

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Liverpool Hope University		
Unit of Assessment: Panel D, Unit 32: Art & Design: History, Theory and Practice		
Title of case study: Changing public perceptions of painting through practical and theoretical approaches to the Lacanian gaze		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 1 st January 2014 – 26 th November 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr. Donal Moloney	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Subject Leader for Fine Art, Design and Film and Senior Lecturer in Fine Art	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Sept 2017-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 st January 2014 – 26 th November 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>This unique public facing practice-based research project involved the creation of a body of paintings disseminated across 23 public facing exhibitions in the UK and internationally to over 85,000 people (over 100,000 if including online dissemination). The public exhibitions, associated catalogues, academic publications and public/online events served to disseminate the research in ways that transformed the public's perception about vision and painting. This methodology communicated the unique links Moloney has exposed between specific theories related to vision through public exhibitions of his paintings; specular highlights, proximal spaces and the Lacanian gaze. This impact is corroborated through viewer feedback (see section 'Details of the Impact', p.3).</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
Aims		
<p>The Lacanian gaze is a theory of vision whereby objects appear to reflect one's act of looking, and stands in contrast to Cartesian perspectivalism (traditional depictions of space using linear perspective). The aim of this pioneering practice-based research project, based at Liverpool Hope University, was to examine links between specific theories related to vision and painting. Specifically, Moloney linked how specular highlights (minute mirror reflections of light from objects) and proximal spaces (shallow spaces), when perceived through the Lacanian gaze, might confound our perception of Cartesian perspectivalism in representational painting. This research project benefited from being developed within the rich research environment at Liverpool Hope University, including two symposia on contemporary painting Moloney organised at the University's Angel Field Festival events since 2017. In particular, the Refractive Pool 'Contemporary Painting in Liverpool' symposia, held at Liverpool Hope University on 07/02/2020, was a research collaboration with National Museums Liverpool (The Walker Art Gallery), with whom the University has had a partnership. This symposium enabled Moloney to further discuss and disseminate his research in a positive environment that was ideal for his public-facing research project. This inclusive and public-spirited research project was very much encouraged at the School of Creative and Performing Arts at Liverpool Hope University. It resonates profoundly</p>		

with the School's core research mission which is to be publicly minded at all times in terms of our research culture.

The research was conducted and publicly exhibited between 1st January 2014 –26th November 2020 (see Section 4). The main finding was that the body of paintings became a novel link between specific theories related to vision and painting: specifically, Hal Foster's reading of the ways in which the Lacanian 'gaze' disrupts Cartesian perspectivalism; Norman Bryson's writing on the reversal of the 'Albertian gaze'; and Arthur Faisman and Michael S. Langer's definition of 'specular highlights'. This research project specifically investigated how overloading the viewer with an excessive use of specular highlights could disrupt underlying narratives within this body of paintings. This link, through the paintings, is this research project's original contribution to knowledge.

Methodology

This research project's research methodology is drawn partly from Katie MacLeod's (2000: online) writing on 'revealing a practice'. Moloney used his analysis of selected theories to partly 'destabilise' the paintings he made (MacLeod, 2000: online). Moloney's aim was to then create further paintings to 'destabilize' the theory he had analysed so that practice and theory 'exacts a radical rethinking' of the other (MacLeod, 2000: online). Differences between both theory and practice were used to highlight further areas of research, in order to arrive at a publicly exhibited approach to developing a novel theoretical link, through his body of paintings, between specific theories related to vision.

MacLeod, K. (2000) 'The Functions of the Written Text in Practice-based PhD submissions', *Working Papers in Art and Design*, 1(1). Available at: https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/12289/WPIAAD_vol1_macleod.pdf (Accessed 8th March 2021).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Moloney, D (2021) 'Representation and the Scopic Regime of (Post) Cartesianism', in Purgar, K. (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of Image Studies*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, forthcoming.
2. Moloney, D. (2017) 'Visual Slippages between the Picture Plane and the Painting Surface: Richard Estes' Double Self-Portrait (1976)', *The International Journal of the Arts in Society: Annual Review*, 12 (1), pp. 1-13.
3. Peer reviewed exhibition (x1 Painting), (Arts Council Funded), 'Hospital Rooms project', Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust, London (2019)
4. Peer reviewed exhibition (x3 Paintings), (Arts Council Funded), shortlisted for Art Prize, public talks and published catalogue: 'Dentons Art Prize', Dentons, London (2018)
5. Peer reviewed exhibition (x2 Paintings) and published catalogue: 'Fully Awake', House for an Art Lover, Glasgow (2017)
6. Peer reviewed exhibition (x1 Painting), winner of the Visitor's choice award, published catalogue, public talks: 'The John Moores Painting Prize Exhibition', The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, (2016)

Each of these prestigious exhibitions (No. 3-6) were with major institutions in the UK (eg Walker Art Gallery) and paintings were exhibited together with internationally renowned artists including Turner Prize Winners, as well as being a prize winner at one of the world's most esteemed painting prize exhibition: The John Moores Painting Prize.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

4.1. The impact of the practice-based research project is demonstrated in four ways:

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- i. the broad extent of dissemination to and engagement with the wider public (over 100,000 people in total between public exhibitions and online dissemination), including in numerous exhibitions of international significance and standing (see 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, below).
- ii. quantifiable public reaction, notably as demonstrated by Moloney's painting 'Cave Floor' being selected for the John Moores Painting Prize Exhibition 2016 Visitor's Choice Award' at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. This award was voted on by over 10,000 people. The exhibition itself was visited by over 70,000 people (see Source 1&2).
- iii. Reviews, talks and interviews in public fora (see, for example, 4.4, 4.5; Sources 7-10).
- iv. Articulated public feedback (see, for example, Source 1). This feedback demonstrated that there had been an impact on formation of public perception of the particular and unique links Moloney's work has exposed between specular highlights, proximal spaces and formation of the Lacanian gaze.

For example, public feedback on the body of paintings included the following from the John Moore's Painting Prize in 2016 (Source 1):

- "I love the surreal, chaotic fantasy world created."
- "Endless patterns, associations, re-associations, layering, suggestions all in one small, dense, mesmerising piece of work. Food for the spirit."
- "It is alive! It moves, twisting and changing, tiny little images of almost fairy tale nightmares that alter and reform as you watch. Fascinating."

This feedback clearly indicates that the impact of the research project into links between theories related to vision was palpable in the public reactions to the paintings. Whilst the public were not necessarily mindful of the Lacanian gaze in their responses to the painting (even though it is central to the theoretical underpinning of the painting itself) the impact could be said to reside in translating these theoretical investigations into paintings that created new visual objects for the public to contemplate.

Similar feedback, from the Director of Art Galleries at National Museum Liverpool (Source 1) stated:

- "Donal Moloney's Cave Floor is a painting which can reveal something new over and over again. Among the myriad of shimmering colours and patterns are hidden images - flowers, rocks, rainbows, bubbles - which reward the view with their jewel-like qualities.
- "We are very pleased to award Donal the 2016 Visitors' Choice, on behalf of the John Moores Painting Prize audience, who so loved this ethereal and otherworldly painting."

This feedback also demonstrates the revelatory quality and impact of the paintings achieved through public exhibitions.

There follow the specific details of means through which impact was achieved during the period, through public-facing exhibition and associated publications, online dissemination, public talks, and reviews in non-academic journals and websites.

4.2 Public facing exhibitions and associated publications, including:

2019: Peer reviewed exhibition (x1 Painting), (Arts Council Funded), 'Hospital Rooms project', Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust, London (Source 3&4).

2019: Peer reviewed exhibition (x2 Paintings), (Arts Council Funded), and published catalogue: 'Substantifs', Arthouse1, London

2018: Peer reviewed exhibition (x2 Paintings), (Arts Council Funded), Symposium, public talks and published catalogue: 'Beautiful Monsters', Portico Library, Manchester

2018: Peer reviewed exhibition (x3 Paintings), (Arts Council Funded), public talks and published catalogue: 'Surfaced: Surface and Materiality in the Screen Environment', Thames-Side Studios Gallery, London

2018: Peer reviewed exhibition (x3 Paintings), (Arts Council Funded), shortlisted for Art Prize, public talks and published catalogue: 'Dentons Art Prize', Dentons, London (Source 4)

2016: Peer reviewed exhibition (x3 Paintings): 'Pleasure Islands', Artwork Ateller, Salford

2016: Peer reviewed exhibition (x3 Paintings) and symposium: 'The Abject Object', Wimbledon Space, University of the Arts London

4.3 Online dissemination:

Research Project Website page hits since Feb 2015 to March, 2020: 20,466 page views from 77 countries. www.donalmoloney.net

Research Project Instagram page (Tag: donal_moloney_art)-1240 followers

Two video interviews about Moloney's research project following the John Moores Visitor's Choice Award (1,504 views on YouTube on 31/01/20):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYDG9oD8Y2k> – 589 views.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7jOd-xLIDc> – 915 views.

4.4 Public talks:

2018: Royal Hibernian Academy: 'Reversing perspective; Bryson's Anti-Albertian Proximal Space and the limits of Cartesian Perspectivalism' (Lecture available online: <https://vimeo.com/264440389>) (Source 5&6)

2016: Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool: 'Surrealism and Kaleidoscopes; 'Cave Floor' and the digital scanner' as part of the 'Talk Tuesday' lecture series (Source 2)

4.5 Reviews in journals and websites

Citation of Moloney's work: Davey, D. (2016) 'A Diverse Selection', in Bukantas, A. (ed) *John Moores Painting Prize 2016 Catalogue*. National Museums Liverpool, pp. 10-20.

Citation of Moloney's work: Addison, J., Ayliffe, M., Carrick, S., Clancy, M., Creed, R., Cummins, S., Dickens, P., Diplexcito, N., McHugh, C., McKenzie, D., Palin, T., Thompson, E. (2017) *Fully Awake 2:5*. Glasgow: House for an Art Lover.

Citation of Moloney's work: Bunker, J. (2018) *Tainted Love: Thoughts on 'Surfaces: Surface and Materiality in the Screen Environment*. Available at: <https://instantloveland.com/wp/2018/05/22/john-bunker-tainted-love-thoughts-on-surfaced-surface-and-materiality-in-the-screen-environment/> (Accessed 31st January 2020).

2019: Interview on Refractive Pool Painting research project website: <https://refractivepool.wordpress.com/2019/08/06/ive-been-trying-to-make-large-paintings-for-years-an-interview-with-donal-moloney/>

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2016: Review of Moloney's solo exhibition 'Donal Moloney: New works on paper', in 'A Small View Gallery', Liverpool on the Messy Lines website:
<https://messylinesblog.wordpress.com/2016/09/11/discoveries-and-dreams/>

2016: Feature on Moloney's Prize winning John Mores Painting on Artist Network website
<https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/manchester-based-artist-wins-john-moores-2016-visitors-choice-award/>

2016: Video interview on Art in Liverpool website:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvZzYwQhv4w>

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/news/press-releases/winner-of-john-moores-visitors-choice-announced>
2. Head of Fine Art, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
3. <https://hospital-rooms.com/current-projects-2019>
4. Co-Founder of 'Hospital Rooms', London
5. Online public talk at the Royal Hibernian Academy, 2018: <https://vimeo.com/264440389>
6. Principal of the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, Ireland
7. 2019: Interview on Refractive Pool Painting research project website:
<https://refractivepool.wordpress.com/2019/08/06/ive-been-trying-to-make-large-paintings-for-years-an-interview-with-donal-moloney/>
8. 2016: Review of Moloney's solo exhibition 'Donal Moloney: New works on paper', in 'A Small View Gallery', Liverpool on the Messy Lines website:
<https://messylinesblog.wordpress.com/2016/09/11/discoveries-and-dreams/>
9. 2016: Video interview on Art in Liverpool website:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvZzYwQhv4w>
10. 'DONAL MOLONEY. BODY OF PAINTINGS' PDF document attached to this ICS