available.

[5.4] Testimonial from the Archives Hub Service Manager corroborating the contribution of UoBDA researchers to the project and its effect on the archive community.

[5.5] Stevenson, J., (2018). How the Exploring British Design project informed the development of the Archives Hub. Archives Hub. <https://blog.archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/2018/02/19/how-the-exploring-british-design-project-informed-the-development-of-the-archives-hub/> [Accessed 25th January 2021]. This acknowledges the UoBDA in the project that led to the launch of the new Archives Hub service.

[5.6] Supplementary information report including a collection of reviews and exhibition materials. Available as a PDF.

[5.7] Jisc. Archives Hub Annual Report 2020. This confirms the usage and value of the service. Available as a PDF.

[5.8] Report from the Agency for Cultural Affairs (2015). *Model Project for the Development of Design Archives* (Kyoto Institute of Technology Museum and Archives).

[5.9] Testimonial from Head of Collections and Research at the Design Museum that corroborates the use of UoBDA research in a new strand of thinking at the Museum.

[5.10] Buxton, P., (2017). Nazism refugees' impact on UK design. *The RIBA Journal*. <https://www.ribaj.com/culture/exhibition-designs-on-britain-jewish-museum-london> [Accessed on 25th January 2021]. A review that evidences how the exhibition revealed often overlooked design histories.

[5.11] Designs on Britain (2017 – 2018). Jewish Museum. <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/designs-on-britain/> [Accessed on 25th January 2021]. Exhibition webpage revealing the new knowledge represented in the content.

[5.12] Jewish Museum, London. Annual Review 2017/18. Report available as a PDF. This includes the quotes and reviews in relation to the success of the exhibition.

[5.13] Testimonial from former Chief Curator and Head of Exhibitions at Jewish Museum London that confirms the role of UoBDA in the conceptualisation and outcomes of the exhibition.