

## **Live Archive Projects in a Design History Learning Setting**

### **Abstract**

This paper outlines a methodology for using uncatalogued archive material in a design history learning setting. The study references concepts such as experiential learning<sup>1</sup> and object-based or object-centred learning<sup>2</sup> and draws on student reports and interviews to explore the potency of the learning experience. Using a specific case study addressing archives relating to Basic Design pedagogy at the Central School of Arts and Crafts it summarises the practicalities of enabling students to work with uncatalogued archive material and explores the pedagogic frameworks required to engage with curatorial practices in this context. Based on the case, the article recommends a flexible approach to archive material that has not yet been subject to formal archiving processes, viewing this a time when a rich range of narratives can be uncovered through collaborative practice. It also references the histories of design history and argues for more attention to be paid to the impact of design pedagogies on the creative and production processes. While the contents of the paper are relevant to archival practice beyond the UK it is worth noting that the perspectives and stories considered in the paper are UK-centred.

### **Keywords**

Design education, design history, material culture studies, art education, Basic Design, archives.

### **Introduction**

For many archivists the thought of putting uncatalogued archive material to work in student-led projects or other activist settings may feel like a considerable challenge to accepted professional codes of practice. They might cite the risks of material becoming disordered or damaged, the potential provision of sub-standard catalogue records or the risks inherent in allowing untrained staff to handle archive material. Many archives simply place a complete embargo on accessing uncatalogued material (at least until it has been box listed) and in many cases the timescales for addressing documentation backlogs can stretch to several years.

Given the extraordinary amount of archive material being generated today a number of scholars such as Terry Cook<sup>3</sup> and John Ridener<sup>4</sup> have argued for a transformation of archival theory to better reflect the realities of the record in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Other archival practitioner, such as Hannah Grout<sup>5</sup>, have called for a more inclusive practice that seeks to ensure the cultural biases and the structural inequalities of society are not reflected in

archival activities (for example through the cataloguing of collections by a predominantly white body of professional staff). This paper argues that archives which have educational or public engagement potential should not be locked away pending cataloguing. Rather, material that is yet to undergo formal processing might be put to work (albeit under close professional supervision) in a way which offers opportunities for more collaborative meaning-making<sup>6</sup> and the inclusion of multiple perspectives in curatorial processes. This is not to suggest a challenge to accepted conventions for conservation or storage, or to international cataloguing standards such as ISADG. Rather it explores the opportunities offered by working with archive material before it has been moulded by institutional or professional concerns.

There are a number of ways uncatalogued archives can be mobilised in this context, from a presence in activist settings, such as those offered by MayDay Rooms in London's Fleet Street, to community cataloguing projects, such as the weekly drop-in sessions offered by the Southbank Centre Archive. University archives are also well placed to frame interventions in the archive because of their close links with teaching programmes, and this paper will present a case study of an Archive Project, run annually by the Central Saint Martins Museum & Study Collection in collaboration with the College's MA in Culture, Criticism and Curation, where students are supported to activate uncatalogued archival material through communal cataloguing, wider research and public exhibitions. The Archive Project has been running for a number of years and this paper will offer a general introduction to that work. However, for the purposes of illustration the paper will zoom in on an iteration of the project based on archival documents generated during the 1950s and 1960s when the Central School of Arts and Crafts was experimenting with the teaching of Basic Design under the Principal William Johnstone.

In focussing on a case study that illustrates the importance of the Basic Design movement on the wider design world, this paper draws on the fields of design history and design pedagogy and suggests that scholars might more widely acknowledge that how designers are taught plays out in what they make or produce. While design history has expanded in more recent decades to accommodate influences beyond a canon of key artists and makers there has only been minimal consideration of the place of design pedagogy in the history of design. This paper will argue for the importance of the impact of teaching methods on design processes and our understanding of design as it emerges over time.

## **Background**

In order to frame the case study it is useful to present here some information about the history of the Central Saint Martins Museum & Study Collection and its development of practices that support current teaching and learning at University of the Arts London. Central Saint Martins is one of the six colleges that comprise the University and its Museum & Study Collection is an art and design teaching collection which seeks to tell the story of the College's rich history through objects and archives. The collection includes 25,000 objects, 5,000 books and journals and over 100 linear metres of archive material relating to

Central Saint Martins and its forerunners the Central School of Arts and Crafts and St. Martins School of Art. While both schools taught design subjects (St. Martins taught fashion design and graphic design alongside fine art) it is the Central School which is best known for its impact on the wider design world.

Set up in 1896 by the London County Council, which was seeking a new way of delivering art education in the capital, the Central School of Arts and Crafts was forged under the leadership of its first principal William Richard Lethaby. An arts and crafts architect and education reformer, Lethaby's aim was to set up a school where design subjects (such as weaving, silver smithing, furniture design or lettering design) would be taught alongside painting and sculpture and seen as equal in status to the fine arts. Lethaby was also interested in internationalism, interdisciplinarity and building strong links with industry. Stuart McDonald<sup>7</sup> argues that the Central School soon became the largest centre for craft education in Britain, while Sylvia Backemeyer<sup>8</sup> notes that throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century students of the school were heavily featured in exhibitions such as the British Art and Industry exhibition in 1935, Britain Can Make it in 1946 and the Festival of Britain in 1951.

Examples of much of this work is retained by the Museum & Study Collection, including lettering designs by Edward Johnston and Eric Gill, moquettes by Enid Marx, textiles by Mary Harper and ceramics by Catherine Pleydell Bouverie. Primarily conceived and resourced as a museum (Accredited in 2001) for art and design objects the Museum & Study Collection was initially reluctant to take on the additional role of acting as the College archive. However, in 2011, following a move from the Southampton Row and Charing Cross Road campuses, both of which had been occupied in excess of a century, to a new single site in Kings Cross, Museum staff made a proactive decision to save material such as course handbooks, correspondence, lesson plans, exam cards and anything else that might represent the College's history. The resulting archive dates back more than 100 years and also includes student records, minute books, photographs, degree show catalogues and prospectuses.

As an organisation with a limited number of associated staff, and one which is expected to actively support teaching and learning in a university context, the Museum & Study Collection has had to think creatively about how to repurpose or reposition the objects in our care as active pedagogic resources, as well as how it might address curatorial challenges such as the bulk acquisition of archive material. By the time the Museum acquired the College archive headway was already being made in exploring the potential for museum objects in a Higher Education setting with the introduction of object-based learning<sup>9</sup> as a pedagogic discipline. This was marked by a move away from traditional, discipline specific show-and-tell sessions to deeper haptic engagements<sup>10</sup> with objects and 'slow looking' sessions here objects were interrogated for materials, construction and historical context and used as a focal point for exploring student's own disciplinary lenses or habituated responses<sup>11</sup>.

A number of methodologies have been used to frame these sessions including Rose's visual analysis of images<sup>12</sup>, Proun's three step process for analysing material culture<sup>13</sup> and Hooper Greenhill's exploration of individual and collaborative meaning making<sup>14</sup>. The provision of worksheets facilitates students in their navigation of museum objects, which

usually takes place in small groups to encourage discussion and debate. Students are encouraged to spend at least half an hour working with their object, offering a rare opportunity for considered engagement in a fast-paced digital world. A more detailed outline of how these workshops are structured can be found in Willcocks and Barton's paper on *Object-based Self-enquiry*<sup>15</sup>. Extensive research via structured observations, student focus groups and questionnaires revealed that students attending these sessions were using a broad range of transferrable skills, including communication, analysis, research, team-working and observation. All of these skills might be evidenced while a group of three or four students uses a methodological framework to interrogate an object or group of objects and shares their findings with the wider class. Students also reported that object-based learning was a useful tool for addressing troublesome knowledge and would lead to 'a deeper and more memorable learning experience'<sup>16</sup>.

As a result of this research, object-based learning became increasingly embedded in the curriculum across the university. However, it was less clear how a large body of uncatalogued archive might usefully be put to work. The answer first suggested itself in 2010 through a project run in conjunction with the Central Saint Martins BA (Hons) Fine Art Course. *In Exchange*, as the project came to be called, worked with 45 boxes of uncatalogued archive material, rescued from the Charing Cross Road building that once housed St. Martins School of Art. The material formed the basis of a six week exhibition in the College's Lethaby Gallery, where it was publicly assessed and mapped by staff and students and used to prompt a live programme of talks, panel discussions and film screenings, all of which took place in the gallery alongside the archive, often involving those who had been either staff or students at St. Martins in the 1960s and 1970s.

The material was not catalogued as part of this process, but the project did result in general box listings which gave a reasonable idea of the extent and scope of the archive. This knowledge and understanding, and the profile raising nature of the exhibition, events programme and web presence, allowed the Museum & Study Collection to campaign for resources to manage the archive longer term and alerted researchers to its presence, none of which would have happened were the archive to have been locked down pending cataloguing (as is so often the case in more traditional archive services). The project also created a sense of excitement around the archive holdings, which came to life as they were encountered in the gallery setting by those with lived experience of the events described in the body of documents.

At the same time *In Exchange* was being developed Dr Alison Green (an art historian and Senior Lecturer at Central Saint Martins) was writing the outline for a new broad-ranging course – an MA in Culture, Criticism and Curation which blended practical work with intellectual enquiry. In light of the increased interest in archives and their use in artistic and cultural practices around the turn of the century<sup>17</sup>, the course would draw heavily on engagements with archives. The Museum & Study Collection was invited to contribute to the development of the course curriculum, and the rudiments of the *In Exchange* were taken as a starting point for the development of a module called the Archive Project.

The Archive Project has been running since 2013 and is scheduled at the start of the academic year, just after the students have arrived. As such, it is intended to be an intensive project offering opportunities for students to get to know and trust one another, as well as a crash course in the kind of practical and critical learning that is expected from the course<sup>18</sup>. The project brief asks the students to 'model and test the curatorial practice of working as a group with a given collection on an institutional project', paving the way for a critique of institutional power dynamics and structural inequalities. The project begins with an introduction to group work, with follow up sessions on object handling, archival description, cataloguing, curatorial practice and research. These sessions are led by professional museum and archive staff and are there to ensure the safety of the material as well as to prepare the students for the often frustrating realities of archival research. In order to develop the student's ability to critically assess the quality of their own work against some kind of bench mark<sup>19</sup> they are exposed to a wide variety of teaching examples where archives have been mobilised in exhibition displays.

Once they have proven capabilities around safe object handling and archival description the students are introduced to their uncatalogued archive material and work together as a group to make sense of it and provide individual catalogue records in line with the Spectrum and ISADG standards. This part of the process is closely supervised by professional archivists and/or curatorial staff to ensure the safety of the material and the quality of the catalogue records, and enables both staff and students to gain an in-depth understanding of the archive. Once the material has been catalogued the students move on to research the archive material, its background and context, and develop a concept for exhibition in one of the College window galleries. Students are encouraged to look beyond the headline concepts for more complex and challenging themes and a small budget is provided for the realisation of exhibition and accompanying events programme.

Seminars delivered through the Archive Project address the power dynamics of institutions and archives, the ethical considerations of historical research and the need to read around archive material and look for what is missing or unsaid. At the same time, the wider MA Culture, Criticism and Curation teaching programme includes a seminars on the fetishisation of the archive by historians and on cultural diversity and queer culture. Reading lists reference the colonial in relation to the archive<sup>20</sup>, archival exclusion<sup>21</sup>, cultural rights<sup>22</sup> and the history of sexuality<sup>23</sup>. These reference points help students (roughly half of whom will be from outside the EU) to frame their research with current critical and theoretical perspectives, many of which will chime with personally resonant narratives.

### *Pedagogic framing of the Archive Project*

There is a growing hunger in Higher Education for learning experiences that bridge the gap between the academy and the professional realm – a kind of experiential learning<sup>24</sup> that can translate the abstract ideas of academia into something concrete and meaningful for a wide range of learners. The Archive Project was designed to be an authentic learning experience, through which the students could familiarise themselves with the processes involved in professional archival and curatorial practices. Stein et al<sup>25</sup> explore what is meant by an authentic learning experience and conclude that such activities should be like those

undertaken by practicing communities in the 'world beyond the learning institution' and feel 'personally real'. For the Archive Project this is achieved through the adoption of roles that mirror those of the archivist, researcher, curator, cultural critic, event organiser and press officer, mimicking the kind of team that might be utilised in the real world to curate, hang and publicise an exhibition and associated events programme. The trust vested in the students in terms of working with uncatalogued archive material, autonomously developing an interpretation of it, and staging a public event also makes for an immediate and high stakes learning experience.

In order to make the project more manageable the students are divided into groups of 7 or 8. For many of the students taking part in the Archive Project, this will be their first experience of group work. Working collaboratively in small groups can have significant educational benefit, but group work also creates an element of risk and complexity that requires careful management. Cartney and Rouse<sup>26</sup> note that for students, working in groups 'offers valuable opportunities for development, interpersonal growth and support'. However, they also caution that the experience of being in a group can be 'powerfully emotionally charged both positively and negatively.' Hand in hand with a sense of belonging and support may come anxieties about performance, the domination of a group by more self-confident students or a sense of dissatisfaction at how much other group members are prepared to or able to contribute.

There are a number of ways this issue can be addressed. The Archive Project begins with a tutorial on group work which draws on examples of collaborative practices or collectivity from education, critical fine art and curating practices and business and management<sup>27</sup>. The project is also assessed using holistic assessment, a complex method of assessing real world learning outcomes where teaching staff are required respond to the student's work as a whole before mapping the quality of the work onto a notional grade scale<sup>28</sup>. While not without its problems (holistic assessment has been accused of being an inexact science) it does allow for the recognition of personal challenges and growth and an array of skills from the integration of complex knowledge, through problem solving to innovation and original thinking. Holistic assessment can also help address what Gourlay<sup>29</sup> describes as the 'tyranny of participation' – an emphasis, even insistence, in the western education system that the student is an active, collaborative learner.

More nuanced assessment methods can recognise less public forms of scholarly activity such as writing or silent contemplation. In this instance students are assessed on a combination of research, oral presentations, written reports and the final exhibition outcome and associated events programme. An element of peer review within the reports can reveal the depth of commitment from less obviously performative students. The reports also reveal a great deal about the student learning experiences. They talk of 'communication', 'listening' and 'compromise'. They also discuss the 'physicality of the experience' and the 'active element of problem solving'. As one student would have it: 'As we all come from various backgrounds and we all have different personal interests, we learnt how to share our skills and trust each other.'

## Basic Design Archive Project

In order to illustrate both the learning opportunities offered by the Archive Project and the potential for significant new research to emerge, this article will focus on an iteration of the project relating to the teaching of Basic Design at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. The case study will show that providing the students with an opportunity to work with uncatalogued archive material led to the uncovering of hidden or obscured histories and expanded considerably our understanding of how Basic Design impacted the professional practice of those who taught or studied at the Central School. In consequence the case study provides evidence in support of the central arguments of this paper; namely that uncatalogued archive material should be more widely mobilised in learning, community or activist settings and that the field of the history of design might more widely acknowledge the impact of design teaching and design pedagogy on design practices.

Initially the material used as a basis for the Archive Project was drawn entirely from the Central Saint Martins Museum & Study Collection, but in recent years uncatalogued material has been borrowed from a variety of other University archives and external collections. While MA Culture, Criticism and Curation is not explicitly a design history course, the archives interrogated by students have included a significant number of design archives, including the Central Saint Martins Central Lettering Record, the archive of the graphic and lettering designer Charles Pickering, the Teal Triggs graphic design archive and the object archive of the architect David Usborne.

The Basic Design Archive Project was born from a box of archive material donated to the Museum & Study Collection by Charlotte Cowlshaw, Harriet Walters and Chloe Walters. The box contained documents belonging to their late father Nigel Walters, who taught furniture design at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in the 1950s, and to his colleague, William Johnstone, who was Principal of the School from 1947 - 1960. As always, the uncatalogued archive material was seen as a jumping off point for the curatorial and research element of the project<sup>30</sup> and while the archive offered up multiple possibilities the students unanimously settled on Basic Design as their chosen lens through which to interrogate the archive.

According to Elena Crippa and Beth Williamson<sup>31</sup> Basic Design emerged in the art school of 1950s Britain in an attempt to create a formalised system of knowledge based on an intuitive approach to teaching art. The principals of Basic Design were rooted in the German Bauhaus and focussed the student's attention on the manipulation and understanding of materials. William Johnstone, a painter and radical pedagogue with a keen interest in what he called 'child art', would go on to be one of the most influential educators in the field of Basic Design. He developed a system of education built on Bauhaus principals and drawing on the work of William Richard Lethaby, who had embraced mass production, encouraged his teaching staff to have an active creative profession and supported the notion of art for industry<sup>32</sup>. In many ways, Lethaby's pedagogic preoccupations can be seen to have paved the way for Johnstone's 're-education in seeing'.<sup>33</sup>

Under Johnstone, proponents of Basic Design at the Central School effectively abandoned representation and figuration, turning instead to abstract shapes, colour, form, line, geometry and a focus on materials. Their aim was to destabilise habitual practices and recover some of the naivety of those whose creative processes had been destroyed by schooling. Another Basic Design scholar, Hester Westley<sup>34</sup> sees Johnstone as driven by the post war need to revive industry in Britain and to liberate art schools shackled to an antiquated arts and crafts curriculum, but he was also genuinely passionate about interdisciplinarity and the possibilities which opened up when students were entirely free to develop their ideas.

Johnstone was only one of a number of art and design educators developing Basic Design pedagogies, and until very recently what little had been written about Basic Design tended to focus on the other main players in the story – on Harry Thubron at Leeds College of Fine Art, Tom Hudson at Scarborough and Victor Passmore and Richard Hamilton in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Westley<sup>35</sup> describes William Johnstone, who was notably absent from McDonald's 1970 review of Basic Design in British art schools<sup>36</sup>, as largely 'under-appreciated and misunderstood' in the scholarship of Basic Design. Crippa, Williamson and Westley have sought to address this, but while a welcome addition to discourse on Basic Design, their assessment of Basic Design at the Central School has focussed on teaching staff who were artists of note such as Victor Passmore, Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi or Malcolm Turnbull. Very little has been written about designers teaching design and almost nothing has been written about the students who studied design subjects at the Central School during this period or how their education impacted their creative practice, leaving the way clear for new research to emerge.

Under the guidance of Museum staff, the MA Culture, Criticism and Curation students interrogated the wider Central School archives for information on staff who were teaching under Johnstone's tenure and students who attended design courses. They listened to the Museum's extensive oral history archive, which often provided a direct link back to the Central School of the 1940s and 1950s. As well as Passmore, Henderson, Paolozzi and Turnbull they uncovered a wealth of lesser known artists and designers influenced by the principals of Basic Design, including Alan Reynolds (printmaking), Morris Kestelman (theatre design), Edward Wright (typography and graphic design), Herbert Spencer (type and lettering design), Tom Fairs (stained glass) and Nigel Walters (furniture design). They were also able to identify a number of significant students who were studying at the time including the textile designers John Drummond, Ruth Harris and Robert Addington, the graphic designers Ken Garland and Derek Birdsall, the pioneering ceramicist Kenneth Clarke and the set designer Ralph Koltai.

The compilation of a body of students who were schooled under the tenets of Basic Design was followed by a visual analysis of their work by the MA students. They found that it was possible to trace the impact of Basic Design principles in the work of almost all of the teaching staff and students identified by the research project. Basic Design's fascination with form, structure, line, movement and geometry is reflected in the angularity of Koltai stage sets, Clarke's asymmetric tableware designs and the strong lines of Garland's graphics. Many of those who studied or worked at the Central School under Johnstone would go on to break with tradition, which was very much in the spirit of Johnstone's teaching practice



and his emphasis on work that was intuitive and unique. A fine example of this is Herbert Spencer's *Typographica* magazine, which would turn out to be more about breaking the rules of typography than any kind of manual for lettering design.

*Typographica*, which has not previously been discussed in terms of its connections to the Basic Design movement, also illustrates the close relationships enjoyed by students and teaching staff under William Johnstone, who encouraged collaborative engagement rather than top-down teaching practices. Many of Spencer's colleagues (including Edward Wright) and students (including Ken Garland and Derek Birdsall) were encouraged to explore new avenues of lettering design and contribute to the journal together. There was a great deal of movement between Central School departments, as Johnstone sought to dissolve traditional disciplinary boundaries and encourage a cross-fertilisation of skills and critical processes. A considerable number of those who studied at the Central School during Johnstone's tenure (including Ralph Koltai, Kenneth Clarke, Ruth Harris, Gordon Crook and Robert Addington) would also return as teaching staff, ensuring the legacy of Johnstone's pedagogic innovations.

The MA Culture, Criticism and Curation students were able to link this archival research with a review of material in the Museum & Study Collection where they found prints, textiles, ceramics and examples of student exam submissions from the 1950s, all of which spoke of the preoccupations of Basic design. In terms of developing an exhibition concept, they began to focus on the exhibition-making techniques of the Independent Group, a group of artists who first met in the winter of 1952 – 1953 to discuss a radically new view of British Art. Having discovered that the Independent Group was peopled with artists and designers with links to Basic Design and the Central School (including Eduardo Paolozzi, Richard Hamilton, Edward Wright and Nigel Henderson) they settled on Hamilton's seminal *Man, Machine and Motion* exhibition, staged at the ICA in 1955, as a model for their display. The resulting exhibition, entitled *Freedom from within the frame*, showed work from the Museum & Study Collection hung in and around a physical, frame-like structure in the Museum's Window Gallery, an homage to the Independent Group's many innovative exhibition designs.

It is worth noting that while the students undertaking the Archive Project are generally presented with material representing marginalised voices or hidden histories, the students involved in this project showed a tendency to default to recognisable figures in art history. They did display the work of lesser or little known artists and designers, and that work was explored in blog posts and podcasts. However the importance placed on Hamilton's structure as the framing device their final exhibition proved a neat metaphor for the continued influence of the canon. This chimes with Emma Gieben-Gamal's<sup>37</sup> assertion that while the development of diverse curricula has become a key issue for higher education 'the dominant paradigms in art, architecture and design history seem at times not to be shifting'.

That said, having work by key artists of the period (including Eduardo Paolozzi, Victor Passmore and Alan Reynolds) displayed alongside the work of textile designers Ruth Harris and John Drummond and stained glass window designer Tom Fairs underlined the richness that resulted from dissolving traditional disciplinary boundaries. The exhibition also proved a strong visual representation of how a fascination with colour, geometry, line and form

underpinned so much of the work made by staff and students of the Central School during the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, it served as a reminder that the fingerprints of Basic Design can still be seen on Central Saint Martins' teaching practices today, where interdisciplinarity and collaborative practice are seen as more important than ever.

### Impacts of the Basic Design Project

In a world where many archives find the acquisition of new material far outstrips their cataloguing resources, this kind of collaborative project offers considerable benefits. For the Museum & Study Collection it has meant the provision of collaboratively constructed catalogue records which include a wider range of voices. It has also enabled the Museum to conceptualise and understand its catalogued collections in new ways. The MA Culture, Criticism and Curation students made connections professional staff had yet to make and shed light on material that was undervalued and misunderstood. Together we uncovered a record of events that have been key in shaping teaching practice at Central Saint Martins right up to the present day.

The Basic Design Archive Project has also had a significant impact on recent collecting at the Museum & Study Collection. Since the project was undertaken the Museum has proactively sought to acquire archives and objects that speak to the pedagogic processes or student experiences of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. This has led to the acquisition of three major archives, two of which relate to students who studied in the School of Textiles under Eduardo Paolozzi and one of which relates to Alan Patchett, who taught in the School of Industrial Design. These new acquisitions illustrate how Johnstone's preoccupation with the principals of Basic Design helped build a pedagogic bridge between more traditional atelier based teaching practices of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and William Coldstream's educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, impacting the lives and professional practices of large numbers of designers along the way.

### Design Pedagogy and the History of Design

In suggesting such a strong and long lasting link between teaching practices and design processes or design production, the Basic Design Archive Project spoke to the little acknowledged impact of the field of design pedagogy on that of design history. It is useful here to consider what has been written so far and how that might expand or change. Stuart McDonald's *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*,<sup>38</sup> published in 1970, was an admirable initial assessment of the influence of art and design pedagogy, but subsequent scholarship has often been dominated by the production/consumption paradigm (initially proposed by John Walker<sup>39</sup> in 1989) and discussions of taste and aesthetics. Hazel Conway<sup>40</sup> argued in 1987 that that society, materials, processes, and the relationship of design history to other histories were also important. Later, Grace Lees-Maffei<sup>41</sup> would argue that the accepted model of 'production' and 'consumption' in design history should be widened to include 'mediation', or the mechanisms through which designed objects are communicated to consumers. This is a much needed expansion of the field, but one which still makes no mention of how designers are taught.

Victor Margolin<sup>42</sup> notes that in moving away from a history of design in which the principal actors are individual artists and makers we must also consider the impact of manufacturers and governments that have used design as an 'instrument of economic power'. Such a revised canon should surely include those who teach design and develop design curricula, particularly when (as is often the case) they are funded by government agencies who see design education as an instrument of economic and social development. As this paper has demonstrated, the design innovations achieved by the staff and students of the Central School of the 1940s and 1950s are testament to how teaching practice can have a long lasting influence on design processes and design language.

Indeed, the ongoing impact of historical changes in design pedagogy is immediately evident for the MA Culture, Criticism and Curation course considered in this case study.

Oppenheimer<sup>43</sup> notes that mandatory history of art or complementary studies for art and design students arose from the reforms implemented by William Coldstream in the 1960s. Coldstream's Reports of 1960 and 1970 paved the way for the introduction of the new 3 year National Diploma in Art and Design, which was replaced by the BA in Art and Design in 1974. He argued that if art and design subjects were to be awarded degree status their assessment would have to be based, at least to some extent, on a contextual, written element<sup>44</sup>. This led to the introduction of mandatory history classes for all art and design students in the 1960s and 1970s, representing a major educational reform for the design world and marking a move away from traditional courses based solely on professional practice.

In many respects the MA Culture, Criticism and Curation course has emerged from that expansion of the field, though the students undertaking the course tend to be designing experiences rather than things. The course combines practice and theory, very much in keeping with the Coldstream reforms, through fast-moving interdisciplinary projects involving curating, archiving, writing, publishing and even virtual reality, preparing students for blended careers that cut across the physical and digital worlds. However, the course has moved on considerably from earlier, more Western-centric notions of complementary studies, which were often feminist or Marxist in orientation. Penny Sparkes<sup>45</sup> observes the shift from the theoretical work on class, taste and consumption of the 1980s to a more recent focus on global, social and cultural shifts. MA Culture, Criticism and Curation's curriculum reflects this preoccupation, challenging dominant discourses and institutional power structures through a range of methodologies such as material culture, cultural studies and cultural activism. This echoes what Grace Lees-Maffei<sup>46</sup> describes as 'design history's promiscuity' in using methodologies from other disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography and linguistics; an interdisciplinary approach she believes has served the field of design history well.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has demonstrated how live student projects can work safely with uncatalogued archive material to co-produce catalogue records and curatorial outcomes from a wide range of perspectives. Putting material to work in this way can have significant benefits for museum and archive services from the development of more inclusive professional

practices to raising the profile of little known or understood archive material. Through the exploration of the Basic Design Archive Project this short study has drawn attention to a wider range of teaching staff and students who played a role in the story of Basic Design at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, linking research around archive material with visual analysis of designed objects to illustrate the impact of William Johnstone's teaching practices in the 1940s and 1950s. More broadly, the paper has shown the long lasting impact of art and design pedagogies on design processes and practices and made a case for greater recognition of design teaching practices on the history of design.

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