

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Royal Holloway, University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: Revitalising Dada's Women: legacies one hundred years on.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2007-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Ruth Hemus	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Reader in French & Visual Arts	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2007- Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Dr Ruth Hemus' research into women exponents of Dada, an early twentieth century avant-garde arts movement, broke new ground by transforming understanding of women's innovative participation in and artistic contributions to it. Her book <i>Dada's Women</i> (2009) directly informed the curation of exhibitions in Switzerland, Italy, the U.K. and Norway over a six-year period (2014-2020), reaching 88,694 visitors. Hemus' research inspired contemporary women artists to create collaborative mixed-media outputs and musical compositions in dialogue with work by Dada women, that were exhibited in museums and community contexts. Her research informed public-facing events that engage diverse audiences in forms of creative practice that had been underrepresented in histories of the Dada movement, and is used to promote the work of innovative women in the arts more broadly.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The European Dada movement of the early twentieth century was long regarded as a male preserve, one in which women were relegated to footnotes or mentioned only as the wives, girlfriends, or sisters of Dada men. Hemus' research into Dada's women challenged that assumption. Her publications, dating back to her appointment to Royal Holloway as a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in 2007, have centred on Emmy Hennings and Sophie Taeuber in Zurich, Hannah Höch in Berlin, and Suzanne Duchamp and Céline Arnould in Paris. Hemus has shown how these five individuals, too often overlooked, made important interventions across fine art, literature, and performance in three key geographical hubs. Through intense archival work Hemus created an extensive bibliography of Arnould's books and magazine contributions, uncovered her Jewish-Romanian roots, and has published several essays and a monograph on this neglected poet. In sum Hemus demonstrates not only how some of the techniques employed by Dada's women chimed with the movement's rebellion against aesthetic and cultural conventions, but also highlights ways in which they were innovators, not imitators. As well as changing minds about these individuals, her research has confronted accepted understandings of Dada more broadly, proposing that it is no longer sufficient to see it as a men's club. This prescient work came into its own in 2016, the centenary year of Dada's beginning in Zurich, when the movement came under renewed scholarly scrutiny and garnered popular attention. Her research into Arnould has drawn particular attention from both academic reviewers and curators.</p> <p>In her prize-nominated monograph <i>Dada's Women</i> (2009, 1800 copies sold) Hemus presented for the first time a comprehensive analysis of the contributions to the movement made by women artists and writers. Dada, born during the First World War, was characterized by a spirit of rebellion against prevailing norms, and by a high degree of experimentation with media, representation and performance. As such it proved to be both provocative and influential, paving the way for later movements and radical styles including Surrealism, Conceptual Art and Pop Art. Hemus' research documents how women artists shaped the movement by championing a</p>		

particular hybridity of form and genre, and rejecting traditional notions of 'authorship' and figurative representation. She argues that an approach to art in which the corporeal and performance played an important role, as well as intermedial practices such as photomontage and collage, and more traditional crafts including tapestry and puppetry, can fruitfully be understood in relation to women's practice. Far from only inserting their work into a fixed canon with historical limits, Hemus' enquiries point to its relevance for twenty-first century practitioners and audiences alike. In that vein she has extended her activities to research by practice. Partnerships with artists for the digital age combine text, sound and image and blend genres, media and forms. Dissemination via large-scale exhibitions, original artworks and interactive workshops broadcast Hemus' research. The international reach, regularity and longevity of her associations with a wide range of beneficiaries bear witness to the primacy of her published work as the touchstone for women in Dada. One hundred years after the movement's inception the impetus to recognise women in the arts proves to be no less timely.

3. References to the research

R1. Ruth Hemus, *Dada's Women* (London & New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009), 250pp. Can be supplied by the HEI on request. Published by a leading university press, this monograph was subject to rigorous peer review. Its quality was recognised by its commendation as runner-up for the R. H. Gapper Prize (Society for French Studies award for the best book published in 2009 by a scholar working in Britain or Ireland in French Studies).

R2. Ruth Hemus, 'Dada Frauen: Kleidung, Körper, Mode' [Dada's Women: Clothing, Bodies, Fashion]. In Christa Baumberger and Ursula Amrein, eds, *Dada Performance und Programme [Dada Performances and Programmes]*. Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2017, pp. 175-98. Can be supplied by the HEI on request. Intersections of art and fashion in works by three Dada women introduced a new interdisciplinary angle in this essay, written for a prestigious centennial lecture series in Zurich.

R3. Ruth Hemus, 'Die Autorin als Herausgeberin: Céline Arnauld und ihre Zeitschrift Projecteur' [the Author as Editor: Céline Arnauld and her magazine Projecteur]. In Ina Boesch, ed., *Die Dada. Wie Frauen Dada prägten [Die Dada: How Women Shaped Dada]*. Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2015, pp. 122-30. Can be supplied by the HEI on request. Edited by one of the curators of the exhibition *Die Dada La Dada She Dada*, this first Swiss publication on women in Dada included Hemus' essay on Arnauld as a leader.

R4. Ruth Hemus, 'Dada's Film-Poet: Céline Arnauld.' In Christopher Townsend, Alex Trott and Rhys Davies, eds. *Across the Great Divide: Modernism's Intermedialities, From Futurism to Fluxus*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, pp. 66-80. Can be supplied by the HEI on request. The focus of this output is Arnauld's prescience in acknowledging film technologies. The return to print of Arnauld's complete works (Classiques Garnier, 2014) gave weight to Hemus' discovery of this neglected writer, inviting critical analyses that are otherwise lacking.

R5. Ruth Hemus, 'Daughters Born without Mothers. Dada's Women.' In *La Grande Madre /The Great Mother: Women, Maternity and Power in Art and Visual Culture 1900-2015*. Milan: Skira, 2015, pp. 103-107. Can be supplied by the HEI on request. This essay on motherhood was commissioned for the exhibition *The Great Mother* alongside contributions by Whitney Chadwick, a pioneering scholar of Surrealist women, and Calvin Tomkins, Marcel Duchamp's biographer.

R6. Ruth Hemus, *The Poetry of Céline Arnauld: From Dada to Ultra-Modern* (Oxford, Legenda: 2020). Can be supplied by the HEI on request. Hemus' peer-reviewed monograph is the culmination of a decade of research on Arnauld that has informed academic articles, a keynote lecture, and exhibitions over this same period. It is the final outcome of an Early Career Leverhulme Fellowship.

4. Details of the impact

Hemus' research has reframed the role of women in Dada, revitalising interest in their work to inform creativity, culture and cultural learning. Firstly, it has directly inspired the curation of 4 exhibitions that have foregrounded avant-garde women, in Switzerland, Italy, the UK and

Norway. Secondly, it has influenced contemporary visual artists and musicians through the commissioning of, and collaborations on new works of art. Thirdly, it has formed the basis of active learning workshops with school groups and members of the public to deepen understanding of avant-garde women's innovative creative practice. In sum, it has helped to change perceptions of a major artistic movement, both among arts professionals and the general public.

1) Inspiring exhibitions and influencing curation

Die Dada La Dada She Dada (2014-2016) was the first ever exhibition devoted to women Dadaists. Staged in Switzerland in advance of the Dada centenary, it toured 3 venues, Forumschlossplatz Aarau, 25 October 2014 – 18 January 2015, Kunstmuseum Appenzell, 22 March 2015 – 28 June 2015 and Le Manoir de la Ville de Martigny, 3 October – 10 January 2016, reaching 4,438 visitors in both German- and French-speaking regions. Curator Ina Boesch calls Hemus 'a vital presence in the process of curation.' She reports that Hemus' research 'stood out particularly for its pioneering analysis of the body of work by Céline Arnould, a poet that nobody was talking or writing about. Thanks to Dr Hemus's book we decided to include Arnould (...) in the exhibition' (S1). Hemus further shaped the visitor's experience in these specific ways: she provided a recorded interview and first-edition books as items in the exhibition; she co-led with Boesch the opening public tour; she contributed essays both to the catalogue and related volume of essays (R3).

The exhibition *La Grande Madre / The Great Mother* was held at the Trussardi Foundation, Milan (26 August – 15 November 2015). Hemus' book (R1) directly informed the curation of the show and led to a commissioned essay for the catalogue (English and Italian, print run 8,000, R5). The curator, Massimiliano Gioni, points to both influence and reach, 'not only had I much to learn from Hemus's research, even in the choices of which artworks and artists to include in the exhibition, but I also felt it was important to share her perspective with (...) a public that was larger than the professional art world and the world of art historians' (S3). The exhibition attracted 48,000 visitors.

Exploding Collage, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle (24 October 2018 – 16 February 2019), 8,784 visitors. This show brought together practitioners of collage from the past and present. [text removed for publication] whose emphasis was on artists who have been less recognised in canonical histories, cites Hemus' book *Dada's Women* (R1) as a driving force in her research and approach, noting that she [text removed for publication] (S4).

The Great Monster Dada Show, Henie Onstad, Norway (25 October 2019 – 26 January 2020). The curator, Ana María Bresciani, acknowledged that Hemus' book (R1) was instrumental in a decision to foreground women in the exhibition (S5). Visitor numbers of 27,473 were unusually high and included multiple middle and high school groups (S5). One press reviewer noted that women artists were 'well represented in the exhibition and through an essay by Dr Ruth Hemus in the catalogue' (sales 403) (S5). Henie Onstad, KHIO (Oslo National Academy of the Arts) and the Goethe-Institut (Oslo) together funded a visiting residency for Hemus where she spoke at a cabaret event that attracted 315 visitors (November 2019). Bresciani writes, 'Hemus's language is very accessible and her oral skills are reachable to both a general and a specialized audience'. She praises Hemus' quest to 'revisit history and open up other spaces of thought and discourse in younger generations to come' (S5).

2) Shaping contemporary artistic practice

Hemus' rediscovery of Dada women has inspired new work by women artists. Her recovery of Arnould informed the commission of original artworks for the Dada centenary. One example was *Projecteur* (2016), a video work by the Swiss artist Anne-Julie Raccoursier produced in dialogue with Arnould's poetry for the 2014-16 exhibition *Die Dada La Dada She Dada*. Curator Boesch notes, 'for Raccoursier Arnould's work was a revelation, as much it was for me and other readers of Ruth's book, and for the visitors to the exhibition. As a result of the exhibition, our visitors gained an understanding that Dada is also female' (S1). A second instance was *Vergessenes Gelächter* (Forgotten Laughter), a theatrical performance of Arnould's poetry by

the Swiss National Theatre actor Isabelle Menke and musician Bo Wiget. First performed at the Theater Tuchlaube Aarau (November 2015) it was selected by the Schauspielhaus Zürich (National Theatre) for its centennial Festspiele festival (June 2016). Boesch clarifies that discussions with Hemus 'played a crucial role in the selection of works' (S1).

In addition, Hemus' work has been the inspiration for the foundation of an arts collective (2014-). Partners are Dr Sonia Allori, a Scottish-based composer, musician and music therapist, and Vaia Paziana, a visual artist who works with Certitude, a London-based charity supporting individuals with learning disabilities, autism or mental health challenges. Together they draw on techniques employed by Dada women, including chance, collage and collaboration, to produce multimedia work. Allori writes, 'The influence of Ruth's research on my work was direct and immediate. I have always found it difficult to describe my work which involves the abstract, the absurd and the serious and in Dada it found a home' (S8). Paziana points to a renewed employment in her work of fabric, lace and weaving, prompted by *Dada's Women*. She writes, 'I can say that there is a constant presence of the 'Dada women's voices' in the back of my mind, may it be at the planning start of devising workshops or the early stages of a new project – they are not going anywhere' (S8).

3) Raising awareness of avant-garde women via creative participation

Allori, Hemus and Paziana's collaborative activities prioritise work that is accessible to audiences with different abilities. Events are characterized by their combination of new outputs with interactive public learning, details of which are shared more widely on the project web-page (S8). Three examples of events include:

(i) For *Gatherings*, a season of invited interventions connected to the exhibition *Exploding Collage*, Allori, Hemus and Paziana were invited to occupy an architectural pod. Together they produced and installed an immersive multimedia collage of digital visuals and soundscape. Visitors were invited to make changes to the grotto using craft materials over the course of the exhibition. On the day of installation the team hosted a group of 13 young people (age 16–21) from Hatton Gallery's learning project. One wrote, 'It's a real inspiration to be able to meet actual artists who are part of the programme. They were so interesting and so kind to us – and they were interested in what we are doing too' (S4). [text removed for publication] reports that as a direct result of this dialogue the group produced their own intervention on the life and work of a woman Dadaist. The outreach team also developed a Dada poetry workshop and digital resource for the gallery (S4).

(ii) A performance of music and words was commissioned by artist [text removed for publication] for a public event *Spring Soup Dada* at Wasps Studio, Glasgow (29 March 2018). Allori composed and performed an original score with words scripted by Hemus. Audience members took part in a lottery to dictate sequences of sound. In an opening [text removed for publication] (S7). Hemus' research has shaped [text removed for publication] ongoing project to introduce Dada's women to educational and community groups.

(iii) *Performing Dada's Women, Tate Exchange*, London (March 2017). An original musical composition incorporating found sounds by Allori and digital animation by Paziana offered a launchpad for school pupils, university students, community groups and the general public to produce their own chance poetry and visual collages. This embodied creative production offered a novel way of learning about avant-garde women. 100% of participants who responded to a questionnaire thought their knowledge had increased as a result of the workshop (S9). One wrote, 'The event (...) inspired a less rigid, systematic attitude towards study/creative practice' (S9). Another reported 'The sessions showed me how taking research out into the public sphere and adapting it for a wider audience of all ages, can be fun, engaging, and inspiring' (S9). The feedback cards themselves were designed for creative verbal and visual responses. For example, 'What is Dada / Who is Dada / How Dada are you?' produced answers such as 'Fun / We all are / I am! (S9). Subsequent events have focused on Dada's women and war (2018) and feminist activism (2019), each attended by around 50 participants. A school student from 2018 wrote 'I feel a lot more informed about the movement and inspired by the work' (S9). An example

remark from 2019 was, 'I never really thought that art could give such a powerful activist message until doing it today' (S9).

Both Allori and Paziana continue to draw on initial collaborative work with Hemus in further independent projects. Of a 2020 series of music sessions for people with learning disabilities Allori writes, 'these workshops introduced (...) Dada to young people who might not otherwise have experienced this' (S8). Paziana reports, 'members of the communities I've worked with, who don't have access to arts education (...) have responded with curiosity, with gratitude, with creativity and continued interest' (S8).

Reach and longevity: transforming and sustaining the legacies of Dada's women

Hemus' research into the women of Dada has had multiple direct impacts on curators, creative practitioners and their publics. Curator Nadine Schneider writes, 'Ruth Hemus challenges with her work the conventions of (art) historiography. Both through her writing and her lectures, she manages to reach very wider non-academic audiences without losing any of the academic "sense and sensitivity"' (S1). Massimiliano Gioni, too, points to its transformative effect, 'I think it is rare than one can find within the field of art history an inspiration to rethink one's own place in the world' (S3). Hemus' work is part of an important rethinking of the role of women artists in the European avant-garde. As Gioni states, 'Hemus has won a crucial place among these great pioneers of a new history of modern art' (S3). Through exhibitions, commissions and learning programmes – held in 10 locations, in 5 countries, over a 5-year period – Hemus' work has been vital both in changing perceptions of Dada's women and in establishing the power of their legacies one hundred years after the movement's inception.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1. Testimonial letter from Ina Boesch, journalist and curator of *Die Dada La Dada She Dada*, Forumschlossplatz Aarau, Zurich; testimonial letter plus data and visitor feedback from Nadine Schneider (Curator of *Die Dada La Dada She Dada*, Forumschlossplatz Aarau, Zurich).

S2. Visitor data with feedback and press clippings provided by the Kunstmuseum Appenzell plus visitor data from Le Manoir de la Ville de Martigny.

S3. Testimonial letter from Massimiliano Gioni (Curator of *La Grande Madre / The Great Mother*, Trussardi Foundation, Milan).

S4. Testimonial letter from [text removed for publication] Hatton Gallery, Newcastle, with input from [text removed for publication], *Exploding Collage/Gathering*; visitor data and feedback.

S5. Testimonial letter from Ana María Bresciani (Curator of *The Great Monster Dada Show*, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Norway) including visitor numbers.

S6. Pack of press clips from *The Great Monster Dada Show*.

S7. Transcript of speech given by [text removed for publication] Wasps studios, Glasgow), [text removed for publication] *Spring Soup Dada*.

S8. Testimonials from Sonia Allori (composer, musician, music therapist) and Vaia Paziana

(Visual Artist). Project page available at: <https://dadaswomen.wordpress.com/about-the-project/>

S9. Tate Exchange Events Report (2017-19) including creative feedback cards and comments by participants (teachers, students, public) in response to *Performing Dada's Women*.