| **Institution:** |
| University of Essex |
| **Unit of Assessment:** |
| 32 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory |
| **1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy** |

a. Overview

Essex Art History includes nine full-time academics, with research expertise spanning from the late Medieval period to the present. While no single methodology or set of theoretical concerns defines our research, our shared commitment to expanding art history enquiry beyond the fine arts has allowed us to work as a single research group rather than in distinct sub-groups. A sense of cohesion further comes from our collective interest in interrogating the political implications of art and visual culture, which underpins nearly all the research we produce.

Our particular strength in curation, as a field of practice, theory and historical study, is supported by the **Centre for Curatorial Studies**, a research and research-led teaching centre housed within Essex Art History. Our research in modern and contemporary art is also supported by the **Essex Collection of Art from Latin America** [ESCALA], one of Europe's most significant collections of Latin American art; **Art Exchange**, our on-campus gallery; and the **University's Art Collection**, which now encompasses the Priseman Seabrook collection, a newly finalised long-term loan of 100 works by British modern and contemporary artists.

A distinct feature of our approach to studying art and visual culture is our emphasis on interdisciplinarity. This emphasis is embedded into the very structure of Essex Art History, which belongs to the School of Philosophy and Art History [SPAH], home to the **Interdisciplinary Studies Centre**. As a result of this structure, our staff members come into regular contact with the ideas and approaches of disciplines beyond art history: for instance, through our School's weekly lecture series, which alternates between philosophy and art history talks; through collaborative research projects; and through more informal reading and working groups that explore overlapping areas of interest.

b. Strategic areas of research focus

Essex Art History conducted an internal review early in the current REF cycle to reassess our core research interests following several personnel changes. Through this exercise, we identified three fundamental and often overlapping areas of research focus:

1) The politics of art and visual culture

Based on the assumption that all forms of visual culture emerge from and contribute to the mediation of social-political forces, much of our work explores the role of art, architecture and other types of visual culture in the assertion, negotiation and contestation of power. To this end, our research pays particular attention to issues of autonomy, agency and dissent in the public realm.

2) Curating and other forms of practice-based research

Curation constitutes an increasingly important form of practice-based research for Essex Art History, with exhibitions functioning as a platform not only for disseminating research but also for developing innovative, practice-based approaches for the study of art and visual culture. While exhibitions remain the single most significant form of practice-based research for Essex Art History, our long-term goal is to become a world leader in practice-based art historical research, which reflects our belief that a close, iterative dialogue between practice and research will stimulate new ways of thinking about the visual world. Consistent with this goal, we are now strategically expanding into new forms of practice-based research beyond exhibitions, such as documentary filmmaking and ecologically informed collaborations with

artist-activists.

3) Interdisciplinary approaches for studying the visual world

We place considerable emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches to studying art and visual culture, which stems from our conviction that interdisciplinary enquiry allows us to better understand complex issues that have shaped the world at different historical moments. While much of our research lies at the intersection of social history and art history, it also frequently involves bringing art history into close dialogue with fields such as anthropology, computer science, medical science, philosophy and sociology.

The areas of research described above closely overlap with those outlined in our REF2014 environment statement, which were visual culture; architecture and theory; images and ideas; and contemporary art (including Latin American art). Indeed, several new hires during the period 2014–16 directly advanced these four, previously identified areas of strategic focus. For instance, visual culture and images/ideas have been supported through the appointments of Grindon and Presciutti, who have specialisms respectively in activist art and the visual culture of social problems in Renaissance Italy. Additionally, architecture and theory have been bolstered through the hiring of Blackmore, Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco and Tymkiw, all of whom study different aspects of the built environment. Finally, our coverage of contemporary art has expanded through the appointment of Blackmore and Grindon, both of whom have expertise in visual culture from the 1960s to the present, with Blackmore in particular concentrating on the art and visual culture of Latin America. That all said, the three areas of research summarised at the start of this section offer the most accurate reflection of our current strategic focus, since the REF2014 environment statement was submitted in late 2013, before the 2014 retirement of four colleagues and the subsequent hiring of five new academics (a change in our staff's composition that we elaborate in section 2a). At the same time, these three areas of focus demonstrate a strong line of continuity with the core strengths that have consistently defined Essex Art History since its inception in the 1960s: namely, politically engaged approaches to art history, innovative approaches to exhibition-making, and interdisciplinary enquiry.

c. Research Centres and Research-Led Teaching Centres

Research centres and research-led teaching centres are a vital part of our research environment. Key among them is the **Centre for Curatorial Studies** [CCS], which is presently directed by Grindon and, from 2015–18, by Grindon and Tymkiw. CCS concentrates on scholarship and research-led curatorial approaches that help to advance the practice, theory and history of curating. To this end, several staff members (Lodder, Blackmore, Grindon, Shukaitis) have organised major, research-led exhibitions. These shows have involved collaborating with external partners, such as the V&A (London), the National Maritime Museum (Falmouth) and Firstsite (Colchester), as well as partnering with several on-campus organisations, such as Art Exchange; Special Collections, which contains over 70 archives of primary source materials housed at the University's Albert Sloman Library; and ESCALA, a research space and museum accredited through Arts Council England. CCS also supports research-led exhibitions that are curated by students, primarily doctoral students, but also taught postgraduate and undergraduate students. Such student-organised exhibitions have taken place at institutions including Art Exchange, the Albert Sloman Library, Firstsite and Goldsmiths, London (the site of an exhibition by one of our PhDs students). As part of our commitment to curatorial research, in 2017 we launched a **practice-based PhD in Curating**, which culminates in the curation of a research-based exhibition plus the writing of a related thesis of 40,000 words. Further activities spearheaded by the CCS include the organisation of talks by international curators, museum directors and conservators to offer our postgraduate students (taught and research) insight on different aspects of managing exhibitions and permanent collections. CCS also initiated a project in 2018 to digitise records from Liberate Tate, a collective that has played a pivotal role in contemporary museum activism. Upon completion, CCS plans to make these digitised records available to researchers outside the University, pending funding.

Besides their involvement in CCS, staff members from Essex Art History have contributed to the **Interdisciplinary Studies Centre** [ISC], which has been overseen by art historians Pearson (2014–18) and Presciutti (2018–19). ISC is home to several areas of research-led teaching at the BA level, including courses in Liberal Arts, Global Studies and Social Change. It is also home to a new, research-led PGT teaching provision conceived during the current REF period for a start date of academic year [AY] 2021–22. This provision will draw heavily on the interdisciplinary research of several staff members from Essex Art History (e.g., Blackmore, Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco, Ruiz-Gómez). Our staff are also involved in interdisciplinary research activities beyond those directly associated with ISC. For instance, the **Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies**, which is part of our School and led by Blackmore, has hosted three international visiting fellows in the current REF period (one artist, one artist-scholar and one filmmaker-scholar) and regularly sponsors research events such as talks, conferences and symposia, particularly around ecology-related themes. As another example, Tymkiw launched the University-wide **Digital Cultural and Creative Research Network** [DCCRN] in 2018 with support from Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco. This interdisciplinary network, which brings together scholars from across the University's faculties, holds its own research events, such as lectures about digital visual culture from prominent international scholars; sandpit sessions that gather art historians and colleagues from other disciplines to collaborate on research projects; and 'Challenge Labs' that invite scholars to use their research expertise to solve challenges facing cultural institutions and companies.

d. Future Strategic Aims

Looking ahead, we recognise that Essex Art History has a relatively small number of staff members, which makes it difficult to offer comprehensive coverage of all periods and geographies. Nevertheless, our size has allowed us to develop a laser focus on what we care deeply about: becoming a hub for innovative approaches to art historical research and research-led teaching that respond to urgent world challenges. To realise this goal, we have four strategic aims:

1) **Remain at the forefront of curatorial studies through ambitious, research-led exhibitions and new methodologies for the study of curation**

   As noted in section 1b, exhibitions have emerged as one of the most significant means by which our staff develop and share research; so, too, have written outputs focused on the historical, theoretical and practical aspects of exhibition-making. We seek to build on this expertise by making CCS one of the School's main strategic priorities for the next 5 years, which will involve investing both in technologies that facilitate research and in ambitious, early-stage research projects with the potential to transform the field.

2) **Become a leader in practice-based research**

   While writing has traditionally been the main medium for producing art historical research, Essex Art History understands exhibitions, films, activist projects, apps and even certain forms of commerce as alternative ways to 'write' art history: that is, as platforms not just for disseminating art historical research but also for developing paradigm-changing ways to do such research. As such, we will vigorously support colleagues (financially, technologically and administratively) in the development of practice-based research projects, especially those that directly respond to urgent world challenges, such as climate emergency and growing income inequalities.

3) **Develop links with outside organisations**

   To ensure that our research has a transformative impact on lives beyond academia, partnering with outside organisations is crucial. To this end, we will focus on cultivating collaborations with museums, galleries, alternative art spaces, sites of cultural heritage and for-profit companies in the cultural and creative sectors. Given our interest in politically engaged approaches to art history, we are especially interested in collaborations that make art and visual culture more inclusive for a wider, more diverse set of publics. Forging links with outside organisations will

also be key as we expand ISC's research and research-led teaching remit from AY 2021–22 onwards to encompass a new postgraduate programme about politically engaged Heritage Studies. This programme will draw on the expertise of Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco (a trained archaeologist), Grindon's longstanding work concerning activism and the University's influential Human Rights Centre.

4) Grow research income to enhance our long-term sustainability

We seek to grow income for research that advances our commitment to socio-political progress. To achieve this goal, we will pursue a multi-pronged approach, which includes: a) using various internal incentives to support colleagues in writing grant applications (e.g., strategic teaching buyouts, workload credit); b) working closely with museums, activist organisations and other institutions to secure funding for practice-based research developed by our academics; c) pursuing knowledge-exchange partnerships with enterprises that will benefit from and enhance our research; and d) increasing networking opportunities with academics from other disciplines and external partners to lay the groundwork for large-scale, cross-institutional projects with major impact potential. Such networking will be facilitated, for example, through the Eastern Academic Research Consortium [Eastern Arc], which involves the University of Essex, University of East Anglia and University of Kent.

2. People

a. Staffing Strategy and Development

Our longstanding staffing strategy is twofold: first, to recruit and hire Early Career Researchers (ECR) on full ASER contracts who demonstrate high potential for delivering world-leading research and research-led teaching; and second, to support, retain and encourage promotion of all of our researchers over the course of their academic careers.

In 2014, we remained faithful to this strategy when four professors retired after several decades of service to the University (Dawn Ades, Valerie Fraser, Margaret Iversen and Jules Lubbock, all of whom are now Emeritus). Following their retirement, Essex Art History made five appointments between 2014 and 2016 of research-active staff at the ECR-level, including one new post (a lectureship-track research fellow in digital heritage). On the one hand, this 'changing of the guard' meant a significant change in the overall seniority of our staff, which from late 2014 onwards has skewed towards emerging scholars. On the other hand, these new colleagues have allowed us to gain or expand research expertise in several burgeoning areas of scholarly interest for the field at large, including the gender politics of Renaissance visual culture (Presciutti); curation (Grindon and Tymkiw); digital approaches for the study of visual culture (Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco and Tymkiw); and art's relationship to ecological activism (Blackmore and Grindon). Our new colleagues also have shifted our centre of gravity more heavily towards forms of practice-based research: above all research-based exhibitions (Grindon), but also documentary films (Blackmore, Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco), activist collaborations with artists (Blackmore and Grindon) and experimental uses of digital technology (Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco and Tymkiw). Since starting their posts between 2014 and 2016, all of our new appointments have achieved permanency, including two who received early permanency. Four of the five new hires also have been promoted to Senior Lecturer (Blackmore, Grindon, Presciutti, Tymkiw), alongside two colleagues who joined our group earlier (Lodder and Pearson).

As suggested by the rapid advancement of our recent appointments, we have a comprehensive set of mechanisms in place to support the career development of ECRs, who will remain at the core of our staffing strategy. Key among such mechanisms is our mentoring programme, which pairs a new, full-time member of staff with a designated mentor among the senior staff. As mentors, senior staff members provide feedback on grant applications and draft publications, as well as advice on how to navigate several university milestones in the pathway towards permanency and promotion. These milestones include a) the *CADENZA* training programme, which occurs midway through the 3-year probation period and results in an application for HEA [Higher Education Academy]

fellowship; b) the application process for permanency, which requires candidates to demonstrate excellence in research and other areas (e.g., education and leadership); and c) an annual research plan, which is required of all research-active staff. To make sure that mentors have the necessary time to support ECRs, we include mentoring as an activity in our School's Work Allocation Model and as a criterion for promotion and salary increase applications. In 2016, we extended our mentoring programme to all part-time lecturers and visiting research fellows, so that they similarly benefit from career guidance and feedback on teaching, work-in-progress and/or research applications.

In addition to the support provided through our mentoring programme, ECRs meet with the Humanities lead from the University's Research and Enterprise Office (REO) to learn the University procedures and resources to support grant writing. Through our Work Allocation Model, we also operate a School-wide policy that protects the research time of junior staff members by reducing their administrative load during their three-year probationary period. Additionally, we provide a framework of essential training courses that enable them to cultivate the skills needed for supervising research students and for conducting research in an ethical manner.

Besides the support mechanisms specifically designed for ECRs, we have a range of mechanisms in place to help all research-active staff. For example, to complement the University-wide research-leave policy, which allows one term of leave for every six served, the School operates a budget that staff may access to pay for image rights; to purchase special equipment required for research; and to defray the costs of research and conference travel in excess of the standard £600 annual research allowance per FTE. To supplement our University's updated work-life policy, which, among other benefits, allows colleagues to take a career break after two or more years of service, we have recently introduced a School-level procedure whereby each staff member designates a 'protected' research day per week that is used by the administrative team to schedule deadlines and to minimise email interruptions.

To provide staff members with peer feedback on their research and to enrich awareness of work-in-progress, we have various platforms in place, including our School's annual Research Away Day, during which colleagues present nascent projects for constructive criticism; our lecture series, which include talks not only from external speakers but also from colleagues who present research-in-progress after returning from study leave. We also offer continuous support for drafting proposals for external research funding. This support is provided by the School's Research Director and the University-wide REO, the latter assisting with all practical aspects of preparing research proposals.

While the staffing strategies and staff development programmes outlined above focus on colleagues currently on ASER contracts, we are fortunate to have a highly engaged group of Emeritus staff, all of whom regularly supervise PhD students and frequently contribute to on-campus events or other activities organised by current staff members, such as symposia, exhibitions, lectures and conversations with visiting scholars and artists during art exhibitions. Our Emeritus staff has also provided feedback to current academic staff on their research projects, be it by offering written comments on article drafts and book manuscripts or by leading staff-wide workshops about research-based writing.

b. Research Students

Essex's Art History has a close-knit and vibrant community of postgraduate research student. Since 2014/15, we have awarded 33 PhDs to our students, many supported by major external scholarships (e.g., Academia Sinica, CHASE, Fundación Jumex).

To assist students in the advancement of their research and the timely completion of their degrees, we have a series of major milestones that aid progression. As one example, before being confirmed as PhD candidates and continuing to their second year of study, students must write a Project Outline, Literature Review and chapter draft towards the end of their first year, which members of the Supervisory Board must formally approve. To help students better meet such

deadlines, in 2017 we introduced a detailed schedule of all key milestones and the relevant deliverables in the student handbook; this schedule is republished every year and updated as needed in response to reflection and feedback. We also have mechanisms in place to assist students with improving the quality of their work. For instance, to help students hone their overarching arguments and the methods used for carrying out their research projects, we host an annual event in which every second-year PGR presents a c. 30-minute précis of their project followed by a c. 20-minute Q&A session, in which current staff members, Emeritus Professors and fellow students of all years provide oral feedback. To prepare students for the viva, in 2018 we introduced the option of mock vivas and oral presentations as part of final-year Supervisory Boards. Finally, to help students make the transition to life after their PhD, our School's Placement Officer and the University's Career Services Team offer PGR students support when making academic job applications, including CV and cover-letter writing and mock job interviews. These support mechanisms - together with those at the University-wide level, such as procedures for monitoring degree progression and the £2,000 *Proficio* account that every PGR student receives to support travel, training or other research-related activities - have contributed to our PGR students' success in obtaining postdoctoral research fellowships, lectureships with research in their contracts or research-driven posts at museums or publishing organisations. In the current REF period, for example, nearly half of our PhD students have assumed such research-intensive positions after graduation.

While the University and School have a range of policies and procedures to nurture the research of our postgraduate students, we equally ensure that students can provide feedback to us so that we may iteratively improve how we support their research activities. For example, all postgraduate research students are consulted during the Annual Review of Courses for postgraduate research provision. As part of this process, students submit feedback that is then relayed to the Director of Graduate Studies and the School Education Committee for consideration. Action plans from the Annual Review of Courses for PGR provision are also regularly reviewed and shared with students, who are invited to provide comments either to the Director of Graduate Studies or to student reps, who attend the School Education Committee. Additionally, we have a termly open-forum meeting in which postgraduate students (PGR and PGT) can make suggestions for improvement. Attended by students and staff, this forum produces a list of actions for departmental consideration, after which the School reports back to postgraduate students on all changes undertaken.

Beyond the mechanisms in place to support our students' research degrees, we provide PGR students with a range of opportunities to participate in collaborative, research-based activities that advance their professional and intellectual development. For example, our online, refereed graduate journal *re•bus* is co-edited and produced entirely by our PGR students, whom staff members support by offering operational guidance, giving advice on the peer review process or serving as peer reviewers. Our School also offers financial support for an annual conference organised by our PGR students (roughly £1k per year). Furthermore, we provide PGR students with the chance to cultivate their own teaching skills within a research-based teaching environment - either through standalone modules or through discussion sections. (During the REF2021 period, for example, we provided PGR students with the opportunity to teach over 15 standalone modules and discussion sections.) Prior to any teaching, all PGR students must complete training on topics including pedagogy, reflective professional practice and dealing with difficult situations. PGR students also are encouraged to complete a free professional development programme that consists of two, 30-credit modules focused on self-reflective pedagogy for research-led teaching. This programme results not only in HEA accreditation but also in a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice [PG CHEP].

c. Equality and Diversity

To complement University-wide efforts to improve equality and diversity, such as its involvement in the Disability Confident (formerly 'Two Ticks') Employer scheme, our School introduced a formal internal policy on equality in 2016. This policy acknowledges that women and minorities have historically been disadvantaged in many aspects of university and academic life through conscious

and unconscious assumptions, biases and prejudices and through unfavourable practical arrangements. Key issues addressed in the School's equality policy include: a) the need for greater gender parity in the composition of staff, both as a whole and at the Professorial level; b) the inclusion of female and minority speakers when research-active staff set up conferences at the University or elsewhere; c) the inclusion of female and minority authors when editing collections of articles or other research outputs; and d) a heightened awareness of implicit bias when refereeing/ assessing non-anonymised work (a risk we have significantly mitigated in this REF cycle by anonymising nearly all coursework and by requiring colleagues to take an implicit-bias training course introduced by the University in 2018).

The School has already taken a variety of steps to implement the policy outlined above. These have included the appointment of a Women's Officer (a role filled by an academic staff member); the appointment of more female colleagues to School leadership roles that historically have been largely held by male colleagues (e.g., Head of School, Director of Graduate Studies); an extensive series of interviews and surveys with both academics and students to identify specific actions for improving gender equality; the creation of a working group tasked with improving learning and research conditions for BAME students; the appointment of a BAME staff member both to the leadership role of Education Director and to the oversight of our BAME initiatives; the introduction of a reading group for staff and research students on Race and Gender, which discusses a wide range of humanities research on race and gender; and an updated School webpage that makes it easier for students and staff to navigate the University's system for reporting harassment, discrimination and assault (https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/philosophy-and-art-history/equality-and-inclusion/counteracting-harassment-and-implicit-bias). Alongside such initiatives, during the current REF period we have increased representation of female and BAME speakers in our lecture series and have brought forward the times of our bi-weekly lecture series (previously 4–5:30 pm, now 3–4:30 pm) to accommodate academic colleagues with childcare or other care responsibilities.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Income

In AY 2015–16, we developed a new, two-part income-generation strategy in response to the changing composition of our academic staff described in section 2a. First, to better nurture the early-stage research projects of our ECRs, we now place stronger emphasis on seed-corn funding, with the rationale being that such projects create a foundation for larger, externally funded research in the future. Second, we focus greater attention on funding sources for practice-based research, such as knowledge-exchange partnerships or grants that offer financial support to organisations that produce or host the practice-based research outputs that our staff have developed, led or collaborated on (e.g., cultural institutions, activist groups). In some cases, such funding flows directly to these organisations rather than to the University; nonetheless, we have made a principled decision to support partner organisations in securing such funding, since doing so ultimately makes our own research possible.

Given the preponderance of ECRs at the start of the REF period, we made a strategic choice: rather than trying to attract major external funding over the immediate term, we focused on laying the groundwork for large and ambitious projects in the future, which we deemed the best way to ensure our sustainability. This decision gave colleagues the necessary time and intellectual space to develop early-stage projects with the greatest likelihood of attracting significant income over the long run. However, it also meant that we only captured a modest amount of external funding in the current cycle (£283k), which comprises the £67k in traditional grants and fellowships captured in our REF4b form; c. £150k that flowed directly to museums hosting research-led exhibitions organised by staff; £62k in funding from external sources that are technically classified as internal University support, such as the Research England Global Challenges Research Fund [GCRF] and 'Enabling Innovation: Research to Application' [EIRA], which is supported by Research England's Connecting Capabilities Fund; and £4k in consultancy fees paid directly to an individual member of staff, with the University's prior approval.

While only implemented within the last five years, our new income-generation strategy is bearing fruit. For example, our early-stage research has received support from several seed-funding sources, including the Humanities Faculty Seed-corn Fund, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) Strategic Fund, GCRF and EIRA. A number of staff members have also benefited from seed-corn funding. Blackmore, for instance, received £30k from GCRF for a project that brings together artists, curators and scholars around three river basins in Peru, Colombia and Mexico to explore common sustainability challenges and to generate new, collaborative research into ecologically-informed arts practices concerning bodies of water. (Blackmore received a further £30k in follow-on funding for this project shortly after the REF2021 period ended.) This project has provided a springboard for a large National Environment Research Council bid recently submitted, with Blackmore as Co-Investigator, which brings together an interdisciplinary group of academics and two artists to curate two bespoke artworks in response to sustainability challenges in the marine environment. Other recipients of seed-corn funding include Shukaitis (for a data analytics project with Firstsite, £9K); Grindon (for research on the interrelationship between aesthetics and activism, £8.5k); Tymkiw (for eye-tracking experiments at museums, £8k); Lodder (for a project about the intersection of law and visuality in Operation Spanner, for £6k); and Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco (for research about heritage education and sustainable development in Lebanon, £4k).

As evidence of our early successes in generating funding for practice-based research, Lodder's exhibition *British Tattoo Art Revealed* received a total of £150k from the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Sir John Fisher Foundation, Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund. (Because this funding went directly to the exhibiting institutions, it does not appear on our REF4b.) Other successes from knowledge-exchange partnerships with industry include Shukaitis's involvement, as a named researcher, in the 2018–2020 programme entitled South East Creative, Cultural and Digital Support [SECCADS], which received £2.6m from the European Regional Development Fund to offer grants to small businesses in South East England's creative, cultural and digital sectors. A further example of practice-based, industry-facing research to receive funding is a project that analyses the role of sound in virtual exhibits, for which Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco and Tymkiw serve as Co-Investigators. In AY 2019–20, this project received £40k in funding, which is administered by the University's Enterprise Project Fund and based on money from Research England's Higher Education Innovation Fund. (Since this funding largely covers a postdoc research assistant based in our School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering, the income appears in that area's income figures.). Findings from this project have provided the basis for an application currently in preparation for a £400k Leverhulme Project Grant that, if successful, would support a project concerning the use of individualised, dynamically changing soundscapes to enhance audience engagement in virtual exhibits.

Alongside the new streams of funding that we pursued as part of our new income-generation strategy, we also have had success securing fellowships to support monographs, a more traditional form of research output to which we remain firmly committed. These successes include Presciutti's one-year Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies ($50k), which she used to work on her book *The Saint as Social Worker: Visual Hagiography and Social Problems in Renaissance Italy* (currently under review); Ruiz-Gómez's one-term Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship (£21k), which supported her book *The Scientific Artworks of Doctor Jean-Martin Charcot and the Salpetriere School* (also under review); Pearson's Paul Mellon Rome Fellowship (£10k), which he used to work on an upcoming monograph about Leon Battista Alberti; and Lodder's Paul Mellon Centre Publication Grant (£7k), to support research for his book-in-progress *Tattoo: An Art History*.

Scholarly infrastructure

ESCALA is a major art resource on campus that features one of the largest collections of Latin American art in Europe (800 artworks plus substantial archival materials). All the artworks are fully digitised and searchable online, and the collection is widely used for research by professional academics (both from the University and beyond), curators and postgraduate students. Besides organising and hosting symposia, object-based learning sessions and other research-related

events, ESCALA frequently enlists staff and doctoral students to curate exhibitions and to write for catalogues and other interpretative materials.

Another valuable on-campus resource is the **University of Essex Art Collection**. Founded in 1964 thanks to a generous donation from Jim Ede of Kettle's Yard fame, the Art Collection contains works by modern British artists, such as Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Alfred Wallis and Christopher Wood. A major addition to the Art Collection during the current REF period came from the **Priseman Seabrook collection**, a long-term loan finalised in 2019 that encompasses 100 prints, drawings and watercolours by key figures of British modern and contemporary art, such as Francis Bacon, Peter Blake, Simon Carter, Alan Davie, Tracey Emin, Lucian Freud, Elisabeth Frink, Eric Gill, David Hockney, Ben Johnson, Paul Nash, John Piper, Eric Ravilious, Colin Self and Graham Sutherland. In addition to providing an excellent teaching resource, this collection offers a unique opportunity to both students and staff to carry out research-led exhibitions and other research projects about Collection artworks.

A further major research resource is the **Albert Sloman Library** [ASL]. In 2017, we transferred roughly 4,000 volumes from a separate Art History Library to the ASL in order to centralise our resources, make bibliographic information fully searchable online and allow staff and students access to these volumes 24/7 during term time. The ASL currently has 1.1m books and pamphlets, 41k journals and over 100 databases, with total Art History-related holdings comprising roughly 32k books and printed items as well as several thousand journals. Among its holdings, ASL's Special Collections are of considerable benefit to our research community. Although not exclusively focused on art, Special Collections include 34,200 volumes and 547m of archives, including political posters (e.g., from US elections, the British suffragette movement), major first edition books, papers from figures involved in historically important events (e.g., the censorship of 'obscene' books in libraries), as well as significant materials on William Blake, Sigmund Freud and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. Since the last REF period, the ASL has undertaken a large initiative to catalogue the materials in Special Collections so that researchers from both this University and others may search the materials online in order to facilitate their research.

The collection-based research opportunities just described have been supplemented through the exhibitions and programming of our on-campus gallery, Art Exchange. While **Art Exchange** does not have a permanent collection, it hosts a range of research-based exhibitions. These exhibitions have often been curated by staff members with the close involvement of students. For instance, Lodder organised the 2018 exhibition *Skin Digging* based on his research about the history of tattooing, and Blackmore curated three exhibitions that built on her work about ecology (*Gone to Ground*, 2019; *Alejandro Jaime: Aggregate Flows*, 2019; and *Carolina Caycedo: When Walls Become Rivers*, 2020). A further platform for research-based dialogue has come from the various artist residencies that Art Exchange has organised and hosted, with financial support from organisations that include the Arts Council, Big Lottery and the Elephant Trust. Consistent with our wider interest in practice-based research, these residencies have enabled staff to directly collaborate with artists on research-based art projects (e.g., Blackmore on Jaime's *Aggregate Flows*). Additionally, the artist residencies have become a nodal point for interdisciplinary conversations across the University's different Departments and Schools, as evidenced by the involvement of academic staff from the School of Life Sciences and Departments of Economics and Sociology as advisers to such projects.

Organisational infrastructure

Core to Essex Art History's research environment is our lecture series that features presentations of research-in-progress - largely from visiting speakers, but also from staff members. Since Philosophy and Art History's merger in the previous REF cycle, we alternate disciplines weekly between Philosophy and Art History, as noted earlier. The interdisciplinary nature of our lecture series provides an opportunity for colleagues to learn about work that straddles the two fields: for example, in lectures from this REF cycle given by Susanna Berger, Juliane Rebentisch, and Oliver O'Donnell. On an informal level, such lectures have prompted lively intellectual discussions, both during and after question-and-answer sessions. Perhaps just as importantly, however, the lecture

series has also spurred researchers from the two disciplines (both within and without the University of Essex) to form smaller working groups to discuss collaborations around topics of mutual interest: for instance, the phenomenology of aesthetic experience, the relationship between politics and aesthetics, and the epistemology and aesthetics of self-representation. Additionally, starting in 2015, we followed the lead of our Philosophy colleagues by introducing an annual 'mini-course', a series of lectures and discussions conducted over 2–3 days with a world-renowned scholar, such as Whitney Davis (2015), Boris Groys (2017) and Anthony Vidler (2019). This mini-course is attended primarily by staff members and PhD students and operates alongside a similar course hosted by Philosophy; however, in each course we specifically select speakers and topics relevant to scholars working in both disciplines, encouraging networking and the exchange of ideas.

Facilities

All research-active staff members have their own office spaces equipped with regularly updated PCs/laptops. Given that several of our colleagues heavily use digital technologies in their research, we have also invested in the technologies they require: for instance, a c. £50k hand-held LASER scanner for collecting data to create 3D replicas of artworks and sites of cultural heritage; and an Igloo projection dome for 360-degree immersive VR projection, which is housed in the University's newly inaugurated £12m Innovation Centre [IC], where staff members can access this and other digital technologies to pursue their research and/or collaborate on research projects with digital, cultural and creative firms located in the building. (As but one example of our close ties with the IC, Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco has displayed several 3D models from her research in the Igloo projection dome, and Tymkiw has organised brainstorming events that bring together research-active staff and members of the IC's start-up group.) To facilitate on-campus research activities by our PGR community, the School has a suite of offices equipped with roughly 20 desks, which students may reserve on a termly or annual basis. PGR students may further access a range of facilities for conducting, presenting and sharing research, including meeting rooms, seminar facilities and the School common room for more informal discussions.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Our researchers actively contribute to collaborations, networks and partnerships within and beyond the academic world. Their **involvement with museums and galleries** is particularly robust, as demonstrated by the various exhibitions that colleagues have curated and that draw on their research expertise. One key example is *Disobedient Objects*, a 2014–16 touring exhibition co-curated by Grindon that examined how political activism has fuelled a wealth of design ingenuity in movements for social change from the late 1970s until today. During its initial stop at the V&A, *Disobedient Objects* counted among the museum's best attended shows since 1946, with 417,000 visitors; a further 40,000 visitors attended the exhibition when it travelled to the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Australia. Another major example of our work with museums includes Lodder's *British Tattoo Art Revealed*, a 2017–21 touring exhibition that reached over 100,000 visitors in its first year alone. This exhibition, which provided the first major historical survey of art and artefacts documenting the history of tattooing in Britain, began at the National Maritime Museum Falmouth and is travelling to seven other venues until 2021. It has also managed to reach new audiences during the pandemic thanks to a virtual exhibition tour on the BBC's iplayer, which went live in early June 2020 and has been viewed over 17,000 times.

Further examples of exhibition collaborations are the 'Museum of Cruel Designs' that Grindon curated at Banksy's 2015 *Dismaland* exhibition in Weston-super-Mare, which drew 150,000 visitors; the 'Museum of the Occupation' (2017–), also curated by Grindon, which is part of another Banksy project entitled *The Walled-Off Hotel* in Bethlehem that raises critical awareness of the West Bank barrier; and Shukaitis's 2016–17 exhibition *Gee Vaucher: Introspective*, the UK's first major institutional show of Vaucher's work, which took place at Firstsite and reached over 31,000 visitors. A number of these curatorial activities have contributed to stimulating local economies, as evidenced by the estimated £20m in additional revenue that *Dismaland* brought to the economy of Weston-super-Mare. Grindon and Lodder have also made significant non-financial contributions to society through their curatorial efforts: for example, by heightening awareness of NGO

organisations working in Palestine (in Grindon's case), or by raising public awareness of British tattoo traditions in the work of contemporary tattoo artists (in Lodder's case). To participate in wider public conversations about the political stakes of curation in relation to the above-mentioned exhibitions and other contemporary shows, Grindon, Lodder, Tymkiw and other staff members have authored articles or have given interviews for a range of high-quality publications that reach general audiences, including the BBC, *The Conversation*, *The Economist*, *Le Monde*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Staff members have also collaborated with museums, galleries and sites of cultural heritage in other ways. Ruiz-Gómez, for instance, served as a consultant to the Wellcome Collection's 2016–17 exhibition *Bedlam: The Asylum and Beyond* and contributed an essay to a catalogue for an upcoming Rodin exhibition at the Tate, while Shukaitis is currently serving as a consultant for the Museo Reina Sofia's 2022 exhibition *Machinations*, about the political imagination. A further engagement with museums is demonstrated by Lodder's role as host of the art history television series *The Art of Museums* (2018–), which is produced by Arte/ZDF/ORF and has so far been distributed in countries including Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal and Taiwan. Through this award-winning series, Lodder has brought art historical rigour to a series that sheds light on masterpieces from eight leading museums from around the world: the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (US), Musée d'Orsay (France), Uffizi Gallery (Italy), Museo del Prado (Spain), Rijksmuseum (Netherlands), Nationalgalerie (Germany), Kunsthistorisches Museum (Austria) and Munch Museum (Norway).

Additional collaborations with museums and sites of cultural heritage have involved the use of digital technologies to create and share research. Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco, for instance, has an on-going collaboration with the University of Cambridge and the Virtual Experience Company that uses a VR heritage platform (http://ksarsaid.net/) to foster critical thinking about history and heritage in conflict-affected countries. Originally focused on cultural heritage in Tunis, this project has now expanded to Lebanon, in collaboration with the British Council and the Lebanese American University. Another project that involved digital tools was a series of eye-tracking experiments that Tymkiw and a psychology colleague (Tom Foulsham) conducted at the V&A, ESCALA and Firstsite to study how the display of artworks and artefacts shape the viewing and circulation patterns of spectators with different levels of mobility (e.g., wheelchair and non-wheelchair users). The results of these eye-tracking experiments, a synopsis of which appeared in a 2020 *Leonardo* article, have provided the basis for a more sustained investigation into the relationship between ableism and normative spectatorship.

Beyond our work with museums and galleries, colleagues have forged collaborations, networks and partnerships in ways that have supported growth in the **digital, cultural and creative [DCC] sectors**. For example, in his 0.2 FTE role as academic lead for the University's digital, cultural and creative initiatives, Tymkiw serves on the steering group of the South East Creative, Cultural and Digital Support programme and is an advisory board member for Creative Colchester Partnership, a group that includes Colchester-area creative businesses, arts organisations and the University and develops initiatives to grow the city's creative, cultural and digital economy. Tymkiw and Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco have also extended our DCC-related efforts through their respective roles as academic lead and research fellow for the Digital Humanities strand of Eastern Arc, which has resulted in numerous research-focused workshops, training sessions and talks about the history of visual culture.

Our staff members have equally made contributions to the wider Art History research environment. For instance, during this REF cycle, we have given more than 100 **keynotes and invited lectures**, both in the UK and abroad (e.g., Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia). A few of the host institutions for such keynotes and invited talks have included the Dutch Art Institute (Netherlands); Hamburger Bahnhof—Museum für Gegenwart—Berlin (Germany); Kansai University (Japan); Kunsthal Aarhus (Denmark); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (US); M+ Museum (Hong Kong); Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (Poland); Princeton University (US); Queens Museum (US); Sookmyung Women's University (South Korea); Universidade Anhembi Morumbi (Brazil); University of Cologne (Germany): and University of Leuven (Belgium). We have also organised

more than 120 **conferences, conference sessions and symposia** in the UK and overseas at venues that include the Association for Art History (4 sessions; UK); the Latin American Studies Association (4 sessions; Spain, Peru, US); the Singapore Institute of Technology; and the V&A (UK).

We have also been extremely active in providing peer reviews for colleagues at other institutions. For instance, we have reviewed journal manuscripts for **19 academic journals**, including: *Art History*, *Asia Pacific Review*, *Body & Society*, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, *Current Anthropology*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *Fascism: Journal of Contemporary Fascist Studies*, *History of Photography*, *Human Relations*, *Journal of Archaeological Science Reports*, *Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage*, *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, *Journal of Design History*, *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, *Journal of Romance Studies*, *Journal of Urban History*, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, *Leonardo and Sculpture Journal*; book manuscripts for **academic presses** including: Bloomsbury, Brill, Cambridge UP, Manchester UP, Pluto Press and Routledge; and grant applications for funding bodies such as the AHRC, the European Science Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research and the Villa I Tatti Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies. Additional contributions to the research base include serving as **external supervisors** or **external examiners** for PhDs at other institutions (e.g., at Birkbeck, Goldsmiths, Konstfack, Sheffield Hallam, University of Bath, University of Brighton, University of Copenhagen, University of Kent, University of Loughborough, University of Leicester, University of Plymouth, University of Sydney). We have made further contributions by serving as **editors or co-editors for anthologies**. Examples of our edited volumes from the current REF period include *Revival: Memories, Identities, Utopias* (2015, Lodder et al.), *Space, Place and Motion: Locating Confraternities in the Late Medieval and Early Modern City* (2017, Presciutti), *Downward Spiral: El Heliocoide's Descent from Mall to Prison* (2018, Blackmore et al.); *Authenticity and Cultural Heritage in the Age of 3D Digital Reproductions* (2018, Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco et al.) and *Natura: Environmental Aesthetics after Landscape* (2018, Blackmore et al.). Staff also serve as **editors of book series**, including Blackmore, who is co-editor of Peter Lang's new Latin American Environment Humanities book series, and Shukaitis, who is editor of Minor Compositions for Autonomedia, an open publication series with 18 titles since 2015 and an average of 8,000 downloads per project.

Taken as a whole, the non-exhaustive list of activities described in this section reflects our commitment to undertaking professional activities that advance not only our own research environment but also the scholarly field(s) and non-academic communities in which we work.