

Institution: Aberystwyth University		
Unit of Assessment: 32: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Multiple Impressions: Expanding Contemporary Printmaking Practices		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001–2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Paul Croft	Lecturer in Fine Art	1 September 1999–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Through practice-as-research, publications, exhibitions, masterclasses, print portfolios, international collaborations and global networking, Croft has enhanced understanding of contemporary printmaking and provided new opportunities for public audiences to experience and engage with such practices. His projects have enabled British printmakers to achieve recognition in China, Australia and the USA, while assisting Chinese artists to exhibit and network beyond China, opening up their work to global markets.</p> <p>Globally and regionally his initiatives and outputs benefit professional artists and art students, museums and galleries, print collectors and the general public.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Since the publication of his influential technical manuals <i>Stone Lithography</i> [3.1] and <i>Plate Lithography</i> [3.2], Croft has continued to disseminate his knowledge of and communicate his enthusiasm for printmaking through the curation of international touring exhibitions and participation at conferences, workshops and print festivals worldwide.</p> <p>Examining the interrelationships between technical, historical and cultural aspects of printmaking, and lithography in particular, is fundamental to Croft's research. In its technical dimensions, including attention to hybrid approaches such as traditional woodcut and modern screenprint, research for <i>Contemporary Chinese Printmaking</i> [3.3] considerably expands on Croft's work on international contemporary lithography for his AHRC-funded project <i>Stone-Plate-Grease-Water</i> [3.4]. It also extends his practical investigations into the relationships between art and technology, such as the digitisation of lithography (2008–2013) [3.5.1–6]. Croft's ongoing study of the interdependence of artists and their printers, and the extent to which such relationships have shaped lithographic practice, lays the foundation for his Leverhulme-funded research for <i>British Lithography 1800–2020: The Role of Collaboration in Practice</i> [3.6].</p> <p>Croft's practice-as-research is underpinned by a continued regeneration and reassessment of his training as a Master-Printer at the world-renowned Tamarind Institute of Lithography in Albuquerque. As Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers who has considerable experience as an artist, collaborating printer and educator, his research into methods, materials and the application of traditional as well as innovative techniques is enriched by a sustained engagement with contemporary practices worldwide.</p> <p>Initiating <i>Contemporary Chinese Printmaking</i> [3.3] involved establishing professional and academic contacts in China and meeting with artists and representatives of academic and cultural institutions in Hunan Province to identify shared approaches to practice, research interests and values. The research aims of this exploratory visit, which was facilitated by funding from the Welsh Government's Strategic Insight Programme and Hunan Department of</p>		

Education's Famous Foreign Professors project, were to map out a series of exchange exhibitions as well as to set up workshops, print portfolios and artist residencies.

Contemporary Chinese Printmaking, the centrepiece of the collaborative project, investigated the practice of three generations of printmakers from Hunan Province. It was primarily concerned with gaining an understanding of traditional and non-traditional Chinese woodcut methods as well as etchings, screenprints, lithographs, and digital prints. It examined methods such as those currently used by advocates for the revival of Chinese colour woodcut techniques, folk art woodcuts representative of practices from Tantau village in southwest Hunan, as well as the reconciliation of analogue and digital printmaking in hybrid processes. This research was consolidated in preparations for *The Xiaoxiang Exhibition of International Printmaking* [3.7], which created international contexts for Chinese printmaking by showcasing over 200 prints by 90 artists from Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Ireland, the UK and USA, and drew attention to a hitherto unrecognised international community of printmakers.

Both Croft's practice-based and curatorial research demonstrates how innovation, ingenuity, historical knowledge, craft, entrepreneurship, networking and collaboration drive contemporary practice and regenerate the discourse on printmaking worldwide.

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

3.1 Paul Croft, *Stone Lithography* (London: A&C Black, 2001; New York: Watson Guptil, 2003; Jilin, China: JLM Fine Arts Press, 2003)

3.2 Paul Croft, *Plate Lithography* (London: A&C Black, 2003)

3.3 Paul Croft, *Contemporary Chinese Printmaking: Prints by Artists from Hunan Province* School of Art Museum and Galleries, Aberystwyth (October–November 2014). A curated touring exhibition of 75 prints in all media and 72-page catalogue. [Submitted to REF2]

3.3.1 Paul Croft, *Contemporary Chinese Printmaking: Prints by Artists from Hunan Province* IMPRESS16, Gloucester (March 2016). 25 prints curated from the main exhibition.

3.3.2 Paul Croft, *Contemporary Chinese Printmaking: Prints by Artists from Hunan Province* Oriel Gallery, Clotworthy House, Antrim Castle (September–November 2016). Curated touring exhibition of 75 prints in all media and 72-page catalogue.

3.4 Paul Croft, *Stone-Plate-Grease-Water: Exhibition of International Contemporary Lithography* comprising 64 artists from UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, Chile & Jordan (UK touring, 2007–2008), MOMA Wales (2007), Bankside Gallery, London (2007), Naughton Gallery, Queens University Belfast (2007), and Llantarnam Grange, Cwmbran (2008).

3.5 Paul Croft, *Space Between: Developing Digital Lithography*, solo exhibition, IMPACT08, Dundee (2013)

3.5.1 Paul Croft, 'The Machine Stops: Inkjet My Foot!' Print Portfolio, University of Arizona Tucson / The Southern Graphics Conference (2008)

3.5.2 Paul Croft, *Lithography from Stone to Digital Print-Portfolio*, University of Nevada, Reno / The Southern Graphics Council Conference (2008)

3.5.3 Paul Croft, 'Integration over Interface: Printmaking in 2028', *Grapheion*, no. 21 (2008)

3.5.4 Paul, Croft, 'The Machine Stops: Inkjet My Foot' Symposium, University of Arizona Tucson (2009)

3.5.5 Paul Croft, 'Developing Digital Tusche Washes for Photo-plate Lithography' Workshop Demonstration, IMPACT07 *International Printmaking* Conference, Monash University Melbourne (2011)

3.5.6 Paul Croft, 'Developing Digital Tusche Washes for Photo-plate Lithography', *Printmaking Today*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2012)

3.6 Paul Croft, *British Lithography 1800–2020: The Role of Collaboration in Practice* (Covid-delayed). Leverhulme Major Award (GBP 43,688), HEFCW (GBP 3,500)

3.7 Paul Croft, co-curated with Professor Luo Xiangke of Changsha Normal University, *The Xiaoxiang Exhibition of International Printmaking*, Mei Lun Gallery Hunan Publishing House, Changsha, China (November–December 2015). 90 international artists showing 200+ prints in all media. 200-page catalogue *The Xiaoxiang Exhibition of International Printmaking* (China, Hunan Fine Art Publishing, 2015)

3.7.1 Paul Croft, co-curated with Professor Luo Xiangke of Changsha Normal University, *The Xiaoxiang Portfolio: Language of The Future*, Mei Lun Gallery; Changsha Normal University; Aberystwyth University (2015–2017) Portfolio of 50 prints by 50 international artists.

3.7.2 Paul Croft, Changsha-Aberystwyth Collaborations Poster Presentation, British Council *Going Global* Conference, Westminster Hall, London (2015)

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

Through practice-as-research, solo and curated exhibitions, print portfolios, exhibitions and masterclasses, Croft has enabled a more nuanced understanding of contemporary print practice. More specifically, his research has:

- Generated new opportunities that expanded professional and creative practices for a range of beneficiaries (artists, collectors, students and the general public)
- Enriched public appreciation for and understanding of printmaking as a key form of artistic expression

As an active printmaker, Croft has exhibited his prints in solo and group shows both nationally and internationally, and has devised and contributed to major print portfolios. In so doing, he has provided new opportunities for public audiences to experience contemporary printmaking. His projects have enabled UK printmakers to exhibit internationally. He has also helped artists from Changsha – a city far from China's cosmopolitan centres, that are integrated into the global art world and targeted by businesses and cultural institutions in the West – to promote the establishment of international networks and implement regional workshops.

The Xiaoxiang Exhibition of International Printmaking (2015) was seen as 'an extraordinarily important event' and recognised in China as 'the most ambitious, largest exhibition ever' to have been hosted in Hunan Province and 'of the highest international standard seen outside Beijing'. It was greeted as a 'milestone of great significance ... in the history of Hunan printmaking' and credited with playing 'an important role in expanding the academic influence of fine art at Changsha Normal'. Cooperation with Aberystwyth University was deemed to have established a 'good foundation for the Xiaoxiang International Centre for Printmaking and the continuing development of international academic exchanges' at Changsha [5.1]. That the project was deemed by Chinese officials to be of cultural significance is evidenced by the funding awarded by government agencies including the China Artists Association and the China Printmaking Society.

Touring the UK (2015–2016), *Contemporary Chinese Printmaking* offered international audiences a context for contemporary practice in China. For many of the artists involved, it constituted the first opportunity to exhibit outside China. Four of them visited the UK in 2014. Stroud's exhibition officer noted that many visitors '*appreciated being able to see work from China at their 'local' museum and art gallery*'. They hoped there could be '*more exhibitions like this*' in '*regional museums and galleries*' [5.2]. Clotworthy House gallerygoers in Antrim judged the '*masterful work*' to be '*awe-inspiring*' and '*world class! What an eye-opener!*' [5.3].

As the principal source of reference for practitioners in Australia, China, the UK and USA, Croft's publications also help expand the reach of his creative and professional practice. The Chinese edition of Croft's book *Stone Lithography*, gives lithographers in China access to Western approaches, as evidenced by a well-thumbed, annotated copy at Guanlan International Printmaking Base, Shenzhen [5.4].

A Master-Printer at the world-renowned Curwen Studio noted that he frequently referred to Croft's research '*when testing out [Croft's] waterless technique*', while another at the Atelier Le Grand near Limoges found Croft's instructions '*clear and concise*' and '*easy*' to follow. An Australian printmaker found the books '*[e]specially useful when setting up shop*'; another practitioner noted he had used Croft's books throughout '*20+ years of teaching*'; and a well-known Bristol-based artist stated that Croft's '*litho bible*' is '*always by our press*' [5.5].

In Wales, Croft fostered awareness of printmaking in his capacity as founder member of the Print Council of Wales, and Chair of the regional cooperative Aberystwyth Printmakers, for whom he equipped a print workshop and developed touring exhibitions, publishing projects, masterclasses, and a community education programme. He connects members of the cooperative with the renowned practitioners who visit, to make prints under his supervision: Anne Desmet RA, Shani Rhys James MBE, Mary Lloyd Jones, Wuon Gean Ho, Marcelle Hanselaar John Duffin RE, and Stuart Pearson Wright.

Desmet stated that her collaboration with Croft had been '*stimulating*' and had enabled her to '*think creatively in a different manner*'. Hanselaar found working with him to be '*one of the most instructive and successful*' collaborations and an '*invaluable help in developing [her] imagery*'. Wuon-Geon Ho appreciated being guided through a '*complicated printing technique that artists cannot easily do alone*', and Duffin pointed out the '*clear and tangible benefits*' to his '*practice and teaching*' [5.6].

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

- 5.1 Letter of corroboration from the Dean of the College of Fine Art and Design, Changsha Normal University, and Director of the Hunan Printmaking Committee, 20 July 2020
- 5.2 Email from the Events and Exhibitions Officer, Museum in the Park, Stroud, 30 September 2019
- 5.3 Visitor book comments, Oriel Gallery, Clotworthy House, Antrim Castle, September–November 2016
- 5.4 Picture of the Chinese translation of *Stone Lithography* in full use at the Guanlan International Printmaking Base in Shenzhen, August 2015
- 5.5 Screenshots of comments on *Stone Lithography* and *Plate Lithography* made by artists and printers on Facebook and Instagram, September–October 2019
- 5.6 Letters of corroboration from Anne Desmet RA, John Duffin RE, Marcelle Hanselaar and Wuon Gean Ho, 14 February 2021, 16 February 2021