

<p>Institution: University of Reading</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 34a Art</p>
<p>Title of case study: <i>The Dark Monarch: Developing a new approach to the display of artworks</i></p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact An exhibition researched and co-curated by the University of Reading's Alun Rowlands – <i>The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art</i> – at Tate St Ives presented an accessible new approach to the display of the Cornish gallery's artworks. It widened public access to this important resource and enabled public understanding and appreciation of 20th-century British art by juxtaposing, and drawing connections between, famous historical artworks, contemporary pieces and examples from popular culture, literature, film, music and local folk ritual. This democratic approach was extended through the associated educational projects, performance events and publications. The model has subsequently influenced strategy at Tate museums across the UK, demonstrating that connections can be drawn across different categories of culture as a way of emphasising the contemporary relevance of previously underused and obscure public collections and as a way of promoting public interaction.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research The invitation to co-curate an exhibition at Tate St Ives stemmed from Rowlands' "expertise in curating within major public institutions both internationally and in the UK" and "his research interest and innovative work with collections, archives and their intersection with contemporary art" (quoted from a letter written by the Artistic Director at Tate St Ives, 2007-2013). Such expertise included exhibitions at Munich's Lenbachhaus Museum, Mudam Luxembourg and the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, and his critical writing on contemporary art and curation, such as 'The movement began with a scandal', in Rugg, J. & Sedgwick, M. eds. <i>Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance</i> (2007). The remit of the commission was to develop new strategies for the presentation and mediation of artwork in the Tate collection with particular relevance to the archives of British modernism in St Ives. The research project sought to create links to other national collections and archives, making these accessible to a wider public, and to re-examine the conventional narrative of British modernism, tracing its legacies within current contemporary art practice and theory.</p> <p>Working in close association with the Artistic Director, a cultural historian and the Tate Research Department in 2008, Rowlands conducted extensive research in the Tate and other archives, national museums and private and public collections. This research identified new ways of navigating the collection at St Ives, distinct from the traditional, largely formal, art historical associations routinely drawn between the collection and the narratives of British modernism. Instead it uncovered previously under-researched links between canonical works in the collection by artists such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth and folk and popular-cultural traditions of magic and the occult, including the pagan prehistory and myths of Cornwall. The research also revealed previously marginalised artists and artworks (for instance, the neglected archives of Ithell Colquhoun, subsequently catalogued and preserved as part of the Tate collection) and established connections to contemporary art practice, music, literature, film and continuing folk and occult traditions.</p> <p>All of these findings informed the curatorial strategy of the exhibition <i>The Dark Monarch</i>, 2009/10, which involved a thematic as opposed to a historical organisation of works, including a diverse range of exhibits from both the St Ives and other public and private collections. The exhibition featured over 200 artworks spanning the fantastical 19th-century fairy paintings of Richard Dadd; the books and journals of occultist Aleister Crowley; 20th-century landscape paintings by John Nash, Graham Sutherland and John Piper; Barbara Hepworth's sculptures; as well as contemporary works such as Derek Jarman's films and Damien Hirst's gold-plated unicorn in formaldehyde (<i>The Child's Dream</i>, 2008). <i>The Dark Monarch</i> also included 12 newly commissioned works.</p>

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As well as curating the exhibition, editing the accompanying 300-page publication (comprising 20 commissioned texts – including a chapter by pop star Morrissey – and four re-published ‘out of print’ essays) and self-authoring a chapter addressing the concerns of The Dark Monarch, Rowlands was “avidly involved in shaping the resources used in the educational projects for schools and younger visitors, who utilised the exhibition in its representation of magic as a touchstone to engaging with historical artworks”. He worked closely with Tate Learning, Young at Tate and Tate Families to develop the education programme, interpretative material and associated events, such as the Dark Weekend (30 November -1 December 2009), which included a 250-strong procession of musicians, dancers and horses, a film screening at the Royal Cinema and a performance by the artist Linder.

After Tate St Ives, the exhibition was also hosted by the Towner contemporary art museum in Eastbourne.

Alun Rowland joined the Unit in 2003.

3. References to the research

Exhibition. *The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art*, Tate Gallery, St Ives, 9 October 2009-10 January 2010; Towner gallery, Eastbourne, 23 January -15 March 2010.

Peer-reviewed as being of at least 2* quality; submitted for REF2.

Edited publication. Rowlands, A., Bracewell, B. & Clark, M. eds. *The Dark Monarch: Magic & Modernity in British Art*, Tate Publishing, 2009 pp.175; 75 colour and 40 black-and-white illustrations; 230 x 170mm
ISBN 978-1-85437-874-3

Chapter. Rowlands, A., *The Numinous and the Luminous* in: ‘The Dark Monarch’ eds. Rowlands, A., Bracewell, B. & Clark, M, Tate Publishing, 2009, pp. xxi – xxxiii.

Conference. *Magic and Modernity in British Art*
20-21 November 2009

A major exploration of the themes and debates presented in the exhibition

An edition of the academic journal *Proof* (University College Falmouth) was dedicated to the exhibition, indicating the esteem in which the exhibition is held.

4. Details of the impact

Rowlands’ research proposed a reframing of conventional and restrictive art historical narrative to emphasize previously ignored connections to the popular traditions of magic, romanticism and the occult. This allowed for the juxtaposition of historical artworks with contemporary examples of art, literature and film, enabling the presentation of a dynamic, relevant and broadly legible display of art pieces from the collection at Tate St Ives.

The impact can be broken down into the following areas:

1. Widening access to the collections and enabling public understanding and appreciation of contemporary art.

Augmented by the range of connected events, publications and performances, *The Dark Monarch* demonstrated how complex art historical ideas/practices can be made accessible and legible to a range of user groups and museum visitors, including not only regular visitors to Tate St Ives and Towner, but audiences drawn from around Cornwall through the various connected events. This is evidenced by the larger than normal visitor figures at the two galleries: for instance, the St Ives exhibition recorded the highest number of visitors for any exhibition in its first three weeks and “the

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largest winter visitor numbers during my tenure as Artistic Director”, with a total of 32,148 people attending and participating in events. To quote the Press & Communications Manager at Tate St Ives, *The Dark Monarch* presented “an exciting step forward in terms of media coverage. Due to the nature of the contributors to the exhibition and its catalogue, reports on both appeared on bloggers personal webpages, tweets, fan forums [...] and on various websites devoted to magic and general esoterica such as Aleister Crowley.”

2. Providing educational opportunities.

Drawing upon the connections *The Dark Monarch* made between art and magic, the exhibition’s learning projects ranged from educating school groups about key artworks to running workshops for teachers who utilised the resources developed from the exhibition. These workshops were used by nine primary schools, 41 secondary schools, 17 tertiary institutions and 25 community groups. Other educational events included a torch-lit tour of the Barbara Hepworth Museum led by Young Tate; *The Dark Monarch Symposium* (21 November 2009) which hosted a dynamic and eclectic mix of talks, debate and performance, including a presentation by Leviathan author Philip Hoare, a music performance by Cyclobe and a screening of the Incredible String Band’s film *Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending* introduced by director Peter Neale; and three *Dark Monarch* Book Groups hosted at Tate St Ives.

3. Influencing museum strategy

The Dark Monarch demonstrated the way in which archival research can enable the rethinking of conventional histories of art, proposing new ways to display and contextualise previously underused museum collections and archives. This has subsequently influenced the programming and curation of exhibitions at Tate St Ives, as evidenced by the quote: “As Artistic Director, the experience of the research and its iteration across the curated exhibition, publication and public events has been key for me in informing how we should be creatively engaging with public historical collections and archives, and how the vitality of these resources are enlivened with contemporary approaches and practices.”

Furthermore, significant discoveries were made through the research, including the acquisition of Ithell Colquhoun’s entire library, now held at the Tate; FayPomerance’s *Sphere of Redemption* (1967); and Penny Slinger’s 1960s’ photo-collages and book-works – an overlooked body of work that amounts to a major contribution to feminist surrealist practice – acquired subsequently for the Tate collection in 2010.

In summary, the **beneficiaries** of the research included:

- members of the general public interested in contemporary art and the history of art;
- visitors/users of art galleries and museums, including exhibitions and associated events;
- audiences for symposia and conferences on contemporary art and the history of art;
- users of/participants in educational projects at galleries/museums/schools;
- participants in the scheduled live events/performances, and
- museum staff.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. National media coverage

The exhibition received extensive coverage from the national media. Examples include:

Tom Lubbock, *Tricks of the light: Weird visions in art*, *Independent*, 5 October 2009. URL:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/tricks-of-the-light-weird-visions-in-art-1797670.html>

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Jessica Lack, *Exhibitions: Dark Monarch*, *Guardian*, 12 October 2009. URL:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/oct/10/exhibitions-darkmonarch-stivestate-preview>

Theatre & Arts: Dark Monarch, BBC, 14 October 2009. URL:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/cornwall/content/articles/2009/10/14/theatreandarts_thedarkmonarch_feature.shtml

Dark Arts, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 22 October, 2009

Brian Dillon, *The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art at Tate St Ives*, *Brian Dillon on the occult influence on modern British art*, *Guardian Review (Books)*, 24 October 2009. URL:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/oct/24/dark-monarch-exhibition-tate-review>

The Dark Monarch was selected as one of the best exhibitions of 2009 by French curator Alexis Vaillant in *Frieze's* end-of-year issue.

2. Local media coverage

An extensive number of features appeared in local newspapers such as *Western Morning News*, *West Briton*, *The Cornishman* and *St Ives Times and Echo*, as well as local magazines including *Cornwall Today* and *Here & Now*. A comprehensive list of these can be provided on request.

3. Online coverage Online reviews of the exhibition appeared in over 30 settings, including:

www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/.../Dark-Monarch...Tate-St-Ives/article.../article.html

www.artcornwall.org/exhibitions/Tate_St_Ives_Dark_Monarch.htm

www.phantasmaphile.com/2009/.../the-dark-monarch-exhibition.html

www.dazedgroup.com/ArtsAndCulture/article/.../The_Dark_Monarch

http://www.bbc.co.uk/cornwall/content/articles/2009/10/14/theatreandarts_thedarkmonarch_feature.shtml

A comprehensive list of the below can be provided upon request:

4. Student's guide to exhibition and teachers' notes

5. DVD of an animated film (*The Magical Portal*) produced by local Key Stage 2 schoolchildren after they were inspired by a work of art at Tate St Ives (2010)

6. Schedule of *Dark Weekend* events and talks

7. Correspondence with Artistic Director at Tate St Ives (2007-2013).

8. Tate Report 2009-10, where the exhibition's innovative curatorial approach is held up as a model for engaging contemporary artists within the Tate collection (p.20).

9. Testimonial from the Press & Communications Manager, Tate St Ives. (Can provide an inventory of events, and press and visitor figures).