



**British Art Studies**

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# Contents

Editorial, British Art Studies Editorial Group

# Editorial

British Art Studies Editorial Group

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## **British art, international audiences**

The first issue of *British Art Studies* went live just over four months ago on 30 November 2015. In the short time since its publication nearly 10,000 readers around the world have accessed the journal. While the majority of the readership is located in Britain (56 percent), followed by the United States (27 percent), the journal has also been read in Italy, France, Australia, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, Poland, Colombia, and Russia—to name just some countries. The statistics suggest that an interest in British art and architecture is wider and more international than conventionally assumed.

This is a direct outcome of the free and open access policy we adopted for *BAS*, and reflects our hopes and intentions for the journal. At the same time, we are conscious that, so far, submissions to the journal have mostly come from researchers based in Britain and the United States; similarly, the materials and subjects addressed in these submissions have predominantly been located within the British Isles. We are pro-actively seeking to expand the field of British art for future issues, by representing a broader community of scholars and a wider realm of subject matter. Our summer issue on *British Sculpture Abroad*, which will be published in July, begins this process. It will include essays by individuals who do not identify themselves as “British art” experts, and who have come into contact with British sculpture through exhibitions outside Britain. Several of the essays will be translated into English from other languages. For future issues, we are keen to continue supporting the translation of research and enabling scholars in all parts of the world to publish and circulate their work on British art. *BAS* has been designed as an interactive and collaborative platform for research—this means we are open to suggestions about how we can encourage and support a diverse range of voices. These can be emailed to the editors at any time: [journal@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk](mailto:journal@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk)

## **New technologies**

As with the first issue of *BAS*, much of this issue’s content has been specifically created and designed to capitalize on the open-access digital platform. We are committed to developing new ways of publishing art-historical research, and Issue 2 contains a rich mixture of text, images, film, and audio. The metrics from Issue 1 are proving a useful indicator of how readers are using *BAS*. Content that incorporates film and audio has so far received the greatest number of hits. This encourages us in our belief that the digital platform offers opportunities for displaying and inflecting art-historical research in ways that are only just beginning to become apparent. This is not simply about creating visually rich content, but also about

developing new methodologies for exploring relationships between objects, data, and historical context, and for presenting and layering information in ways that yield new insights.

A major theme of Issue 2 is the relationship between art history and conservation. Our aim is to foster a dialogue between these two related, but often disconnected, modes of research. The digital platform allows us to integrate complex technical information with visual and critical analysis, in ways that bring the worlds of the art historian and the conservator closer together. For example, by using simple digital tools such as the overlaying of images, technical information can be understood in direct relation to the object. Conservation and technical research often appear in specialist publications; our aim is to resituate this work in an art-historical context and enable it to be accessed and understood by a wider audience. Some of the digital tools we have employed to display this information are in the public domain and freely available [as open source software](#). Looking further ahead, we have articles in development that focus on network-mapping and the visualizing of “big data” and other kinds of information, which we hope will contribute in new ways to the buoyant debates animating digital humanities scholarship.

Conservation and transformation are also the main themes of our “cover” in this issue. A series of moving images capture details from the conservation of Louis I. Kahn’s Yale Center for British Art in New Haven. The project will soon be completed and the museum reopens to the public on 11 May. The images mark a fleeting moment in the building’s life, in which it was emptied of art and stripped back to its architectural bones. The animated cover underlines our aim to use every part of the journal in ways we could not do in print.

Social media is an important tool for *BAS*, which we use to distribute and enrich our content. We use Twitter to promote connections between *BAS* and the activities of museums, galleries, and scholars. This has already yielded some exciting results, such as conversations with librarians about our pioneering use of DOIs (digital object identifiers) at paragraph level, and with archivists about issues of cataloguing and digital preservation. Katy Barrett’s “Look First” feature will climax with a “Twitter tour” and a digital map containing linked data on 25 June—the anniversary of the “Hogarth Act” (the Engraving Copyright Act of 1734). This is especially pertinent given our commitment to promoting fair use/fair dealings of images for art-historical research.

## Conversations continued

Conversation and collaboration remains central to *British Art Studies*. Following on from the lively debate generated by “There’s No Such Thing as British Art” in Issue 1, Patricia de Montfort and Robyne Calvert have convened a similarly important Conversation Piece titled “Still Invisible?”, to tackle issues around the presence and absence of works by women artists in galleries and museums. This conversation was generated by a [British Art Specialist Subject Network](#) event held at the Hunterian Art Gallery at the University of Glasgow in December 2015. As an online journal, *BAS* can respond quickly to ideas and debates as they unfold. As with Issue 1, this conversation will be released in “waves”, with new contributions added over the coming weeks. Since we are keen to encourage dialogue, not simply to publish views and opinions, the comments function allows readers to add their voices to the conversation. Our fourth wave, relating to the [Art + Feminism wiki edit-a-thon](#) that is to be held at the Glasgow Contemporary Art Centre on 25 May, will provide further opportunities for contributing to the debate and for raising the visibility of women artists and their work.

The topic of this Conversation Piece also links to themes raised by Giulia Smith’s article on Magda Cordell McHale and Catherine Spencer’s article on Prunella Clough in Issue 1. We are interested in developing themes from issue to issue and facilitating connections across the journal. Readers can use the “Search” function to roam content through keyword searching. Our data shows, not surprisingly, that this is how many readers arrive at content selection, either from a web search outside the journal or through keyword searches within it. We want to facilitate these non-linear ways of navigating the journal; there is no set route through each issue.

*BAS* is a collaboration in digital publishing between the Paul Mellon Centre and the Yale Center for British Art. The process of developing and designing the first two issues has arisen out of a series of conversations between our two research centres. An audio-visual essay on John Singleton Copley’s prints presenting a conversation between Jules Prown, founding director of the Yale Center for British Art, and Mark Hallett, the current Director of Studies at the Paul Mellon Centre, is a reflection of this ongoing intellectual exchange. *BAS* is still a relatively new venture: as we move forward, we hope that this transatlantic collaboration will continue to encourage the growth and scope of the field in exciting and experimental directions.

# Licensing

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