

Institution: The Open University		
Unit of Assessment: D32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Open Arts Objects: Diversifying Art History by Transforming Teaching		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009-2020		
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:
Leah R. Clark	Senior Lecturer	2013 - present
Renate Dohmen	Lecturer	2015 - present
Kathleen Christian	Senior Lecturer	2013 - 2019
Kim Woods	Senior Lecturer	1990 - 2018
Paul Wood	Lecturer	1981 - 2014
Emma Barker	Senior Lecturer	1995 - present
Clare Taylor	Senior Lecturer	2009 - present
Elizabeth McKellar	Professor/Emeritus	2005 - 2020
Warren Carter	Lecturer	2013 - present
Gillian Perry	Professor/Emeritus	1977 - 2016
Amy Charlesworth	Lecturer	2015 - present
Leon Wainwright	Professor	2011 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The Open University's Art History researchers have pioneered a new expanded, global and object-centred approach to art history, which challenges traditional perceptions of the discipline as elitist and Eurocentric. Their innovative research methodologies and novel theoretical frameworks have reached more than 14 million people and have had a significant impact by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting A Level Art History and shaping its new curriculum. • Enhancing teacher understanding and informing students' comprehension of global approaches to art history. • Attracting new audiences to art history and widening participation. 		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The Open University's (OU) Art History department has a long and radical tradition of introducing new audiences to novel art forms and approaches through research. In recent years, its researchers have applied innovative object-centred methodologies and new theoretical frameworks to challenge perceptions of art history as elitist and Eurocentric. Their work has pioneered a broader and more inclusive definition of art history as a field of enquiry which embraces global perspectives and considers artefacts, not just in terms of the collections in which they first became known, but also where they came from and how they got there (mobility). This research has resulted in monographs, edited volumes, and articles on topics ranging from collections of Chinese porcelain in Renaissance Italy to illustrated travel books by women in British India.</p> <p>The OU's Art History researchers have addressed the cross-cultural exchanges and global forces that have shaped the history of Western art from the fourteenth century to the present day. In 2017, Christian, Clark, Woods and Wood re-examined the field of Renaissance art history by exploring the art of this era in the light of global connections by considering the movement of objects, ideas and technologies through the lens of cultural encounter and conflict [O1a]. Published the same year, Barker, Taylor, and McKellar explored how increasing engagement with the rest of the world transformed early modern European art, architecture, and design. Their research focussed on how commercial activity and colonial ventures gave rise to new and diverse forms of visual and material culture across the globe [O1b]. McKellar and Dohmen (2017) examined the aesthetic interactions initiated by the Anglo-Indian colonial encounter across the disciplines of painting, printmaking, design, photography, and architecture [O1c]. In 2018 Carter, Wood, Perry, and Charlesworth examined selected periods in the art of the last one hundred years through the prism of postcolonialism, exploring a range of pivotal moments such as the early twentieth-century modernists' appropriations of non-western art, how</p>		

Mexican muralists in the 1930s negotiated European avant-gardist strategies, and art produced in the current period of globalisation [O1d].

In addition to these publications, OU's Art Historians undertook related research, many supported by external grants. For example, **Clark's** BA/Leverhulme funded archival research on Italian collections of Chinese porcelain first featured in her 2017 publication [O1a] and resulted in a number of publications including an article [O2]. **Wainwright's** longstanding commitment to global movement and globalising processes for the history of art (Leverhulme), **Dohmen's** research in India (Paul Mellon) and **Carter's** work on Mexico, also resulted in a number of publications including a monograph [O3] and articles [O4, O5]. **Wood's** 2017 and 2018 publications [O1a,d] reflect his long-established research into Western art and the wider world [O6].

3. References to the research (All peer reviewed)

O1. *Art and its Global Histories* Manchester University Press:

- a. Vol I: **Christian, K. & Clark, L.** (Eds.). (2017) [European art and the wider world, 1350-1550](#). (includes chapters by **Clark, Christian, Wood** and **Woods**);
- b. Vol II: **Barker, E.** (Ed.). (2017) [Art, commerce and colonialism, 1600-1800](#). (includes chapters by **Barker, Taylor** and **McKellar**);
- c. Vol III: **Dohmen, R.** (Ed.). (2017) [Empire and art: British India](#). (includes chapters by **Dohmen**, and **McKellar**);
- d. Vol IV **Carter, W.** (Ed.). (2018) [Art after empire: from colonialism to globalisation](#). (includes chapters by **Carter, Wood, Perry** and **Charlesworth**).

O2. **Clark, L.** 'The Peregrinations of Porcelain: The Collections of Duchess Eleonora d'Aragona of Ferrara.' *Journal of the History of Collections* 32, no. 2 (2020): 275-88.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhy063>

O3. **Wainwright, L.** (2011) [Timed Out: Art and the Transnational Caribbean. Rethinking Art's Histories](#). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

O4. **Dohmen, R.** (2012) 'Memsahibs and the "Sunny East": Representations of British India by Millicent Douglas Pilkington and Beryl White.' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 40(1), 153-177. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150311000295>

O5. **Carter, W.** (2019) 'The Slow Fuse of the Revolutionary Mural': Diego Rivera, Poststructuralism and Historical Revisionism', *Acta Academia Artium Vilnensis*, Vol. 94. <http://oro.open.ac.uk/60540/>

O6. **Wood, P.** (2013) *Western Art and the Wider World*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118781401>

4. Details of the impact

The OU's Art History department's research underpins its ambitious [Open Arts Objects](#) (OAO) project to decolonise the A Level Art History curriculum [O1-O6]. The project empowers teachers to teach an expanded global approach to the discipline through an open access website providing free resources (including 54 films), based on the department's novel methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and research insights [C1a]. For example, films include a discussion of porcelain in Mantegna's *Adoration of the Magi* (**Clark**), Kahlo's *Self-Portrait* (**Carter**), textiles in Shonibare's *Ship in a Bottle* (**Taylor**), Lutyen's Viceroy's House/ Rashtrapati Bhavan (**McKellar**), Sonia Khurana's *Zoetrope* (**Wainwright**), and Tipu's Tiger (**Dohmen**). In addition, the 'critical terms for art history' films on mobility, Classicism, essentialism, hybridity, Modernism, and globalisation are underpinned by this research (**Barker, Clark, Christian, Dohmen, Carter, Wainwright, Wood**).

From September 2016 to February 2020, an average of 692 users visited OAO's open access website each month. Since March 2020, average monthly users rose to 2,215 and over 78,000 watched OAO content on YouTube [C1b,c]. Users range from teachers and students to the general public, and are located in approximately 160 different countries and represent approximately 700 educational institutions, such as schools, academies, colleges and universities [C1d,e,g].

Protecting A Level Art History and shaping its new curriculum

In February 2016, OAO project lead, **Clark**, suggested making a series of films underpinned by the department's research including *Art and its Global Histories* to support Art History teaching

[O1]. She devised six key questions based on her methodological approach to objects, which each presenter would answer to camera about a single object [C2d]. By May 2016, OAO published 10 initial films on its website. In June 2016, the OAO team held a teaching focus group at the OU's Camden office to consult with 10 A Level Art History and Art & Design teachers [C2a]. The teachers responded positively to the films and some expressed reservations about their ability to teach a global approach to the discipline; their response underscored the need for the OAO resources and informed the production of another 12 films [C2b]. Their feedback also highlighted the importance of the “*knowledge of experts*” and the “*expertise of the [OU] academics*” in the films [C2b].

In autumn 2016, UK exam board AQA announced it would remove Art History from the A Level curriculum from September 2017. The decision was controversial and attracted criticism from prominent art historians, teachers, and educators. In the weeks that followed, the OAO team were well placed to play a critical role in an online campaign, #whyarthistorymatters [C3]. In December 2016, exam board Pearson agreed to continue the provision, with a new global element to the curriculum. The OAO team played a vital role in informing the new specification's author's choice of works and supported the new global dimension by producing in total 54 open access films and support materials for teachers, which were ‘written into’ the spec [C4a,c]. The films cover themes based on the research such as Chinese porcelain collections in the Italian Renaissance to the colonial legacies of Tipu's Tiger, and ‘critical terms’ from hybridity to globalisation, which one teacher noted “*directly address the needs of the new syllabus with its course on ‘Art and Identity’*” [C3b]. Pearson includes the OAO website as a recommended resource in all eight of its teaching topic guides for the qualification and in its term updates [C4a,b]. The A-level teacher and author of the Pearson specification, notes “*I cannot understate the value of the OU (and Leah **Clark** and Gill **Perry** in particular) to the original discussions around the development of the new global History of Art A Level. Their expertise and support for the decolonisation of the specification and their agreement for the inclusive nature of the new programme of study was of profound and fundamental importance [...] it absolutely could not have happened without the OU team [...]. Many teachers (both experienced and new to the subject) have also appreciated the CPD days which has brought the community together and allowed us all to share the ethos of the OU*” [C4c].

Founding Trustee of the charity Art History in Schools noted “*Teachers are immensely grateful that you [**Clark**] worked closely with [name withheld] who wrote the new Pearson global A-level syllabus [...], and [name withheld] who had written the first A-level textbook Thinking about Art. That you and your team at Open Arts Objects Project volunteered to write materials specifically related to the new syllabus, especially the new global aspects, was an enormous boost to schools*” [C5].

Association for Art History (AAH) Head of Engagement, commented, “*OAO provides a useful set of resources for the teaching of the new A Level specification, and continues the support for art history education at 16-19 [...]. These resources build out from the conversations that happened as part of the 2016 campaign to ensure the continued provision of art history at A Level [to which] the OU were key contributors through facilitating teacher discussion at your London offices*” [C2c].

In January 2020, the National Extension College (NEC) launched an online Art History A Level, which also incorporates OAO resources. In a letter from September 2020, a teacher who worked with the NEC and AAH to write the A level, commented: “*This [the online A level] relied heavily on existing films for students to work from, and so Yinka Shonibare was chosen as the specified sculptor (Clare **Taylor** on Nelson's Ship in a Bottle), the Benin Plaque for the pre-1850 non-European tradition sculpture (Kim **Woods**) and Kahlo (Warren **Carter**) for the post-1850 non-European tradition painting. All the films on critical terms were also used. The course went live in January [2020] and has proved to be the fifth most popular online A-level since lockdown*” [C5].

Enhancing teacher understanding and informing students' comprehension of global approaches to art history

Between 2016 and 2019, the OAO team shared its collection of films based on its research insights with more than 50 A Level Art History/Art & Design teachers during focus group events

in Cheltenham, Bristol, Belfast, and London, in addition to a 'Teaching Global Art History' event in London in October 2019 [C6a,b,c]. In feedback collected during these sessions, teachers commented that the OAO resources had improved their teaching, built confidence, and that it was *"excellent to have non-western [teaching] material [provided by OAO] as I will need to educate myself"* [C2b, C6c,b].

In Higher Education, the books [O1] and films have also been adopted worldwide [C1]. In North America and Europe, this has led to a change in the design and delivery of HE curriculum, with lecturers noting that the books and films have informed their move to a global approach [C7a,b,c]. At the OU, the books and films are used on the module A344, which has an average of 250 students a year and has been transformative; for example, one student's blogpost noted that the course had changed her conceptions of Britain's colonial past and helped her understand today's globalised, postcolonial world [C8].

Engaging new audiences in art history and widening participation

In 2017-18, **Christian** and **Perry** served as academic consultants on art history for the nine-part BBC series, *Civilisations* [C9a]. Produced in partnership with the OU, 13.7 million people have watched the series on television or online since it was first broadcast in February 2018.

Following the broadcasts, more than 69,000 people visited the free Open University online OpenLearn course, [Travelling Objects](#), which OAO team members developed to accompany the series. Close to 35,000 ordered an educational global art history poster produced by the OAO team [C9b]. These materials and accompanying OAO films inspired the public to visit museums and engage with objects they otherwise might have overlooked. For example, they moved one person *"to look at Chinese porcelain, whereas before the films I had very little interest in or understanding of works that were not deemed quintessentially Renaissance like paintings and altarpieces"* (Clark's film) [C1f]. Another sought out Tipu's Tiger at the V&A (Dohmen's film) [C1f].

In March 2020, the OAO team led a series of classes with more than 50 Art History students at three London Schools: St Paul's Girls', Townley Grammar, and the London Academy of Excellence, Tottenham. The team used **Clark's** OAO film, based on her research [O1, O2], on Italian Renaissance painter, Mantegna, and his painting of the Magi and a Chinese porcelain cup, to introduce students to concepts such as hybridity and mobility. The film also addressed how to approach a work of art using the object-based methodology. The students then applied this global approach and knowledge to produce their own short films exploring other objects, answering set OAO questions [C10a,e,f]. At London Academy of Excellence Tottenham [LAET], an Art History teacher noted that without these resources *"on works from beyond the European tradition, like Tipu's Tiger or the Benin Plaques it would have been incredibly hard to prepare this new specification"* [C10b]. At Highgate school, the films have been integrated into the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) with exercises based around the films [C10c].

In post-lesson feedback, several students demonstrated a less Eurocentric, more global understanding of the Renaissance. Before the class, they associated the Renaissance with Italy. In contrast, after the class they expanded this to Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and China, and remarked on the importance of global trade [C10d]. Students also said that the lessons helped prepare them for university interviews [C10d]. Indeed, an A-level teacher noted *"many of our students have used [the films] as a bridge between school and university: demystifying their fears of tertiary education [going] beyond the expectations of what we can normally deliver in the classroom [...] showing how the bridge between school and university has been strengthened by this initiative"* [C4c].

The OAO team is working to transform a traditionally elitist and Eurocentric discipline by introducing new objects and approaches through its classes and resources. It is championing a more accessible and inclusive art history and removing barriers students might face to engaging with art history in schools, universities, museums and galleries. These barriers are faced particularly by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students. One teacher notes that at LAET, a majority BAME student school, pupils *"often find it difficult to access art institutions. They also need to justify the value of studying art history to their parents and carers so the concrete outcome from your visit in form of the films is very important in demonstrating that*

value [...]. Your resources have created more interest in Art History as a subject and have given it much needed visibility after I have struggled to create an interest within a reticent community” [C10b]. In focus groups, teachers also mentioned the OAO events and resources motivated them to better “consider the feelings of students from ethnic minorities to encourage them to feel ownership of the topics covered” [C6c].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

C1. OAO website evidence:

- Open Arts Archive website (<http://www.openartsarchive.org>) screenshot.
- Audience data from Google Analytics, showing monthly users.
- YouTube views.
- Location data from Google Analytics.
- Network data from Google Analytics, showing educational institutions.
- Survey Monkey feedback from website users.
- Referrals to website.

C2. Evidence of the 2016 working group and early impact:

- Invitations and meeting minutes to evidence that it happened and who was there.
- Comments from teachers.
- Testimonial from Head of Engagement, the Association for Art History.
- The six questions Clark devised for the videos.

C3. Evidence of OAO’s role in the #whyarthistorymatters campaign:

- Link to 14th OAO’s October statement on the AQA decision on The OU website <http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/openartsextra/save-art-history-in-the-A-Level-curriculum/>
- Letter from Head of Art History, Godolphin and Latymer School.

C4. Evidence for shaping the Pearson A Level Art History curriculum:

- [Topic guides](#) with OAO as recommended resource.
- Term updates from Pearson recommending Open Arts Objects as a resource (autumn 2017; winter 2017; spring 2018; autumn 2018; winter 2019; spring 2019).
- Emails and testimonial from Head A-level teacher at Godalming College and author of Pearson’s A-level spec.

C5. Evidence for OAO’s influence in new NEC A Level Art History and Pearson:

Testimonial from Founding Trustee of the charity Art History in Schools, and author on A-level NEC spec.

C6. Evidence from 2016 – 2019 focus groups (x6 + Teaching Global Art History Event):

- invites, agendas, emails, attendance lists.
- feedback teaching focus groups.
- attendee feedback Global Art History.

C7. Evidence from HE:

- syllabi from HE institutions (Colorado State University; University of Oslo; University of Texas, Dallas) adopting *Art and its Global Histories* books.
- testimonials from lecturers (Canada).
- weblinks to 8 syllabi using the books.

C8. Evidence from OU students: Blog post by A344 student:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/openartsextra/why-art-history-matters-amanda-noble/>

C9. BBC Civilisations Evidence:

- Series links on BBC website: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05ws2kj>
- Broadcast figures – TV and iPlayer – provided by the BBC; OpenLearn course page statistics; Poster orders.

C10. Evidence of OAO lessons in London Schools:

- Lesson plans/correspondence with teachers.
- testimonial from teacher at London Academy of Excellence.
- screenshot of VLE using OU films.
- Student feedback.
- Student films (transcripts provided).
- Student handout: OAO questions for making their own film.