

<b>Institution:</b> University of Southampton		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28 History		
<b>Title of case study:</b> 28-03 Globalising Gulbenkian: Recovering Calouste Gulbenkian's International Vision for the Gulbenkian Foundation		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2003 – 2017		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Dr Jonathan Conlin Dr Ozan Ozavci	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Senior Lecturer Research Fellow	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> September 2006 – present January 2014 – January 2015
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> October 2014 – December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>With a USD4.5bn endowment, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is the 24th wealthiest philanthropic organisation in the world. Historically it has restricted its activities to Portugal. Research by Conlin into the life of its founder demonstrated that Gulbenkian intended his Foundation to serve 'humanity' rather than any single country, and revealed how his vision had been compromised, owing to the capture of the embryonic foundation by the dictatorial regime of Salazar in the years immediately following Gulbenkian's death in 1955. A biography authored by Conlin and published to coincide with the 150th anniversary of Gulbenkian's birth (2019) was translated into four languages, increasing public understanding internationally of a secretive figure who shaped the modern oil industry. In Portugal the book sparked a national discussion over the mission of the Foundation. Recognizing Gulbenkian's vision and values, the Foundation has changed its priorities and perspectives, committing itself to a series of new global initiatives in 2020, including a Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Born in Istanbul in 1869, by the time Calouste Gulbenkian died in Lisbon in 1955 he was the world's richest man, known as 'Mr Five Per Cent' for his personal holding of 5% of Middle East oil production. Conlin's first book, the definitive history of the National Gallery, London (2006), revealed Gulbenkian's abortive plans to leave his wealth and art to that institution. Invited to give a lecture (later published [3.1]) on Gulbenkian at a 2008 conference on twentieth-century philanthropy, Conlin studied the correspondence of Gulbenkian's executors. He discovered that Gulbenkian intended his Foundation to be international in scope; the Portuguese dictator Salazar and one of Gulbenkian's executors restricted its funding parameters in such a way as to make the Gulbenkian Foundation 'a gift to Portugal'.</p> <p>Conlin published his findings in an article in a Portuguese journal [3.2], which was circulated among foundation Trustees and other senior staff. With Gulbenkian's 150th anniversary on the horizon (2019), the Trustees wanted to commission a scholarly, objective account of their founder's life. They selected Conlin on account of his expertise in the history of collecting and previous scholarship on Gulbenkian. A memorandum of understanding (2012) was signed between the Foundation and the University of Southampton under which the former agreed to contribute GBP300,000 towards a three-year research project, subsequently (2015) extended to five years and GBP400,000.</p> <p>Though Gulbenkian was a celebrity in inter-war and post-war Europe, he shunned publicity. In the absence of reliable sources of information, several myths grew up around him, rehearsed in biographies published in the years immediately following his death in 1955. Historians began researching the history of the oil industry in the 1970s, but Gulbenkian's role in shaping its emergence remained hidden. This was partly because his vast personal archive (282 metres of material) remained in storage until 2007, off-limits to scholars. Recognizing the historical significance of this archive and acknowledging that they only possessed a limited understanding</p>		

of their founder's career and values, the Foundation granted Conlin full access to these materials and complete freedom to publish, uncensored, whatever he discovered.

Conlin's research revealed that Gulbenkian owed his fortune, not to any oil expertise or illicit ties to the Ottoman sultan, but to his skill organizing oil financing and brokering global oil cartels. It further demonstrated Gulbenkian's role in helping to establish the oil giants we know today as Shell and Total. A true 'citizen of nowhere' who lived in hotels and held four passports, Gulbenkian also formed one of the world's great art collections, now the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon. He intended his Foundation to be a gift to 'Humanity' rather than any single nation. Had his wishes been observed, his would have been the first global philanthropy.

The ramifications of Gulbenkian's personal and professional networks proved to be so extensive that Conlin and his team undertook archival research in public, private and corporate archives in ten countries, working in nine different languages. Preliminary results formed the focus of a free exhibition (2014) at the Gulbenkian Museum (Lisbon) [3.3], which addressed Gulbenkian's origins and life up to 1914. The principal output was a four-hundred-page biography [3.4] published in five languages (2019), which won the Business Archives Council's 42<sup>st</sup> annual Wadsworth Prize, awarded 'for a book judged to have made an outstanding contribution to the study of British business history.' An epilogue provided an equally authoritative account of the Foundation's beginnings, indicating the measures taken by the Salazar regime to ensure that most of the new Foundation's wealth would be spent within Portugal.

An article addressing Gulbenkian's activities as art collector [3.5] led the Gulbenkian Museum to invite Conlin to deliver the keynote introduction [3.6] at 'Collecting: modus operandi, 1900-1950', an international conference on the history of collecting held at the Museum. The keynote demonstrated how the Foundation had constructed a portrait of Gulbenkian the collector which served their Portuguese-focussed agenda.

### 3. References to the research

**3.1** Jonathan Conlin, 'Calouste Gulbenkian and His Foundation,' in David Cesarani and Peter Mandler, eds., *Great Philanthropists: Wealth and Charity in the Modern World, 1815-1945* (Vallentine Mitchell, 2017). Available on request.

**3.2** Jonathan Conlin, 'Philanthropy without Borders: Calouste Gulbenkian's founding vision for the Gulbenkian Foundation', *Análise Social* 45.2 (June 2010).  
<http://analisesocial.ics.ul.pt/documentos/1276642460B4gPX8sh5Jy72UR1.pdf>

**3.3** Jonathan Conlin (as curator), *More than Mr 5%: the Early Life of Calouste Gulbenkian*, temporary exhibition, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, 2 October – 3 November 2014.

**3.4** Jonathan Conlin, *Mr Five Per Cent: the Many Lives of Calouste Gulbenkian, World's Richest Man* (Profile, 2019). Translated into Portuguese, Turkish, Russian and Armenian. Listed in REF2. Won the Business Archives Council's 42<sup>st</sup> annual Wadsworth Prize:  
<https://businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/wadsworthprize>

**3.5** Jonathan Conlin, "'Renowned and Unknown": Calouste Gulbenkian as Collector of Paintings,' *Journal of the History of Collecting* 30.2 (July 2018).  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhx037>

**3.6** Jonathan Conlin, "'Only the Best"? Calouste Gulbenkian, Collector', keynote, *Collecting: Modus Operandi, 1900-1955*, 15 February 2019.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDD3UMn1NEo>

### 4. Details of the impact

Upon its publication in January 2019 Conlin's biography reintroduced Gulbenkian to publics inside and outside Portugal. The book entered the UK non-fiction best-seller lists, reaching 3rd place in the *Evening Standard's* 'London Bestsellers' while the Portuguese translation spent several weeks at number two in Portugal [5.1]. A paperback edition was published in January 2020. The English edition was reviewed in four national newspapers as well as *The Economist* Dominic Sandbrook writing in the *Sunday Times* that 'Jonathan Conlin, the first modern

biographer of this frustratingly elusive figure, does a fine job of digging beneath the legend.' [5.2, 5.3].

The implications of the biography for the Foundation were clear to journalists inside and outside Portugal, with Conlin interviewed on NewsTalk radio (Dublin), RTP television and radio (both Lisbon) and the BBC World Service's 'The Forum'. As German public radio observed in the introduction to their interview of Conlin [5.4], 'The inheritance of the great oil magnate has always been important to the cultural life of Portugal, and remains so today. The Gulbenkian Foundation has a very high profile in that country, and so there's a lot of controversy surrounding the new biography of the founder.' The Portuguese newspaper *Público*'s headline welcomed Conlin's book: 'After 60 Years, A Biography To Help To Shape the Future of the Gulbenkian' [5.5]

The biography was launched at the Gulbenkian Foundation's Lisbon headquarters in January 2019 and formed a focus of the Foundation's celebrations of Gulbenkian's 150th birthday. At the launch Conlin, Foundation President Isabel Mota and the Portuguese Head of State, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa delivered speeches addressing the biography's implications for Gulbenkian's legacy to Portugal and the world. Having delayed his departure to Panama on a state visit expressly to attend this event, the President conceded that Conlin's book 'in several points offers a different interpretation to what we formerly understood.' His Excellency acknowledged that the Foundation's first chairman had followed Salazar's lead rather than acting as Gulbenkian's executor, resulting in a Foundation which had advanced 'beyond his [i.e., Gulbenkian's] original intentions.' [5.6]

The Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon invited Conlin to contribute a series of labels to their permanent collection galleries, which attract over 400,000 visitors a year. These labels allowed visitors to learn more about Gulbenkian's taste and manipulation of the art market. The 'Quem é Calouste?' ['Who is Calouste?'] competition saw 550 young adults aged 15-25 accept an invitation to tell the Foundation what Gulbenkian meant to them. Participants used music, creative writing, film and visual arts to respond creatively to the man's contrasting personas: the paterfamilias, the tycoon, the refugee and the visionary. [5.7] As a Foundation Trustee noted, the competition demonstrated how, 'thanks to Conlin's research, Gulbenkian has become a living presence, particularly for a younger generation.' [5.8]

The project also provoked a debate within the UK charitable sector on 'founder's intent'. Staff from 20 UK-based foundations attended a symposium at the Foundation's UK branch on 20 February 2019, at which Conlin took part in a discussion with Gulbenkian's great-grandson and the Chief Executive of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Hosted by Janet Morrison, Chair of the Association of Charitable Foundations, the symposium considered how far 'founder's intent' should direct a foundation's agenda. As Morrison noted in her summing-up, the symposium suggested it could be 'something that facilitates continuous development and vision', rather than being 'a dead hand' [5.9].

Like an oil tanker, a large organisation like the Gulbenkian Foundation does not turn on a dime. Conlin's research has nonetheless been the catalyst for unprecedented self-examination by the Foundation and its stakeholders. Citing Conlin's 'definitive biography', the Foundation's website states that it 'is trying to act more internationally, partly to tackle the major issues facing society but also to honour the Founder's wishes.' [5.10] In February 2020 it announced the creation of the Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity, an annual award of EUR1,000,000 intended to engage civil society in addressing global challenges such as climate change. As the UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted, this 'will undoubtedly be an important contribution to addressing the enormous challenge of climate change and is part of the global efforts to promote the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals' [5.11]. In July 2020 Greta Thunberg was announced as winner of the inaugural award.

To quote a Trustee, 'For many years before Conlin's project there were those within Portugal who suspected that the familiar narrative of the Foundation's origins, centred on an old man who "fell in love with Portugal", might not be the end of the story. But nobody seemed to have the will or expertise to delve any deeper, partly owing to a broader silence surrounding the Salazar period. What Conlin's biography uncovered is not easy reading, yet cannot easily be dismissed:

its scholarship is profound, and the writing's fluency gave the book wider traction, here in Portugal as well as internationally. Although the Foundation's programmes cannot be transformed overnight, the new Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity announced in February 2020 shows our commitment to acting more internationally. For those of us charged with steering the Foundation rehearsing the familiar myths will no longer do.' [5.8]

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

**5.1** 'London's Bestsellers', *Evening Standard*, 17 January 2019; 'Livros Não ficção', *Expresso* [Lisbon], 9 February 2019.

**5.2** 'Fire Sales', *The Economist*, 5 January 2019, p. 64.

**5.3** Dominic Sandbrook, 'Mr Moneybags', *Sunday Telegraph*, 6 January 2019, p. 41.

**5.4** 'Neuer Blick auf Übervater der portugiesischen Kultur', *Fazit*, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 19 March 2019 <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/audio-archiv.517.de.html?drau%5Bsearchterm%5D=Gulbenkian>;

'Calouste Gulbenkian: Architect of Middle East Oil', *The Forum*, BBC World Service, 1 March 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cswptf>.

**5.5** *ípsilon* [review section], *Público*, 25 January 2019.

**5.6** Translation of President of Portugal's speech about Conlin's biography.

**5.7** For *Quem é Calouste?* competition, see: <https://gulbenkian.pt/quemecalouste/vencedores>

**5.8** A testimonial by a Trustee of the Gulbenkian Foundation.

**5.9** A video of the London roundtable on founders' wishes and philanthropic foundations (quote is at 25:40).

**5.10** For the quotation linking the Gulbenkian Foundation's changing priorities and Conlin's research see: <https://gulbenkian.pt/en/the-foundation/calouste-sarkis-gulbenkian/last-years-in-lisbon>

**5.11** For the inaugural Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity, including a statement from UN Secretary-General António Guterres, see: <https://gulbenkian.pt/en/the-foundation/gulbenkian-prize-for-humanity>