

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: King's College London		
Unit of Assessment: 29 Classics		
Title of case study: Forging New Connections Between Ancient & Modern Art: Modern Classicisms & The Classical Now		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011–2020		
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:
Michael Squire	Lecturer in Classical Greek Art (2011–2015) Reader in Classical Art (2015–2018) Professor of Classical Art (from 2018)	From 01/09/2011
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

This case study derives from King's research into the legacy of Graeco-Roman visual culture. Underpinning research, led by Michael Squire, championed the interconnections between ancient and modern art. From 2015 onwards, Squire directed a collaborative research project called Modern Classicisms: the result was a major exhibition, The Classical Now, in spring 2018, which juxtaposed ancient objects with modern and contemporary works.

The project and exhibition provided a pathway to impact, benefiting three distinct groups. First, the research has benefited artists (with associated economic gain), generating new creative practices, collaborative partnerships and cultural artefacts. Second, by changing curatorial interpretation and methods of public engagement, research insights have benefited museum professionals. Third, the research has facilitated a broader transformation in public perceptions of 'ancient' and 'modern' art, with a wide range of associated social and cultural benefits.

2. Underpinning research

Underpinning King's research, led by Michael Squire, centred around the interpretation of classical art. This work has led to new insights into both ancient Graeco-Roman visual culture and its subsequent reception. A particular focus has been the legacy of classical forms in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Three significant insights of this research agenda stand out.

- First, Squire has challenged traditional assumptions that the 'modernist' 20th century marked a total break with earlier artistic traditions. Early work on *"the present classical past"* (*Panorama of the Classical World*, 2004, pp.306–331) led to a 2011 book on *The Art of the Body: Antiquity and Its Legacy*, in which Squire argued that *"when viewed comparatively, ancient and modern images ... prove at once familiar and strange"*. The research attracted major media – e.g. ABC Australia (2012), BBC Television (2015) and BBC World Service (2017); it was also cited in connection with Squire's 2012 Philip Leverhulme Prize. The Prize allowed Squire to refine and expand his argument, with subsequent chapters on *"theories of reception"* in classical art [1], *"classical archaeology and the contexts of art history"* [2] and *"the legacy of Greek sculpture"* [3]. *"It would be mistaken to conclude that twentieth-century modernism rendered Greek sculpture an artistic irrelevance ..."*, Squire has demonstrated: *"Throughout the political, social and cultural upheavals of the twentieth century, the Greek artistic legacy in fact remained integral to defining the 'modern' condition"* [3 p.755].
- Second, Squire's research has championed the significance of physical display: the means of exhibiting objects actively directs response, often in complex and under-acknowledged ways. Insights have pointed to both similarities and differences between ancient and modern (post-Enlightenment) modes of displaying 'art' [4, 5, 7]. In particular, Squire has analysed the

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importance of literal and metaphorical ‘frames’ to interpreting artefacts, not least via a major co-edited book published in 2017 [4, esp. pp.1–98].

- Third, Squire’s research has led to collaborations with contemporary artists, yielding new perspectives on the intertwined relationships between ancient and modern visual cultures. Modern artistic responses can shed light on the ancient meanings of Greek and Roman art, Squire has demonstrated; by extension, ancient visual cultural perspectives can enrich the interpretation of modern work [esp. 1, 2, 5, 7]. Conversations with artistic practitioners have proved fundamental here: Squire has published interviews with artists as journal articles – for example, with Marc Quinn [5] – and in a co-edited volume [6: interviews with Edward Allington, Léo Caillard, Damien Hirst, Alex Israel, Marc Quinn, Mary Reid Kelley and Rachel Whiteread]. Such publications have emphasised resonances between ancient questions about visual representation and contemporary artistic practice.

These insights led in 2015 to a major collaborative research project on Modern Classicisms: Ancient Art and Contemporary Artists in Dialogue, centred around the reception of classical art in the 20th and 21st centuries [A]. Resulting publications show how contemporary artistic practice can inform the study of ancient materials (and vice versa), shifting the historicist focus of classical archaeology [6, 7]. The project also provided a pathway to the impacts described below.

3. References to the research

* indicates peer-reviewed.

- *1. Squire, M. J. (2014). Theories of Reception. In C. Marconi (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Art and Architecture* (pp.637–671). New York: Oxford University Press.
- *2. Squire, M. J. (2012). A Place for Art? Classical Archaeology and the Contexts of Art History. In S. Alcock and R. Osborne (Eds.), *Companion to Classical Archaeology* (2nd ed., pp.468–500). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- *3. Squire, M. J. (2018). The Legacy of Greek Sculpture. In O. Palagia (Ed.), *A Handbook of Greek Sculpture* (pp.723–765). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- *4. V. J. Platt and M. J. Squire (Eds.) (2017). *The Frame in Classical Art: A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- *5. Squire, M. J. (2019; online 2017). ‘Casual Classicism’: In Conversation with Marc Quinn. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 26, 195–235. DOI: 10.1007/s12138-017-0451-9.
6. R. Allen, J. Cahill and M. J. Squire (Eds.) (2018). *The Classical Now*. London: Elephant. Catalogue accompanying the exhibition (1 March to 28 April 2018). See also [A].
- *7. Squire, M. J. (2019). ‘Modern Classicisms’ & *The Classical Now*: Dialogues Between Past and Present. In A. Pizzo (Ed.), *Antico e non antico* (pp.541–555). Rome: Mimesis.

4. Details of the impact

Squire has been Principal Investigator of Modern Classicisms since 2015 [A]. The project received GBP400,000 in funding between 2016 and 2018 (c. 50% gifted by Christian Levett, Founder of the Musée d’Art Classique de Mougins (MACM); see also G.2.i). It also brought two doctoral/postdoctoral researchers to King’s, both with experience of collaborating with artists (Ruth Allen and James Cahill, 2017–2018; Cahill began a Leverhulme ECR fellowship at King’s in 2020). In November 2017, King’s staged a public workshop to launch the project, involving artists, curators, collectors, heritage professionals and academic researchers. This, in turn, led to a major King’s exhibition in spring 2018 – *The Classical Now*. Held across two London locations (Bush House Arcade and Somerset House), *The Classical Now* showcased work by 58 modern and contemporary artists (including Damien Hirst, Henry Moore, Pablo Picasso, Grayson Perry, Marc Quinn and Rachel Whiteread); these were displayed alongside Graeco-Roman artefacts – in ceramic, bronze, marble and mosaic – in four thematic displays (Overture, Place, Mythology, Pose). The exhibition attracted 8,248 visitors; 452 survey responses were collected [C].

Modern Classicisms and The Classical Now created a forum for academics, curators, teachers, students and artists to learn from one another. It brought King’s research into direct contact with a broad community of art professionals, while also bringing insights to a wider public audience. The effects were transformative: as the President of the Royal Academy writes, the “King’s research programme provided a very welcome structure that allowed experiences and debate to cross what has become in practice a professional divide verging on a gulf” [G.1.vi].

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In what follows, impact is narrated thematically, structured around three beneficiary groups:

1. the creative benefits, especially among artist practitioners (sometimes with associated economic gain for professional artists);
2. the benefits to art-institution professionals, above all by influencing curatorial thinking, behaviour and practice;
3. the social and cultural benefits that derive from transforming public attitudes to ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ art.

1. Stimulating artistic creativity

Influencing new artistic thinking and practice; establishing collaborative networks; inspiring, co-producing and generating creative artefacts (with economic gain for professional artists)



Figure 1: Caillard’s commission for The Classical Now (*The Times*, 27 February 2018, p.4)

Professional artists have derived particular benefit from Squire’s underlying research [F]. Artist testimonies tell how Modern Classicisms and The Classical Now forged a new co-community of practitioners and researchers: “*It feels like suddenly we’re in a community whereas before we were little torches in the dark*” [F.2.i]; “*I had the opportunity to ... learn about the intersection of academic and artistic research*” [F.1.vi]; as Marc Quinn writes, it spurred “*opportunities to create a dialogue between my work and ... the past*” [F.1.vii]. Artists also speak of professional gains: “*the public presence of Dr Squire’s research projects has brought me increased exposure and profile*” [F.1.viii];

“*[Modern Classicisms] gave me a chance to connect my theoretical and practical interests in art*” [F.1.iv]. This has led to more tangible benefits, too. British sculptor Nick Hornby associates the “*huge inspiration*” of his collaboration in Modern Classicisms with two 2019 artist residencies – and a successful bid for a paid public commission at Harlow Science Park [F.1.ii, completed in summer 2019]. French multimedia artist, Léo Caillard, likewise states that his collaboration within the exhibition led to an increase both in public exposure (“*a 40% rise in website traffic*”) and sales (among collectors “*who first encountered my work in The Classical Now*”) [F.1.i].

Léo Caillard draws attention to longer-term professional benefits, too. Caillard worked with Squire to produce a colossal installation on top of Bush House for The Classical Now [Figure 1]. The commission attracted major media attention for Caillard [E], resulting in four new commissions and exhibitions (“*It has helped further establish my reputation in the UK – but also in France and internationally*” [F.1.i]). “*My view of antiquity, and the thinking behind my artistic practice, has matured and evolved as a result of encountering Squire’s research*”, Caillard writes, “*I also find myself able to articulate my own work more clearly to galleries and collectors*” [F.1.i].

Modern Classicisms and The Classical Now spurred various other creative activities, including a competition launched in September 2017: 27 entries were received in diverse media (e.g. poetry, drawing, choral composition, film, textiles, painting, photography, video game [A]). Among visitors to the exhibition, 51% of public respondents indicated that their own creativity had been enhanced [C.1 p.6]; subsequent interviews indicate a range of media (e.g. film, song-writing, patchwork-quilting, photography, painting, architecture, sculpture, textiles) [C.1, C.2]. The same data identifies specific beneficiary groups [C.1] – including a group of school students studying A-level art [Figure 2], and a Royal Drawing Schools class (“*it has made me see more value in re-examining ancient aesthetics and ideals and re-purposing it for new messages*”) [C.1 p.27].

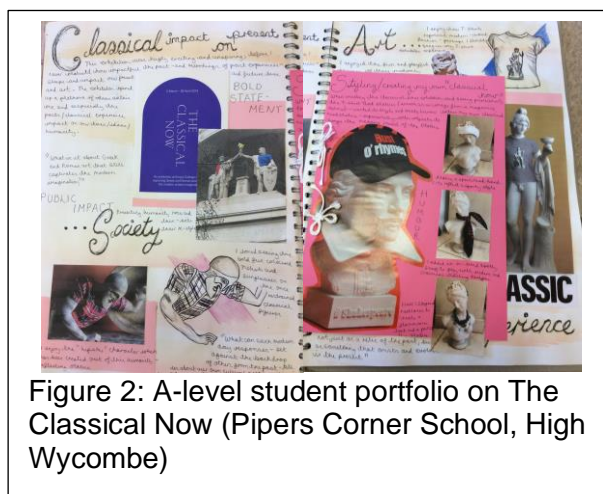


Figure 2: A-level student portfolio on The Classical Now (Pipers Corner School, High Wycombe)

2. Changing museum/art institution practice

Stimulating new museum projects (with social, cultural and economic benefits); changing art institutional behaviour; enhancing curatorial interpretation, presentation and engagement

Thanks to collaborative partnerships with art institutions (e.g. MACM, Royal Academy, British Museum, Soane Museum, DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, White Cube [A, G.1, G.2, H]), The Classical Now brought Squire's insights into direct dialogue with museum and gallery professionals. Those respondents who self-identified as curators attest to this impact – both of The Classical Now (“*I took inspiration from lots of aspects of the exhibition for future ideas and projects*”; “*it has introduced me to some bold curatorial ... practices*”; “*it's a tendency in the curation ... I think that I could work in my country [Ecuador]*”, [C.1 p.16]), and of associated Modern Classicisms workshops and events (“*a very good paradigm of how to rethink public events as collaborative thinking rather than transmission of knowledge*”, [B.1 p.13]).

Activities have in turn generated new museum projects. As a direct result of The Classical Now in London, MACM curated a partner exhibition of works by Léo Caillard in France (*Past is Present: March-May 2018*): March to May 2018). The MACM Director pinpoints Modern Classicisms as the stimulus for the show [G.1.iii]. She also indicates the benefits of both exhibitions to MACM (e.g. national/international publicity, estimated 20% increase in visitor numbers and hence revenue, demographic participation – especially among millennials): “*Squire's research has informed, and helped us articulate, our day-to-day practice and aspirations for the museum*” [G.1.iii; see also A].

An indirect benefit has been to encourage future collaborations between art institutions and British universities. The DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art in Greece – which sponsored *Liquid Antiquity: Conversations* as part of The Classical Now – explains how this partnership was its first with a British university: the successful collaboration “*enhanced our international presence and our networking and brought our work closer to a new audience ... [It] has certainly enhanced our eagerness to form such partnerships again in the near future*” [G.1.iv].

Testimonials from museum professionals confirm a longer-term benefit to curatorial practice. The Director of Sir John Soane's Museum describes how Squire's research challenged him to reflect on the museum's aims: he concluded that Soane also “*wanted his museum to be a living entity that responded to contemporary art as much as ancient art*”; as a result, the museum intends “*to increase ... offerings in contemporary art where it makes sense in terms of our holdings*” [G.1.i]. The 2020–21 exhibition *Langlands & Bell: Degrees of Truth* demonstrates this shift, setting contemporary artistic work by Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell against the antiquities and neoclassical spaces of the museum.

The impact of this research has changed practice at the British Museum, too. Ian Jenkins (Senior Curator) tells how King's research – disseminated via The Classical Now – has led to new curatorial decisions. “*A case in point would be the British Museum's exhibition on Troy*” in 2019–20, Jenkins writes, which opened by juxtaposing a modern painting by Cy Twombly and Hittite remains: “*Squire's own research ... [and] the King's project ... played an important role in our approaching landscapes of modern artistic reception, as well as their potential for innovative visitor engagement.*” “*Such dialogue between museums and universities proves mutually beneficial: it forms part of our shared programme of research, as well as our common commitment to outreach and widening participation – in London, the UK and globally*” [G.1.ii].

3. Transforming public perceptions

Changing public attitudes to 'ancient' and 'modern' art; engaging new audiences; associated social benefits (from e.g. public understanding, cultural participation and enhanced quality of life)

Squire's research has helped to shift public understandings of both 'classical' and 'contemporary' art. Already in November 2017, the launch workshop of Modern Classicisms facilitated a public discussion between 31 academics/ artists/ curators/collectors, with videos subsequently published online [A]. Of the 272 participants, 94% of respondents indicated that they learned something new, 67% felt enhanced creativity, 63% felt inspired [B.1 p.7]: “*inspirational*”, “*enlightened a new view of antiquity*”, “*feeling renewed in my approach*” [B.1 pp.5, 11, 8; see also B.2, B.3].

The Classical Now exhibition – which was without cost to visitors – extended the reach and significance of this impact. In total, 96% of responses were positive: 78% “*enjoyed themselves*”, and 65% “*learned something new*” [C.1 p.6]. Crucially, response data demonstrates that the exhibition transformed visitor perceptions in two distinct ways. First, the exhibition changed attitudes to ancient art (193 answers: e.g. “*Made me realise the continued relevance & influence*

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of classical work”; “Brought ancient art alive for me”; “I realised that ancient art is ... more accessible than I imagined it to be” [C.1 p.10]). Second, the exhibition changed public appreciations of modern and contemporary art (173 answers: e.g. “More multilayered than I thought”; “Made it seem ancient”; “Made me like it more”; “The exhibition changed my view” [C.1 pp.12 and 13]). Survey responses also point to associated knock-on social benefits – increasing accessibility, stimulating cultural participation and encouraging independent analytical reflection (e.g. “It’s made me want to go and look at more ancient art in London museums”; “It will influence how I view galleries in future, both of modern and ancient art”; “We’ll see different things and we’ll be able to make connections” [C.1 pp.10 and 17]).

There is indication of broad demographic reach, too [C.1 p.4]: 15% of exhibition respondents were international tourists (representing 5 continents); 78% had no previous King’s connection; 36% identified as non-white (higher than the UK BAME make-up of 14%). Some visitors enrolled in the accompanying cultural programme – including a lecture by Mary Beard (396 attendees [A]) and a study weekend co-organised with the Royal Academy [H]. Social media amplified this impact. Engagements with #TheClassicalNow reached 1.076 million users [D], with tweeted responses claiming, for example, “I am a different human being after seeing this!” [C.1 p.20]).

Professional reviews and media coverage affirm significance while extending secondary reach [E]. *The Guardian* rated The Classical Now among “5 of the best” UK exhibitions (“an epic update of the antique” [E.6]; *The Sunday Times* wrote that “by placing ... well-known torsos against Yves Klein’s eye-popping answer ..., you will see each one afresh” [E.7]. Impact has continued after the exhibition closed. The *Times Literary Supplement* listed the catalogue [6] among the “2018 books of the year”: “[it] should have a lasting impact ..., with some excellent essays on the continuing and sometimes unexpected dialogue between modern artists and antiquity” [E.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

A. Modern Classicisms project website: www.modernclassicisms.com [with videos of workshop launch, details of the art competition and information about The Classical Now (and accompanying cultural programme)].

B. Participant feedback: Launch and opening workshop of Modern Classicisms (10/11/2017). 1. Analysis and report, including details of follow-up research (also published online). 2. Spreadsheet summarising 66 received responses (questionnaire, online survey, email) [Return = 24%]. 3. Video interview testimonials from contributors/participants (also published online).

C. Visitor feedback: The Classical Now exhibition (01/03/2018–28/04/2018). 1. Analysis and report, including details of follow-up research (also published online). 2. Spreadsheet of 452 responses (questionnaire, online survey, interviews) [Return = 5%].

D. Pulsar (2019). ‘The Classical Now Exhibition: Social Media Impact Overview’. Independent assessment by Pulsar Platform Ltd., commissioned by King’s (also published online).

E. Sample dossier of media coverage for The Classical Now: 1. *The Times* (27/02/2018); 2. *Time Out* (04/03/2018); 3. *The Art Newspaper* (06/03/2018); 4. *Financial Times* (02/03/2018); 5. *The Telegraph* (20/03/2018); 6. *The Guardian* (31/03/2018); 7. *The Sunday Times* (04/03/2018); 8. *Voice of America* (19/03/2018); 9. *Die Welt* (15/03/2018); 10. *Times Literary Supplement* (20/11/2018).

F. Testimonials from artists: 1. Written: i. Léo Caillard; ii. Nick Hornby; iii. Mary Reid Kelley; iv. Svitlana Biedarieva; v. Christodoulous Panayiotou; vi. Ursula Mayer; vii. Marc Quinn; viii. Gen Doy. 2. Video (also published online): i. Alexandre Singh; ii. Léo Caillard; iii. Christopher Le Brun; iv. Mary Reid Kelley.

G. Testimonials from museum/gallery/art-institution professionals: 1. Written: i. Bruce Boucher [Director, Sir John Soane’s Museum]; ii. †Ian Jenkins [Senior Curator, Department of Greece and Rome, British Museum]; iii. Leisa Paoli [Présidente/Directrice, MACM]; iv. Regina Alivisatos [Administrative Director, DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art]; v. Polina Kosmadaki [Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Benaki Museum, Athens]; vi. Christopher Le Brun [President, Royal Academy of Arts; freelance artist]. 2. Video (also published online): i. Christian Levett [Founder, MACM]; ii. Christopher Le Brun [President, Royal Academy of Arts].

H. Royal Academy of Arts website: Information about ‘Essential Forms’ weekend, organised in partnership with ‘Modern Classicisms’ at King’s (14/04/2018–15/04/2018). See also: A, G.1.vi.