

Institution: Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)		
Unit of Assessment: UOA32		
Title of case study: The Constituent Museum		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr John Byrne	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Reader in The Uses of Art	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1994 to Present
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 <p>'The Constituent Museum' book was one of five major publications and outputs of the 5 year European Funded Programme 'The Uses of Art: The Legacies of 1848 and 1989'. The book was intended to be a significant and world-class contribution to debates on the development of contemporary art practice beyond the current museological limitations of neo-Kantian architectures of disinterested spectatorship and objecthood. The book, and the Constituencies Research Strand from which it developed, has had a direct impact on the managerial operating systems, curatorial imperatives, and public engagement policies of two significant and world class museums –The Van Abbemuseum (NL) and The Whitworth (UK).</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>'The Constituent Museum' publication (2018) arose out of 'The Constituent Research Strand', managed and coordinated by John Byrne (LJMU) between 2013 and 2018 as part of the five year 'L'Internationale' EU funded project 'The Uses of Art: The Legacy of 1848 and 1989'. The L'Internationale consortium of Museums and Galleries (which includes Moderna Galerija (MG=MSUM, Ljubljana, Slovenia); Museo nacional centro de arte Reina Sofia (MNCARS, Madrid, Spain); Museu d'art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA, Barcelona, Spain); Museum van Hedendgaagse Kunst Antwerpen (M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium); SALT (Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey); Van Abbermuseum (VAM, Eindhoven, NL); Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA, UK) and The Whitworth and Manchester Gallery (Manchester, UK). In total, 'The Uses of Art: The Legacy of 1848 and 1989' project attracted 1,609,724 total visitors to activities related to the project. 3,723,806 people also collaborated in the project between staff members of partner organizations, artists, thinkers, communities involved in the project and on-site and on-line public of the programme activities.</p> <p>The Constituent Museum Research proposed that, if Museums and Galleries are to meaningfully re-think their current Mediation and Education Programmes, and make art more accessible to a range of different publics and users, then they would have to re-think those audiences as constituencies and, in doing so, begin to think of themselves and being one constituency amongst many. This, in turn, would mean that Museums and Galleries would have to both open-up and re-think their existing hierarchical managerial and operational systems and, instead, re-negotiate their operating systems, role, functions and meaning in an open dialogue with users and constituencies that visited them. Further to this, the research proposed that this open and public re-thinking of Museum and Gallery operating systems would be developed over time, through the uses of art, as a full, open and ongoing collaboration between individual museums and galleries and their constituents. According to Charles Escher, Director of the Van Abbemuseum and co-founder of The L'Internationale Consortium of Museums and Galleries, Byrnes research during the period of this project " led, and contributed to, a sustained body of research around the question of repurposing and reformatting Public Museums and Galleries as Constituent Institutions. Constituent working in museum is a process whereby a percentage of 'visitors' become 'users' who collaborate, long term, on projects that are aimed both to be fulfilling in</p>		

themselves and to impact eventually upon the managerial operating systems of the host institution.” (S.1)

Through a series of seminars, discussions, workshops and think-tanks, in which Staff and Directors of the L’Internationale consortium of internationally renowned Museums and Galleries worked alongside invited thinkers and members of the public. The results of this research were published as a book ‘The Constituent Museum: Constellations of Knowledge, Politics and Mediation – A Generator of Social Change (R.1). This book was produced as a ‘toolkit’ for change in the sector. It was organized into 5 Key sections or chapters (1) Becoming Constituent / Producing Constituencies (2) Architectures of Use (R.2) (3) Pedagogies of Encounter (4) Distributing Ownership and Empowerment (5) Archiving / Collecting Relationships. The Constituent Museum book included 16 newly commissioned key texts and 28 Newly Commissioned Project Studies from around the world from a total of 53 contributors. According to Charles Escher, Director of the Van Abbemuseum and co-founder of The L’Internationale Consortium of Museums and Galleries, Byrne’s own article in this book ‘Negotiating Jeopardy: Towards a Constituent Architecture of Use’ (R.2) “is a major contribution to the development of constituent thinking and to discussions and debates around how operational changes could be made to museums and galleries in support of a more diverse, more democratic usership.” (S.1)

This research has resulted directly The Van Abbemuseum restructuring both their Collection Policy and Board of Collectors to include constituency members from a full range of ethnic, gender, class and LGBT+ representation (S.1, S.3, S.4). Also, The Whitworth and Manchester Galleries (UK) have recently begun to collaborate on a 5 year (2019 – 2025) Constituent Research and Publications Programme, aimed at fundamentally restructuring their existing management and curatorial mechanisms, that will be based around the developing global network of artists called ‘The Association of Arte Útil (of which John Byrne now a Board Member)(R.4) (S.2, S.7).

3. References to the research

R.1. 2018 The Constituent Museum: Constellations of Knowledge, Politics and Mediation – A Generator of Social Change, Lead Editor, Valiz Publications, ISBN: 978-94-92095-42-8.

R.2. 2018 ‘Negotiating Jeopardy: Towards a Constituent Architecture of Use’, in John Byrne, Elinor Morgan, November Paynter, Aida Sánchez de Serdio, Adela Železnik (eds.) ‘The Constituent Museum: Constellations of Knowledge, Politics and Mediation – A Generator of Social Change’, Valiz Publications, pp. 92-102.

R.3. 2016 ‘History, Use-value, and the Contemporary Work or Labour of Art’, in Nick Aikens, Thomas Lange, Jorinde Seijdel, Steven ten Thije (eds.) ‘What’s the Use? Constellations of Art, History and Knowledge, A Critical Reader, Valiz Publications, pp. 114-128. ISBN 978-94-92095-12-1.

R.4. 2016 ‘Social Autonomy and the Use Value of Art’, Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Inquiry’, Autumn/Winter 2016, pp. 60-69. ISBN: 978-1-84638-170-6.

R.5. 2015 Back to the Future: Grizedale Arts, Use Value and the Work of Art: Published as part of the Coniston Institute’s Online ‘[New Mechanics Library project](#)’, last visited 10/12/2015.

R.6. 2013 John Byrne and Steven ten Thije (Managing Editors) ‘The Manual for Useful Art’, Special Edition Autonomy Project Newspaper, ISBN: 9-7891-677069.

Funding Generated:

‘The Uses of Art: The Legacies of 1848 and 1989’ LJMU and the L’Internationale consortium of Museums and Galleries. €2.5 Million (€50,000 to LJMU). Culture program of the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency), Grant number EACEA 2013-1183-001-001. 2015-2019.

4. Details of the impact

The Constituent Museum research, co-ordinated by John Byrne's Constituencies research group within the framework of the five-year programme The Uses of Art – The Legacy of 1848 and 1989, led by the European museum confederation L'Internationale, has had profound impact on the current policy and programme of the Van Abbemuseum (NL), The Whitworth and Manchester Gallery (UK).

Van Abbemuseum:

The constituent museum research has been essential for one of the main current research and development trajectories of the museum. According to Charles Escher, Director of the Van Abbemuseum, "Byrne's research into the Constituent Museum has shaped the 'De Werksalon' project in the Van Abbemuseum (2016 – 2020) in which a one floor of the Collection wing of the Van Abbemuseum is dedicated to constituent practice, with local constituencies from vulnerable migrants, the queer community or urban farmers among others finding a home in an art museum to exchange their passions with artists and visitors as well as influencing the presentation of artworks in the collection." (S.1)

Currently 'The Vanabbemuseum is reflecting on how a constituent approach can become central to the whole museum operations. This shift would not have been possible without the research and support generated through the work on the publication the Constituent Museum. For Example the Constituent Museum Research, led by Byrne (R.1, R.2, R.3) has been essential for one of the main current research and development trajectories of the museum: De Werksalon (2016 – 2020)(S.1, S.3). This is one floor of the Collection wing of The Van Abbemuseum dedicated to constituent practice, combined with Arte Útil. This research programme aspires to implement the ideas laid out in The Constituent Museum Research, by working with local Eindhoven based groups, which are topical and connected to important contemporary social, political and economic issues. These groups are considered constituencies and follow a one or multi-year programme. During this programme they are supported in developing a constituent voice, using the collection and facilities of the museum to work on topics they themselves define as relevant. This programme is now running for two years and will close next season. Currently the museum is reflecting on how a constituent approach can become central to the whole museum operations. This shift would not have been possible without the research and support generated through the work on the publication the Constituent Museum.

Also, Byrne has been invited by the Van Abbemuseum to continue developing Research into The Constituent Museum as part of the Van Abbemuseum's Deviant Research Programme (2017 - ongoing) (S.1, S.4) which is an ongoing series of Research Fellowships supported by the Mondriaan Fund in the Netherlands. In March 2020, due to the Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic, all planned physical participation in this Programme was curtailed, and Byrne was asked to develop an online solution for continuing this work across both the Van Abbemuseum and the Whitworth Art Gallery (Manchester UK) (S.1, S.2) . Byrne has subsequently developed and led on the Decentralising Political Economies online/offline platform. According to Escher, Director of the Van Abbemuseum "I was able to participate at a distance in the subsequent research developing the 'Decentralising Political Economies' within the Outset-supported collaboration with the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester in which Byrne took the lead role. This project has produced an alternative online platform (www.dpe.tools) (S.7) that will enable the direct impact of this research to be preserved and impact the long term re-thinking not only of our two museums but of the wider field engaged in similar attempts to find a better relationship between publics, users, art institutions and artworks." (S.1)

Van Abbemuseum and The Whitworth Art Gallery:

In 2018 the Van Abbemuseum (NL) collaborated directly with The Whitworth Art Gallery (UK) on a successful bid application for £150,000 to 'Outset' Contemporary Art Fund and received an Outset one of a kind Transformative Grant titled 'The Constituent Museum: Collecting Relations and the Transformational Potential of Arte Útil' (S.8). The intention of the project is to radically re-think what Constituent art institutions of the future might become, and how they might function. Using Arte Útil (the idea of 'art as a tool' or 'useful art') the Van Abbemuseum and The Whitworth Art Gallery have, according to www.outset.org.uk (S.5) sought to "radically transform their core protocols (which, as with most museums, are rooted in the 19th century) by redrawing relationships with local constituency groups, creating agency for them to inform the museums' collecting, curating and presenting". For both Chalres Escher, Director of the Van Abbemuseum, and Alistair Hudson, Director of the Whitworth, Byrne's Research around the subject of the Constituent Museum played a direct role in the development of this application (S.1 and S.2) stating that "its approval has allowed the two museums, together with John [Byrne], to continue further on our path towards a meaningful Constituent Museum." (S.1)

In order to do this, both the Van Abbemuseum and The Whitworth Art Gallery have each employed one part-time Constituent curator, and are developing one Constituent public Programme in each institution and one shared Constituent Project. Both the Van Abbemuseum and The Whitworth Art Gallery have pledged to create new 'constituent agencies' which will consist of both existing museum staff and local constituent groups, artists and social designers. These agencies will be coordinated by the new Constituent Curators who will mediate between the constituencies involved, The Van Abbemuseum, The Whitworth Art Gallery and The Association of Arte Útil (S.8) through a series of ongoing meetings, discussions and projects. In this way the resources of both Museums, usually only accessible to visiting publics as 'display', will become open source tools for use in projects that will seek to identify and provide solutions for local 'real world' urgencies around health, mental health, well-being and the economy. Byrne was asked to play a key role in the development of this Programme, via an invitation by Alistair Hudson, Director of the Whitworth and Manchester Art Galleries, to become the Whitworth Art Gallery's Researcher and Writer in Residence (S.2) Through this role Byrne has directly contributed to the development of a 'Constituent Museum' framework, leasing between both The Van Abbemuseum Museum and The Whitworth Art Gallery, as a means to help both institutions develop some of the key operational strategies (S.1, S.2), outlined in 'The Constituent Museum' book (R.1) that will lead toward them becoming Constituent Museums.

The Whitworth Art Gallery:

The Constituent Research strand of The L'Internationale and The Constituent Museum research, led by John Byrne, and the successful Outset Award for "The Constituent Museum: Collecting Relations and the Transformational Potential of Arte Útil" have also directly impacted upon the new curatorial direction that incumbent Director Alistair Hudson is taking the Whitworth (Manchester, UK) from 2019 onward. According to Hudson:

"Between 2013 and 2018 Byrne acted as the Manager and Coordinator of the 'Constituencies' Research Strand of the EU Funded L'Internationale Project 'The Uses of Art: The Legacy of 1848 and 1989'. After taking over the Directorship of both The Whitworth Art Gallery and the Manchester Art Gallery in 2017, I invited Byrne to act as Researcher and Writer in Residence at The Whitworth Art Gallery. This so that Byrne could both work alongside, and assist, both the curatorial and education teams at The Whitworth Art Gallery as the Whitworth itself began a process toward becoming working example of both a 'Useful' as well as 'Constituent' Museum."

Since 2018, Byrne has led on, and contributed to, a sustained body of Research around the question of repurposing and reformatting The Whitworth Art Gallery as a Constituent Museum as Museums themselves begin to move from a symbolic to an operational mode of Constituent Usership (as opposed to passive viewership) in a post-exhibitionary era.” (S.2)

Beginning in March 2019, and coinciding with the launch of an open and constituent exhibition, ‘Joy for Ever: How to use art to change the world and its price in the market’ (to celebrate the 200th anniversary of John Ruskin’s birth) (S.6) the Whitworth began the process of publically rethinking itself as a Constituent Museum based on ‘Use’ As Researcher and Writer in Residence at The Whitworth Art Gallery, Byrne has led discussions and workshop with Curatorial and Management Staff which help them to rethink their current operational systems by drawing on the historical past of The Whitworth, which was initially opened as a public resource for the education and cultural benefit of the working women and men of Manchester. This will mean that Byrne’s continued research around ‘The Constituent Museum’ will directly influence the process by which The Whitworth Art Gallery intends to become a new kind of public art institution, one that will aim to both share and use its public collection and programming policy as a tool for ground-up social, political and economic change.

In March 2020, due to outbreak of the Covid 19 Pandemic, Alistair Hudson, Director of The Whitworth Art Gallery (S.2) invited Byrne to continue developing this line of Constituent Research and enquiry by taking a lead role in developing the ‘Decentralising Political Economies’ Research project with The Whitworth Art Gallery, (which, in collaboration with ‘The Association of Arte Util’ also form part of the ongoing ‘The Constituent Museum: Collecting Relations and the Transformational Potential of Arte Util’ project between Van Abbemuseum and The Whitworth Art Gallery). According to Hudson, “This Research Project has also seen the development of an alternative online platform (www.dpe.tools) that will enable the direct impact of this Research to continue impacting on the long term re-thinking of both Institutions. The purpose of the www.dpe.tools platform is, over the next three years, to help to continue debates around how Museums and Galleries can shift towards Constituent forms of operation based upon use, and to provide materials and Research towards the opening of ‘Economics the Blockbuster’, a major international Exhibition to be held at The Whitworth Art Gallery in 2023. As part of this long-term Research strategy, Byrne has also been invited to co-edit a series of publications in association with The Whitworth Art Gallery and the University of Manchester Press that will also include the publication of his own two monographs on the subject ‘Negotiating Jeopardy: Use Value and the Work or Labour of Art’ and ‘Museum 3.0: Use Value and the Coefficient of Art’. (S.2)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S.1 Corroboration/Testimonial Letter from Charles Escher, Director of The Van Abbemuseum and Cofounder of ‘The L’Internationale Consortium of Museums and Galleries.

S.2 Testimonial Alistair Hudson, Director of The Whitworth Art Gallery.

S.3 De Werksalon (2016 – 2020).

S.4 The Deviant Research programme of the Van Abbemuseum (2017 - ongoing).

S.5 Outset - ‘The Constituent Museum: Collecting Relations and the Transformational Potential of Arte Util.’

S.6 Joy for Ever: How to use art to change the world and its price in the market (2019)

S.7 Decentralising Political Economies (2020) (<http://www.dpe.tools>)

S.8 The Association of Arte Útil (<http://www.arte-util.org>)