

Institution: Royal College of Art		
Unit of Assessment: 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Harnessing the power of political art to mobilise the public, to change how museums engage with public discourse and support campaigning		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Peter Kennard	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Tutor Senior Research Reader Professor of Political Art	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1994-2013 2013-2017 2017-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 RCA research brings protest through art to the public. This research has changed public understanding of art as protest, empowered disenfranchised and disaffected communities, and shaped our collective discourse on social and political imperatives. Seeking to recognise the impact of this research by Kennard on the nation's visual culture, the Imperial War Museum mounted a 12-month exhibition which attracted 250,000 visitors and reached an estimated 16 million people through media coverage. The research changed assumptions about the role of museums across the UK as sites of public discourse about contemporary issues. As a central force in changing collective social conscience about war, poverty and climate catastrophe, Kennard's research has been deployed by CND and Greenpeace, among others, in support of their campaigning activities. It has been recognised by the UK's national art institutions as central to the representation of dissent, to the extent that it is now preserved by them for future generations.		
2. Underpinning research Peter Kennard is considered to be the UK's foremost political artist engaging with an evolving range of topics, including the costs of war, the arms trade, environmental destruction, the plight of refugees, and the deception and hypocrisy of governments and corporations. He is highly prolific, having produced approximately 350 images, and his work has been shown in more than 30 group or solo exhibitions since 2013. Photomontage and three-dimensional sculptural montage are keynotes of this work. The roughness of the montages, the visible joins and the use of monochrome are deliberate gestures intended to break through the perfectly crafted, high-resolution surfaces of the corporate image-world to expose the ugly reality they help to conceal. It doesn't hide how the images are constructed to enable the public to engage critically with their making and with the subjects depicted. Kennard deconstructs imagery and language as presented in mass media and then reconstructs them to bring together cause and effect. Since 2000, Kennard has collaborated with NGOs, charities and campaigning organisations to transform his work into a potent tool for social change. Different materials have been incorporated into the work, partly in response to the increasing dominance of screen-based imagery in our lives. Kennard produces montage images in order to catalyse the broader public into action and advocacy. Exhibiting in publicly funded galleries allows Kennard – alongside long-term collaborator Cat Phillipps – to run workshops to engage the public in the work's subject matter. These workshops empower the public to visualise their lives through production,		

rather than just consumption, through manipulating imagery using computers and hand-drawn or printed images.

Study for a Head IV (3.1), a 2012 collaboration with Phillipps, consisted of a faceless image of Prime Minister David Cameron looming out of the *Financial Times*' stock market pages. It featured in the *Boardroom* installation, as well as in a fly-poster campaign around Britain, as did a similar image featuring Theresa May during the 2017 general election. More recent works have had a range of targets, from former US President Donald Trump to the 2016 Trident vote in parliament, where Kennard's iconic, broken-missile photomontage was resurrected for the campaign against renewing the nuclear weapons system.

In *Song of Oil, Ice and Fire* (3.2), kennardphillipps have reimagined the artwork *Christina's World* by Andrew Wyeth to show how it would look after an oil spill, as part of a Greenpeace video campaign against Shell's exploration of the Arctic. Iconic landscapes by the likes of David Hockney are torched to make way for kennardphillipps' dystopian vision, and a nineteenth-century American seascape painting is shown wrecked by spills and scarred by the invasive equipment needed to access dwindling reserves.

Kennard's work in this period also featured free exhibitions and installations in public galleries. The installation *Boardroom* (3.3) addresses how factual information and statistics can be communicated through the artist's work, at a time when factual information has become highly contested. Begun in 2014, *Boardroom* is an ongoing, multi-layered project to create a new form that can engage the public in critically analysing our information environment. The project combines new images with older work and uses both digital and hand-drawn imagery, along with light projection, logos, statistics, photomontages, and prints and drawings on substrates, including paper, glass, and found objects. *Boardroom* is based on research from a number of authoritative sources, especially the United Nations and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Covering many areas of global conflict, it focuses on the arms trade in relation to human rights. The installation is site-specific and is further developed each time it is exhibited in public galleries (four to date), and changes further during exhibitions in response to world events and discussions and workshops with the public. Commissioned by the Imperial War Museum (IWM), *Boardroom* was published as a book, *Unofficial War Artist*, in 2015 (3.4), designed to present the work in an accessible form. IWM continues to offer it for sale.

Kennard's collaboration with Phillipps included a series of performances and installations, starting at Summerhall in the 2014 Edinburgh Festival (3.5). The artists developed a new way to perform an artist's talk, which involved showing, in a dramatic format, how their work was created and thereby democratise the creative process. For the events, kennardphillipps created an environment with current work using newspapers strewn around the space, on each of which was printed the face of a world leader. Beginning as a conventional lecture, it then developed into a performance in which the artists crawled around the space, ripping open the papers to reveal photos that identified victims of wars and conflicts. Around 40 of their prints were shown in sequence, projected onto a screen, and a soundtrack composed by kennardphillipps, based on the sounds of war, played continuously. The performance was filmed live and shown simultaneously on a screen in close-up.

In *Visual Dissent* (3.6), Kennard created a new kind of history book, beginning in 1969 with the Vietnam War and ending in 2019 with Extinction Rebellion. Each year is designated by an event described factually and illustrated by Kennard's own images and reproductions from newspapers, magazines and demonstrations. The book is aimed at a general audience, especially young people, to show how art in many forms can be important for international protest movements, and he writes in an accessible way about how and why he made the work.

3. References to the research

3.1 *Study for a Head IV (David Cameron)*, kennardphillipps (Peter Kennard and Cat Phillipps), 2012, pigment ink on *Financial Times* newspaper with UV gel topcoat.

3.2 *A Song of Oil, Ice and Fire*, Peter Kennard and Cat Phillipps (cinematics and photography), 2015, video commissioned by Greenpeace, based on: *Christina's World*, Andrew Wyeth; *Pearlblossom Highway*, David Hockney; and *An Arctic Summer*, William Bradford.

3.3 *Boardroom*, Peter Kennard, exhibited at: Imperial War Museum, London (*Unofficial War Artist: Peter Kennard*, 2015); Midland Arts Centre, Birmingham (*Off Message: Peter Kennard*, 2016); Somerset House, London (*Daydreaming with Stanley Kubrick*, 2016); Rua Red, South Dublin Arts Centre (*Finnegan's Woke*, January 2019); and the Millennium Gallery, Sheffield (*Art Against War: Peter Kennard and the CND Movement*, 2018). **Submitted to REF2021**. Hamlyn Artists Award 2017; £60,000; in part to develop *Boardroom* as an ongoing research project.

3.4 *Peter Kennard: Unofficial War Artist* (2015), London: Imperial War Museum.

3.5 Peter Kennard and Cat Phillipps, exhibitions, performances, workshops: *Demotalk*, Summerhall, Edinburgh Festival 2014; *Living with War: Artists on War and Conflict*, Glasgow Museum of Modern Art, 2014; *Here Comes Everybody*, Stills Gallery and St James Shopping Centre, Edinburgh Festival 2015, Travelling Gallery, on tour Scotland, 2016.

3.6 *Peter Kennard: Visual Dissent* (2019), London: Pluto Press. **Submitted to REF2021**. Review by *Eye*: 'Kennard sees himself as a visual journalist, a "reporter by other means", and he is a deeply honourable and trenchant exponent of the medium. In a time of global crisis, on so many fronts, his unremittingly tough and clear-sighted body of work should inspire a new generation of image warriors to wield the scissors of revelation, whether electronic or steel.'

<http://www.eyemagazine.com/opinion/article/defiance-and-revelation>

4. Details of the impact

4.1 Changing public understanding of art as protest

The Imperial War Museum (IWM) programmed a major exhibition of Kennard's work in acknowledgement of his contribution to the nation's visual culture in relation to conflict. *Peter Kennard: Unofficial War Artist*, including the *Boardroom* installation, ran for 12 months from 2015 to 2016 and was seen by nearly 250,000 people. The exhibition was reviewed over 60 times in creative practitioner journals and blogs, and by every UK broadsheet newspaper. Laura Cumming in the *Guardian* said: 'His questions hover in the air, and on the page, with undiminished urgency'; Jonathan Jones in the *Guardian* described it as, 'a thrillingly grotesque montage of modern times' (5.1). IWM estimated the total reach of media coverage at more than 16 million people (5.2).

The exhibition was aimed at a non-specialist, general audience, a large proportion of whom were young people from a different demographic from IWM's usual visitors (5.3). The presentation of the material was designed to engage a younger audience and to show them the possibilities of using art as a form of protest. For one week, Kennard created a 'protest camp' in a huge open gallery at the IWM, where visitors could make campaign posters about issues they cared about, which were then fed back into the display. At times, there were as many as 200 people simultaneously making art in this way (5.3).

After seeing the exhibition, the art director for the poet and recording artist Kae Tempest put Tempest and Kennard in touch. As a result, Kennard was commissioned to create the artwork for Tempest's book, album and show *Let Them Eat Chaos*. Tempest said: 'I feel like everything I was trying to say with *Europe is Lost* or *Tunnel Vision* was there in Peter's images, it felt like our intentions were harmonious...Peter Kennard forces us to take stock, to be present with the greater ills committed in our name. His work is an antidote to forgetting, to convenient numbness and to willful ignorance. Someone is bearing witness which encourages us to do the same' (5.4). Kennard's artwork formed the cover of the book album, street posters and animations to accompany live performances, a BBC2 programme, and Tempest's Mercury Prize show (5.4).

Further presentations of *Boardroom* in Sheffield, Dublin, Birmingham and Somerset House, London, drew audiences totalling almost 100,000. The singer Jarvis Cocker said of the Sheffield exhibition: 'This art is uncompromising, brutal and hard-hitting – but also very beautiful. It's beautiful because it wants to keep us alive. All of us. (Even the lazy ones). It's a jolt of electricity. A shot in the arm. A kick up the backside. You know what? It's a wake-up call' (5.5). Audience

feedback from the Dublin exhibition reflected Cocker's comments: 'I am now awake!' and 'an inspiration and call to art action!' (5.6).

4.2 Empowering communities with the tools of contemporary art

The collaborative nature Phillipps and Kennard's installations drew in new participants to consider and discuss the issues and topics covered in the work. The installations included: *Demotalk*, Summerhall, Edinburgh Festival 2014; *Living with War: Artists on War and Conflict*, Glasgow Museum of Modern Art 2014; and, *Here Comes Everybody*, Stills Gallery and St James Shopping Centre, Edinburgh Festival 2015, Travelling Gallery, on tour Scotland, 2016. The installations consisted of exhibitions of Kennard's work incorporating work created by participants, with each given equal prominence.

In 2015, the exhibition hosted by the Stills Gallery (Edinburgh) attracted 10,524 visitors, a 40 per cent increase in numbers for the gallery for that period, drawing in a much more representative cross section of society (5.7). Phillipps and Kennard took over an empty shop to hold workshops where art was produced and became content for the exhibition. The workshops involved organisations working with people not usually engaged in the arts, which attracted new audiences and enabled them to become active participants in protest art (5.7). The organisations involved included Edinburgh Young Carers, Great Feats (youth not in employment, education or training), those supported by mental health workers, North Edinburgh Arts community organisation, The Rock Trust for homeless young people, Crisis (working with homeless people) and Shakti (supporting BAME women) (5.7). The Director of the Stills Gallery noted: 'They were very different from our usual audience, much younger, lots of families and community groups...that whole different mix of people being here in the gallery was really special and quite unique to that particular exhibition' (5.7).

A similar approach at the Red Rua gallery (Dublin) resulted in higher footfall than usual (5.6), as well as intercultural events with refugee and migrants' groups, and residents in a socially-marginalised housing estate. This group worked on a series of posters and statements visually expressing their concerns, which led to a meeting with the local head of housing. According to the Executive Director of Red Rua, 'The project helped provide a means for them to communicate their difficulties...being able to do that through visual art is massive' (5.6). Participants echoed this view: 'We found it great to be given a voice and given tools to speak because we generally feel forgotten about' (5.6).

4.3 Changing museum approaches

IWM wanted to use the Kennard exhibition to challenge assumptions about the museum itself as 'people didn't expect to see something so anti-war at the museum' (5.3). The *Guardian* review noted that IWM had 'done a brave thing in putting on an exhibition of pacifist art just as we mark another reverent anniversary of the 20th-century wars this museum so vividly documents' (5.1). Both the Stills Gallery and Rua Red used the *Boardroom* exhibition as a springboard to increase audience numbers, to draw in groups that normally feel excluded, and to change the nature of visitor engagement. Each gallery has sustained this new approach. As the Director of the Stills Gallery noted: 'Every year since Peter's exhibition... we have used that slot to show our most powerful and challenging work. I feel our programming would not have developed in that way unless we had worked with Peter on that exhibition in 2015' (5.7). The Executive Director of Rua Red gallery stated: 'The work they did here was to create an open studio space which then informed the exhibition...we continue to use the second gallery as a workshop space, and we have followed that model' (5.6).

4.4 Supporting campaigning organisations to mobilise protest

In 2018, as part of CND's 60th anniversary celebrations, Kennard was featured as one of the '60 Faces of CND' (5.8). In 2018, work to agree a UN Treaty for the Resolution of Nuclear Weapons was supported by the exhibition *Peter Kennard and the CND Movement* in Sheffield, which featured *Boardroom* and the *Nuclear Clock*, and was accompanied by the free newspaper *Art Against War* (5.5). In this publication, the General Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) described Kennard's work as the outstanding example of how visual images 'challenge ideas and change the discourse on war and peace' (5.5). It does this by continually evolving to support the changing dimensions of dissent, with a re-issue of his Trident

image for a Stop Trident demonstration in 2016 attended by 60,000 protesters. Kennard created a new image for a CND collaboration with Extinction Rebellion (XR) Peace, which was unveiled at a protest on Westminster Bridge in October 2019 (5.9).

Greenpeace commissioned kennardphillipps to create *A Song of Oil, Ice and Fire* for a video to challenge Shell's plans to drill for oil in the Arctic. The video was used in Greenpeace's social media campaign, with almost 800,000 views and 10,000 shared on Facebook in a single day (5.10), and it has had over 670,000 views on YouTube. An Arctic campaigner for Greenpeace said: 'Shell could be risking disaster by drilling for oil in Arctic waters in less than six weeks. We made this video to expose that... We need everyone to watch and share this video, to show Shell it won't get away with destroying the world we love' (5.10).

4.5 Acquisitions by national galleries

As well as engaging directly with the public, acting as a call to arms on behalf of campaigning organisations, and mobilising the broader general public to take part in protest, Kennard's work has been recognised by the UK's national art institutions as central to the representation of dissent, and as 'defining the visual and cultural response to conflict and crisis' (5.11). As a result, in the period covered by this case study, four kennardphillipps pieces have been acquired by the National Portrait Gallery, including *Study for a Head* (5.11), and work by Kennard from their collection has been included in the Tate's 'Walk through British Art' display.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Cumming, L., 'Peter Kennard: Unofficial War Artist', review, *The Guardian*, 17 May 2015: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/may/17/peter-kennard-unofficial-war-artist-review>; and Jones, J., 'Peter Kennard review – a thrillingly grotesque montage of modern times', *The Guardian*, 12 May 2015: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/may/12/peter-kennard-review-imperial-war-museum>

5.2 Peter Kennard media statistics provided by Imperial War Museum, London.

5.3 Head of Art, Imperial War Museum, London email statement (2019); and images of 'protest camp' at Imperial War Museum, London.

5.4 Email statement (2019); and Tempest TV visuals: www.zeroh.net/work/kate-tempest-let-them-eat-chaos and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07yc9ms>

5.5 *Art Against War* (2018), free newspaper available at Millennium Gallery, Sheffield, including 'CND' by General Secretary of CND, pp. 1-2.

5.6 Executive Director, Rua Red gallery, South Dublin Arts Centre, Dublin, email statement (2019); and *Finnegan's Woke* visitors' book (2019).

5.7 Director, Stills Gallery, Edinburgh, email statement (2019).

5.8 '60 Faces of CND' (2018), CND, London: <https://cnduk.org/60-faces-peter-kennard/>

5.9 General Secretary of CND, email statement (2019).

5.10 <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/greenpeace-video-targets-shells-plans-drill-arctic/communications/article/1349146>; and <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/picture/2015/may/26/artists-recreate-iconic-painting-with-landscape-ravaged-by-oil-to-protest-arctic-exploration-big-picture>

5.11 National Portrait Gallery Acquisitions, London: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp163226/kennardphillipps-peter-kennard-and-cat-phillipps>; and 'New Acquisitions of Political Photomontages', *Face to Face* magazine, autumn/winter (2019), text provided by email.