

Basic Design and the Hatton Gallery: researching, displaying and sharing archival resources

British Art Network Seminar

Friday 21 November, 11.00 – 16.45
Hatton Gallery & Newcastle University

The British Art Network brings together professionals working with British art from the 16th century to the present day. The aim of the network is to contribute to the sharing of expertise, research and ideas across cultural organisations; to enable improvements in curatorial skills and collection knowledge; and to foster greater collaboration between partners leading to enriched understanding and enjoyment of British art for audiences across the UK.



Richard Hamilton
Chromatic spiral, 1950
Oil paint on plywood
Presented anonymously 1998
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This seminar will take the revolutionary teaching known as Basic Design and the related display on view at the Hatton Gallery as a starting point for a day of presentations and discussion on the way in which researchers, curators and art institutions use, present and share archival material with their audiences.

Invited speakers will discuss their research into the history of Basic Design teaching, addressing the methodological challenges they encountered and the insight they gained from working with archival material. The day will also offer a chance to discuss different approaches to making archives accessible via exhibitions, digitisation, publication and learning and participation activities.

Programmed by Elena Crippa, Curator, Modern & Contemporary British Art, Tate, in collaboration with Rob Airey, Keeper of Art, Hatton Gallery.

Programme

- 10.30 - 11.00: Welcome Tea and Coffee
- 11.00 - 11.15: The Basic Design Research and Exhibition Project – a brief introduction to the Hatton's one year project funded by the John Ellerman Foundation, its aim and objectives focused on the current exhibition and developing research project. Rob Airey, Keeper of Art, Hatton Gallery.
- 11.15 - 11.45: Opportunity to view *Basic Design: A Revolution in Art Education* exhibition with Elena Crippa, Curator, Modern & Contemporary British Art, Tate and Rob Airey, Keeper of Art, Hatton Gallery.

Session One: Basic Design

- 11.45 - 12.00: Beth Williamson
Traces by the thousands': Fragments of Basic Design in Britain

This talk will negotiate the joys and frustrations of archival research. Locating, viewing, gathering and interpreting archival material can be laborious and trails may lead nowhere. Yet a chance discovery or archival encounter might alter our understanding of historical moments entirely. Taking the artist and educator William Johnstone (1897-1981) as a case study it will assemble fragments of documents, correspondence, photographs and manuscripts, seeking out the roots of Basic Design as it was conceived of in Britain, as well as the exchange of ideas that helped to shape that conception.

- 12.00 - 12.15: Suzi Tibbetts
Tom Hudson & the National Arts Education Archive at Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Suzi Tibbetts will be offering a reflection on her experience conducting archival research, particularly at the National Arts Education Archive in relation to Hudson's teaching and, more broadly, approaches to teaching relating to Basic Design. Suzi will discuss how submersion in, engagement with, and re-enactment of the archive, has subversively shaped her teaching practice at Leeds College of Art.

- 12.15 - 12.30: Discussion and Q&A, chaired by Rob Airey
- 12.30 - 13.30: Lunch will be served in the Lounge of the Courtyard Cafe

Session Two: Researching, displaying and sharing archival resources

- 13.30 - 13.45: Donald Smith
Chelsea SPACE

CHELSEA space is a public exhibiting space on the campus of Chelsea College of Arts next to Tate Britain with an exhibiting programme across art, design, and popular culture. This paper describes some uses of archives and Special Collections to create experimental curatorial projects whilst tacitly examining an art school's history and pedagogy.

13.45 - 13.55: Followed by Q&A

13.55 - 14.10: Liz Bruchet
The Slade Archive Project

The Slade Archive Project was launched in 2012 as a joint initiative of the Slade School of Fine Art and UCL Centre for Digital Humanities, driven by a shared curiosity of what could be done with the unique archive materials of the Slade within the digital space. This presentation considers some of the complex custodial responsibilities generated by the digitisation and crowdsourcing activities of the project.

14.10 - 14.20: Followed by Q&A

14.20 - 14.35: Jo Melvin
Three missing pages

Alarmed by responses to Morgan Fischer's question – 'what happens to the artists whose work is lost to history?' – at the Open Systems conference at Tate Modern in 2005, I set about investigating strategies to invoke what I have referred to as the phenomenal archive. This idea of an archive's phenomenal character is not so much because it is ephemeral, although that may play a role in its ambiguous status but because its scale is indeterminate and its rendering as well as its access is contingent on circumstances. The relationship between the personal and the public, data protection, copyright infringement and the risk of libel are considerations an archive curator has to address. What can be said in one context may not be written in another, and then again may still be subject to censure. Three missing pages are the number of sheets omitted from the letter Roger Hilton sent to Peter Townsend for publication in *Studio International* magazine in March 1974. These sheets are a metaphor for what may be redeemed if the phenomenal becomes part of the story. I am interested in the modifications of established canons, failures and blemishes unearthed in archival investigations. Anecdotes lead to revisions. I will refer to Barry Flanagan's archive to demonstrate how the archive's materiality lends itself to visual display that in turn casts new ways of thinking about events surrounding exhibitions.

14.35 - 14.45: Followed by Q&A

14.45 - 15.00: Polly Christie and Sally Davies
Transforming Tate Britain: Archives & Access

The Vision for Tate's Archives & Access project is that it will lead the sector in transforming the way that larger and more diverse audiences engage with and learn about art. Through the course of this four year project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Tate will digitise and make available 52,000 pieces from Tate's Archive of British Art, and present them online, alongside contextual materials and a suite of tools to provide greater and more in depth access to the art collection. A learning programme will test and embed the new resources and tools, and will explore the potential

for using digital technologies to engage communities with their own visual and cultural heritage.

This presentation will look at the approach and activities used to maximise accessibility and engagement with archive materials both in Tate and beyond, and demonstrate the newly released content and tools.

15.00 - 15.10: Followed by Q&A

15.10 - 15.40: Tea and coffee will be served

Session Three: Discussion

15.40 - 16.30: Group discussion, chaired by Frances Spalding

16.30 - 16.45: Closing remarks, Elena Crippa, Curator, Modern and Contemporary British Art, Tate.

16.45: Event closes