

M4C DTP Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) Marketing Template

Project Title			
Making art part of everyday life: The influence of Asian art on UK curatorial practice			
LEAD INSTITUTION			
Name of HEI institution	Birmingham City University		
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION			
Name of organisation	Ikon Gallery, Birmingham		
Website URL	https://www.ikon-gallery.org		
THE RESEARCH PROJECT			
<p>Ikon is a contemporary art gallery whose practice combines international and local activity to critical acclaim. Established by staff of the School of Art at BCU in the 60s, Ikon has a history of innovative offsite programming that, further expanded in the 90s, it is continuing to critically examine. The doctoral research project will contextualise Ikon’s programme through the lens of ‘everyday art’ linked to an increasingly internationalist agenda using Ikon as a case study through which to examine the influence of Asian art linked to a preoccupation with “the everyday” in UK curatorial practice.</p> <p>Significantly, this kind of democratisation through “the everyday” – a dismantling of cultural hierarchies, to counteract conventional notions of “fine” and “high” art – is linked to an increasingly globalised nature of contemporary art (Belting, Harris). In particular the influence of artists hailing from Asia (e.g. China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, India), who derive their “relational aesthetic” more from local tradition than western theory, is as strong as it has been underestimated. The richness of their visual/cultural heritage, developed prior to exposure to western definitions of art, artistic authorship etc., constitutes a compelling counterbalance to our relatively recent tendency to experience art as something exclusive within dedicated art space. Ikon has been one of the key arts organisations profiling the social methodologies of Asian artists in the UK since the 1990s.</p> <p>Key research questions include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How has Ikon’s curatorial practice (gallery and offsite) historically developed regionally and internationally? 2. What comparisons can be drawn between Ikon’s programme and other contemporary curatorial engagements with Asian art in the UK? 3. How might expanded models of “the everyday” in Asian art enable UK gallery partnerships with, and demonstrate impact on, local and global communities? <p>These questions can be explored through research into and participation in Ikon’s programme, which includes many artists from Asia, recently Sheela Gowda (India), Lee Bul (South Korea), Kan Xuan (China), Navin Rawanchaikul (Thailand) and Rie Nakajima (Japan). Ikon’s Director Jonathan Watkins has also participated in and curated shows across Asia including the Shanghai Biennale (2006), Sharjah Biennial (2007) and Guangzhou Triennial (2012). The concept of ‘everyday’ was central to Watkins’ ‘Everything Changes’ (Shanghai, 2009), and ‘Floating World’ (Bahrain, 2017). How do these large contemporary art biennials and exhibitions foreground alternative art forms linked to a familiar reality informed by different native relational aesthetics? Avoiding both the colonial assumptions of a western canon and the post-colonial concerns with cultural appropriation, this project seeks to</p>			

examine how common ground might be found with Asian perspectives on art as part of the everyday and thus influence UK curatorial practice.

The project sits at the intersection of a number of key subjects and theoretical perspectives that include community art (Krause, Jeffers & Moriarty), public art (Cartiere, Doherty), socially engaged art (Bishop), land art (Kastner & Wallis), Internet art (Baumgärtel), the everyday (de Certeau, Johnstone, Rendell) and curatorial practice (O'Neill, Obrist). It is a timely project within the field of scholarship and the context of contemporary art gallery practice, which is increasingly relied on, by the government and local councils (as main funders), to develop partnerships that build knowledge and understanding of diverse communities, ultimately addressing globalisation and enabling social cohesion. This agenda is demonstrated through other programmes in the UK, including the Liverpool Biennial, Situations (Bristol), Mima (Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art), CFCCA (Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art, Manchester) and Arte Util (multinational) historically linked to Ikon and the recent collecting activity of Tate.

The student will synthesise a range of literature and undertake research in Ikon's Archive as well as regional and national archives such as those at the Library of Birmingham and Tate. The student will derive case studies, historical and live, from Ikon's and other curatorial programmes, at local and international levels, conducting interviews with the curatorial and artistic leads, in addition to project participants and the wider public. An initial four months of research methods training provided at BCU would be followed by a six-month work placement at Ikon. A second placement at Ikon would take place in the second year of study. It is also envisaged that international trips in the second year to conduct fieldwork in the selected cities of relevant regions, primarily, China, Japan and Thailand, may be required.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

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