

Institution: Royal Holloway, University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 26 Modern Languages		
Title of case study: Reframing the work of modernist artist Hans Jean Arp for British and European Audiences		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2003-2017		
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:
Eric Robertson	Professor of Modern French Literary and Visual Culture	1991- present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017-2019		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Professor Eric Robertson's research on the artist, sculptor and bilingual poet Hans Jean Arp (1886-1966) has had significant and far-reaching impact on both curatorial approaches to and the public understanding of this major artist's work. Robertson was joint lead curator of a major international retrospective exhibition on Arp between 2017 and 2018. Inspired directly by Robertson's research, the exhibition presented his work in a boldly multidisciplinary light at two major, state-funded galleries in the Netherlands and the UK. The exhibition, alongside publications, events and creative works to which it gave rise, attracted approximately 250,000 visitors in two countries; associated activities engaged and inspired children and younger visitors. The exhibition fostered European collaboration and intercultural communication at a time when such international co-operations are of importance culturally and politically. Beyond this, Robertson's research has influenced curatorial approaches to Arp's work internationally, as evidenced by its impact on two further exhibitions.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Robertson is one of the world's leading authorities on the work of the painter, sculptor and poet Hans, or Jean, Arp (1886–1966), one of the twentieth century's most significant European avant-garde artists. Arp's work is increasingly recognized as innovative and influential. He is internationally renowned as one of the foremost Modernist sculptors and visual artists. A founder member of the Dada group, he was also closely involved with Surrealism and with Concrete Art and Minimalism, yet he was also an accomplished poet in two languages. His bilingual, multicultural background and the sheer diversity of his practices have often led to partial definitions (e.g. as a French Surrealist artist, an abstract sculptor or a German poet), but his work has rarely been examined holistically.</p> <p>Robertson's research has constantly sought to rectify this omission by arguing that Arp's bilingual poetry and his acute linguistic awareness offer a key to understanding his visual and sculptural work. The poems use wordplay and humour; they disrupt grammar and reject traditional forms to better express natural processes while refusing to imitate nature's outer forms. His abstract drawings and collages, surreal reliefs and minimalist sculptures create a shared 'language' of visual forms. They also explore the relationship between objects and the names we give them. Arp was a pioneer of 'intermedia' art: shared titles, themes and forms cohabit and connect his works across different creative practices. As Robertson has repeatedly shown, Arp's Franco-German identity made him an important mediator within the twentieth-century European avant-gardes (R1, R2, R4).</p> <p>Robertson's work on the French avant-garde, multilingual literature and text-image studies covers his entire academic career. The research on Arp was done between 2000 and the present day. His widely acclaimed, prize-winning monograph <i>Arp: Painter, Poet, Sculptor</i> (R1)</p>		

was the first major English-language study of Arp in nearly half a century and ran counter to accepted understandings of his work. It was the first to reveal that Arp's bilingual poetry, self-translations and other textual reworkings not only complement his visual art and sculptural works but inform them deeply, imbuing them with humour and a disruptive, shifting and even 'rewritable' character. Robertson's work has reappraised Arp's relationship to the international avant-garde as well as his standing in art-historical and literary contexts (R1, R2, R6). With this aim in mind, the exhibition too dedicated entire sections to Arp and the European avant-gardes and to his close ties with Dada, Surrealism and other influential groups.

Awarded one of six inaugural Arp Research Fellowships in 2015, Robertson spent 3 months at the Stiftung Arp in Berlin researching Arp's influence on post-war European and North American art. The Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg commissioned him in 2017 to make short films on the work of Arp and his mentor René Schickele assessing their importance as proponents of Franco-German cultural reconciliation. The films were shown throughout the exhibition 'Laboratoire d'Europe: Strasbourg 1880-1930' (Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg, Oct 2017- Feb 2018).

3. References to the research

(R1) *Arp: Painter, Poet, Sculptor*, Eric Robertson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 256 pp. ISBN 978-0300106909.

The book won the 2007 R. H. Gapper Prize (awarded by the Society for French Studies to the best book published in 2006 by a scholar working in Britain or Ireland in French studies).

International journal and magazine reviews noted: 'Arp is exemplary of what interdisciplinary approaches can achieve' (*Nordlit*). Widely cited in studies of visual art and the avant-gardes, curatorial practice, poetics and literary bilingualism, and by scholars writing in French, German, Russian, Korean and English. Available from HEI on request.

(R2) *Arp: The Poetry of Forms*, by Eric Robertson and Frances Guy (Otterlo: Kröller-Müller Museum, 2017), 144 pp. ISBN 978-90-73313-43-9.

Robertson's essay, 'Art is a Fruit' (pp. 6–39) constitutes the main textual input of the book, which sold out its first print run of 3,000 copies. Available from HEI on request.

(R3) 'Traduction, décomposition, concrétion', by Eric Robertson in Aimée Bleikasten and Maryse Staiber (Ed.), *Arp dans ses ateliers d'art et d'écriture* (Strasbourg: Presses des Musées de Strasbourg, 2011), pp. 156-166.

This peer-reviewed chapter explores the role of language(s), organic motifs and the workings of chance in Arp's practices as a poet and visual artist. It is adapted from an invited paper to open the international conference held with the major retrospective 'Arp is Art' (Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg, 2009). Available from HEI on request.

(R4) 'Writing in Tongues: Multilingual Poetry and Self-Translation in France from Dada to the Present', by Eric Robertson in *The Multilingual Spaces of French and Francophone Writing*, edited by Delphine Grass. *Nottingham French Studies*, 56, 2 (2017), pp. 119-138. (doi.org/10.3366/nfs.2017.0175).

This peer-reviewed article situates Arp at the source of a century of multilingual poetry in Europe. The essay is an extended version of a keynote lecture delivered at the international conference 'Multilingual French Identities' (University of Lancaster, January 2014). Available from HEI on request.

(R5) 'Swallows, parrots and the cacadou supérieur: Arp as self-translator' by Eric Robertson. In *Dada: the Virgin Microbe*. Edited by David Hopkins and Michael White (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014). p. 205-223 (Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies). ISBN 978-0-8101-2939-9.

This peer-reviewed chapter examines the complex and often humorous workings of language in Arp's textual and visual practices. Reviewing the book in the *Journal of European Studies*, Richard Sheppard praised 'Eric Robertson's perceptive analysis of how the signification of Arp's

poems is changed when they are translated, either by the first or second person, into his second – or do I mean first? – language.’ Available from HEI on request.

(R6) ‘Foreign Bodies: Arp with Schwitters and Miró’, by Eric Robertson in *Schwitters Miró Arp*, edited by Dieter Buchhart. Exhibition catalogue, Hauser & Wirth, Zurich (Munich, London & New York: DelMonico/ Prestel, 2016), pp. 93-99. ISBN 978 3 7913 5592 4.

Commissioned for an international touring exhibition, this chapter examines all three artists’ pioneering use of atypical, everyday materials and focuses on their harnessing of destruction as an integral part of the creative act. Hauser & Wirth sold their entire stock of 1,100 copies. Available from HEI on request.

4. Details of the impact

Professor Robertson’s research on the work of Arp has introduced not only Arp, but new dimensions of European modernism, to international audiences and curators. An international touring exhibition, jointly curated by Robertson and independent curator Frances Guy was hosted by the Kröller-Müller Museum, Netherlands (20 May-17 September 2017) and Turner Contemporary, Margate UK (12 October 2017-14 January 2018). The exhibition, and the learning programmes and published resources it generated, informed curatorial practices, enhanced visitor experience, inspired new forms of artistic expression, supported museum education, and benefitted the local economy in both locations. This was the first major retrospective of Arp’s work in the UK or the Netherlands since the 1960s, and as its joint lead curator, Robertson’s impact was direct; his work on Arp has also informed two further exhibitions, including another major international retrospective.

Informing Curatorial Practices of Arp’s Work and Legacy

For the exhibition ‘Arp: The Poetry of Forms’, Robertson improved professional understanding of Arp’s work by leading gallery tours with museum staff, lenders, press and media and co-organised public symposia at both venues. The exhibition was judged to have demonstrated ‘collaboration at its best. Its curatorial rationale owes much to Robertson’s study, which was key in bringing together the different strands of what he terms Arp’s “intermedia” practice’ (S5).

Robertson’s research on Arp as painter, poet and sculptor shaped the exhibition’s conceptual orientation and structure. He was heavily involved in selecting the loans list, led negotiations with the Arp foundations and other lending institutions, and helped oversee the entire installation process at Turner Contemporary. He authored wall texts and captions at both venues and translated some poems. According to Turner Contemporary’s [text removed for publication], Robertson’s [text removed for publication]. This [text removed for publication] (S4).

Robertson’s research also informed the curation of one UK-based and one major international exhibition (S6, S7). His emphasis on ‘newly urgent 21st-century concerns regarding citizenship, nationalism and identity’ helped shape the major retrospective ‘The Nature of Arp’ (Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas/ Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 2018-19) which received 190,000 visitors and a further 45,000 through online events (S6). Its curator, Dr Catherine Craft, states that Robertson’s ‘formidable knowledge as a literary scholar, his careful readings of Arp’s poems in their original languages, and his emphasis on the importance of translation in Arp’s practice were of critical importance as I developed an exhibition concept that could accommodate Arp’s multivalent approach to pursuing different artistic formats’ (S6).

Enhancing visitors’ experience of Arp’s poetry and art

The exhibition enhanced understanding of Arp’s work amongst visitors whose prior familiarity with his work ranged widely. 86% of visitor responses in a Turner Contemporary survey rated their experience as ‘very good’ or ‘good’; 80% reported learning something new; 84% said they wished to see more things like this (S1). Visitor comments were overwhelmingly positive, with many focusing on aspects of exhibition design and curation. The exhibition made some visitors aware of Arp for the first time (‘Interesting to see works of Arp as unknown to me’; ‘Discovered and liked Arp’ (S1); ‘I had only a vague sense of Arp before visiting this exhibition, but now feel I

know a lot more about his work [and] the fact that he wrote poetry, and really enjoyable poetry at that' ['Books and Boots', S8]).

Many visitors praised the exhibition's curation and its expansive scope ('beautifully curated'; 'well curated and a great collection of works.' 'I enjoyed the Arp exhibition's level of commitment to the artist'; 'Loved the words/info on the walls.' [S1]) Robertson's research on Arp's bilingual poetry and experimental writing (R3, R4, R5) made this the first exhibition to place these on an equal level with his visual and sculptural output.

The exhibition enhanced visitors' understanding of Arp's influential place in modern art ('It is very good to see work by those not often seen in Britain eg Arp and Frankenthaler.' 'I learnt how he had worked with many artists.' 'Didn't know anything about Arp previously, but now recognise his forms / shapes in the subsequent works of others' [S1]).

Numerous reviews appeared in the Dutch and UK media (S8). *The Guardian* review noted: 'In the age of Brexit, an exhibition of this sculptor who transcended Europe's borderlines is a timely reminder of how art can defy national boundaries'. *The Daily Telegraph* described the exhibition as 'beautiful'. For *The Art Newspaper*, 'the show highlights the artist's many innovations that continue to resonate today.' Dutch daily newspaper *Trouw* praised its selection of sculptures as having 'an irresistible appeal, even for those who know little about abstract art.' The *Burlington Magazine* review observed: 'Arp's language has a remarkable mobility, moving between German and French and playing off the fluid, organic forms of the sculptures' (S8). The Kröller-Müller exhibition webpage has had over 9,000 visits (Dutch) and more than 550 (English). 46 Facebook posts by Kröller-Müller had a total reach of 112,640. 25 Instagram posts by the museum received more than 2,000 likes. 44 Twitter posts by Kröller-Müller attracted over 190 likes and 113 retweets. The mini-documentary on the Arp exhibition by Kröller-Müller and MuseumTV reached 91,274 viewers in 2017 (S2).

Inspiring New Forms of Artistic Expression

Through the exhibition, Robertson's research stimulated new works by creative practitioners in the UK and the Netherlands. As part of the programme of cultural events organised around 'Arp: The Poetry of Forms', the composer Helen Caddick (<http://www.helencaddick.com/>) created 'Amphora', a specially commissioned musical composition and dance performance inspired by Arp, and indirectly by Robertson's work (S9). Robertson discussed the project with Caddick and provided her with detailed, bespoke research material on Arp, some of which was incorporated into her successful applications to Arts Council England (GBP15,000) and the RHUL Research Strategy Fund (GBP5,000). The composer cites Robertson's research as a direct inspiration for her understanding of Arp 'as a man and [...] his approach as an artist' (S9). 'Amphora' was premiered to approximately 1200 visitors on the exhibition's opening weekend at Turner Contemporary. A CD of the composition was released and a documentary film 'Amphora: the making of' was shown in the gallery spaces at Turner Contemporary.

For the exhibition, the Kröller-Müller Museum commissioned two new creative works inspired by Arp: a poem by Moroccan-Dutch writer Abdelkader Benali performed at the exhibition's opening; and for its 2017 summer programme, a new musical stage production, *Menschen-Worte*, composed by Astrid Kruisselbrink, directed by Marc Pantus and performed by a string quartet to an audience of 280 (S2).

Supporting museum education and cultural engagement work with schools and diverse audiences

Educational materials and activities created for the exhibition engaged thousands of children and younger visitors at both venues. Both galleries have a longstanding commitment to catering for all age groups, widening access and inclusivity, and in the case of Turner Contemporary to the local community, who make up approximately 25% of their visitor base (S1). Its [text removed for publication]: [text removed for publication] (S4). Robertson provided Turner Contemporary's learning facilitators with material for workshops and worked closely with its Schools Office on learning guides and KS1 & 2 lesson plans. The latter formed the basis of 'a large-scale funded

learning project for 5 schools during the exhibition, engaging thousands of young people in the art of Jean Arp' (S10). Participants reported that school workshops were 'great for our more able students who enjoyed having their ideas challenged and appreciated'; '[we] did a really fun mask making session and the children were all smiles' (S10).

The Kröller-Müller Museum produced three lesson cards for the Arp exhibition for approximately 1,000 primary and secondary students. Especially for the exhibition, poet Abdelkader Benali and the museum organized a 'poetry relay'. Benali's open invitation to write poetry to accompany art resulted in 36 entries. The ten winners received an 'Art as an adventure' masterclass in which the poems were recited and discussed. The poetry relay webpage was visited 809 times during the exhibition (S2).

Benefitting the economy of the Museums and local areas

The exhibition attracted 162,224 visitors at the Kröller-Müller Museum and [text removed for publication] at Turner Contemporary, Margate, totalling 246,213 for both venues. Opened in 2012, Turner Contemporary has been [text removed for publication] (S4). [text removed for publication]. The opening weekend attracted 8,256 visitors, 23% higher than the previous year (S1). The overall budget for the exhibitions amounted to EUR750,000 including additional funding from Dutch, British and Swiss organisations (S2). Entrance to Turner Contemporary is free of charge; questionnaire respondents who visited during the exhibition spent a mean average of £8.89 in the Gallery, with individual spending ranging from zero to GBP550. Of those who spent money, the mean spend was GBP22.82 with a mode of GBP10 (S1). A full-price entrance ticket to Kröller-Müller Museum costs EUR21.90; full-price adult ticket sales alone amounted to approximately EUR1,500,000 in revenue (S2). The high visitor numbers also brought benefits to the local economies of both venues via accommodation and hospitality: 61% of Turner Contemporary visitors surveyed during the exhibition spent 2 nights in paid accommodation in or near Margate at an average cost of GBP159 per person (S1).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1: Statistical analysis commissioned by Turner Contemporary showing the exhibition's economic impact, visitor numbers, profiles, responses and behaviours.

S2: Kröller-Müller Museum Evaluation Report, January 2018, with visitor numbers, digest of media coverage and educational reach.

S3: Testimonial from Frances Guy, co-curator demonstrating the importance of Robertson's contribution.

S4: Testimonial from [text removed for publication] Turner Contemporary and [text removed for publication] Turner Contemporary, describing the importance of the exhibition 'Arp: the Poetry of Forms' for the Gallery and Robertson's vital contribution to its success.

S5: Testimonial and symposium report by Clare Nadal published in Public Monuments and Sculpture Association newsletter.

S6: Testimonial from Catherine Craft (Curator, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas) demonstrating the 'critical importance' of Robertson's research to the concept for the Nasher's exhibition 'The Nature of Arp'. Includes press clippings.

S7: 'Arp is Art' exhibition flyer citing Robertson's monograph as a source. Luxembourg & Dayan, London, 2012.

S8: Collated UK and Dutch Reviews of the exhibition 'Arp: The Poetry of Forms'.

S9: Testimonial from Helen Caddick, composer and creator of the dance and musical composition *Amphora*.

S10: Testimonial from Jennifer Scott, Learning & Engagement Manager, Turner Contemporary, demonstrating how Robertson's research underpinned the successful and innovative educational programme that the Gallery created around 'Arp: The Poetry of Forms'.