

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award in Art History: 'The International Context of the Art of St Ives 1948-60'

Department of History of Art, University of York, and Tate

The Department of History of Art at the University of York, in collaboration with Tate, invites applications for a PhD studentship fully-funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to commence in October 2011. The topic for the doctoral research project is 'The International Context of the Art of St Ives 1948-60'. The context for the research project is a forthcoming exhibition on the art of St Ives to be presented at Tate St Ives in 2014 and touring to the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima). It is curated by Dr Chris Stephens, Curator (Modern British Art) & Head of Displays, Tate Britain. It is intended that the PhD project will feed directly into the exhibition by establishing new connections and contexts for the art on display. The student will be able to help devise themes for particular room displays, take part in the selection of works, write for the catalogue and contribute to the interpretation of the exhibition more widely.

This collaborative PhD takes as its focus the encounters between British artists associated with the artists' colony in St Ives and the abstract art being produced internationally in the period 1948-60. This is the period when a new generation of artists shaped by the war emerged from the shadow of the masters of the pre-war period such as Picasso, Braque and Matisse, and before the dominance of American Abstract Expressionism was secured as the hegemonic movement of post-war painting. While there are many different types of encounter on which the research might focus, its essential ingredient is the empirical investigation of the direct experience of British artists of the work of their counterparts in mainland Europe or America, whether that be in the form of the actual presence in Britain of certain artists and their work, the availability of publications in which they were discussed or British artists' travels to particular sites of encounter, such as the Venice Biennale. The necessity of this study is to counteract the prevailing tendency to isolate the practice of St Ives artists within national boundaries and position it as derivative of American painting. The influence of American Abstract Expressionism and anxieties thereof are well established components in accounts of St Ives, not least because of the high-profile attacks on American critics' supposed nationalistic bias launched in the early 1970s by Patrick Heron, a St Ives protagonist. However, little research has ever been done on exactly what contact there was between St Ives artists and the work of the Americans, for example.

This is a fantastic opportunity to engage in research on one of the most important groups of artists of the last century in the context of Tate's world-class collection, gaining invaluable skills and experience in both the museum and academic fields. We are looking for a highly promising candidate who meets the AHRC's criteria for eligibility and can demonstrate the potential to develop advanced research skills. The studentship will be supervised by Dr. Michael White, Department of History of Art, University of York and Dr. Chris Stephens, Head of Displays, Tate Britain, and supported by the Research Department at Tate.

The successful candidate will meet the [AHRC's criteria for eligibility](#) and be able to demonstrate the potential to develop advanced research skills. The award pays tuition fees and a maintenance grant each year (£14,090 in 2011-12) for a maximum of three years of full-time doctoral study, subject to evidence of satisfactory progress.

Department of History of Art, University of York

The department has a strong research and teaching record and the most recently published Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has confirmed History of Art at York as one of the top-ranking research departments in the UK. The Department currently has 16 members of academic staff and

recruits around 100 undergraduate students per year to the Single Subject degree and the Combined Honours degrees with English and History. At graduate level the Department admits about 30 MA students a year, and has about 40 PhD students at any one time.

Tate

Tate is home to the national collection of British art and is one of the leading collections of modern and contemporary art in the world. Its mission is to increase public knowledge, understanding and appreciation of British art from the sixteenth century to today and of modern and contemporary international art. It has four galleries –Tate Britain, Tate Modern, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives – and houses a major specialist research library and an archive containing the papers of artists and art world figures. Tate Online is the UK's leading art website with over twenty million visitors a year, and hosts a dedicated Research section which includes the online scholarly journal *Tate Papers* and gives details of major research projects and current studentships.

Schedule of Research and Supervisory Arrangements

The student will spend much of the first year gathering material from Tate Library and Archive, as well as elsewhere in the UK, and determining the most successful case studies for the project. There is much scope for the project to focus on one or more of the St Ives artists and to place the emphasis on a particular site of encounter, such as the Venice Biennale. The thesis might focus on particular correspondence between individual artists' works or on the critical discourse of modernism and the art press. The precise number of days that the award holder will be expected to be at Tate and how these days will be grouped will be agreed at the beginning of the degree. It is estimated that over the three years of the studentship the candidate will spend 12 months, full-time equivalent at the Tate site. Dr Stephens will facilitate the necessary introductions and access to facilities there and develop the award holder's skills to complete the collaborative element of the project.

As the research develops, it will feed directly into the exhibition project and the student will gain direct experience of the process of exhibition development. He/she will be able to contribute to the selection of objects, advise on potential loans and then potentially determine the topic of certain rooms displays in the exhibition as well as accompanying interpretation materials such as wall text, captions and exhibition guides. The research is expected to produce material for the exhibition catalogue, primarily in the form of an essay. The student will be able to work closely with Tate staff on public events to accompany the exhibition, such as talks and conferences, some of which might be further disseminated through Tate's online journal *Tate Papers*.

While at Tate the award holder will have access to a work station within the Research Department, a personal IT account providing access to electronic resources relating to the collection that are not available to the public, access to Tate's research library as well as seminars and events organised by the Research Department.

Supervision meetings between the award holder and the York supervisor, Dr White, will take place regularly each term, with a minimum of three meetings per year with both supervisors. In addition, the award holder will have a Thesis Advisory Panel made up of the supervisor and at least one other member of staff.

The award holder will also be warmly encouraged to attend the research events organised by the department, by the departmental research schools in British Art, and by the University's Interdisciplinary Research Centre in Modern Studies and Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past.

Applying

For informal enquiries, please contact Dr Michael White, Department of History of Art, Vanbrugh College, University of York, Heslington, York YO10 5DD: michael.white@york.ac.uk: 01904 323344.

Applications should be made on paper and should include the following documents:

- A covering letter, stating why you are applying for this PhD and why you think your academic interests qualify you for this award
- A curriculum vitae
- A transcript of your qualifications to date (and anticipated results if still studying for an MA)
- A writing sample (e.g. MA essay or dissertation)
- Contact details for two referees

Please make it clear in your application that you are applying for a collaborative doctoral award with Tate, and send it to:

Susanna Frater
Postgraduate Administrator
Department of History of Art
University of York
Heslington
York
YO10 5DD

The closing date is **5.00pm on 17 June 2011**. We expect to interview candidates for this studentship in London at the beginning of July.