

Committee: Barbican Board	Date(s): 24 July 2019
Subject: Barbican Visual Arts Annual Report	Public
Report of: Louise Jeffreys, Artistic Director	For Information
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Summary

This report provides an overview of the Visual Arts department's current areas of activity and strategic focus. It outlines the impact of our activity over the past year, and points to key future strategic projects. The report is structured as follows:

1. Introduction

Progress on Strategic Change Objectives

2. Gender balance in 2018-19 financial year and into the future
3. Diversity in the 2018-19 exhibition programme
4. Multi-disciplinarity in the 2018-19 programme
5. Workforce of the future: diversification initiatives

Public and Critical Successes in the Past Year

6. Critical successes in past year
7. Conclusion

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

1. Introduction

Barbican Visual Arts is committed to supporting the Barbican Centre's strategic 'change' objectives, as well as playing a meaningful role in contributing to the Corporation of London's wider objectives. It is especially pertinent that the Gallery's exhibitions and artist commissions encourage a flourishing society and thriving economy. We believe that access to the best visual art and design is inspirational and enriching. Given the high profile of the Barbican's visual arts programme in the national and international Press, and the number of people who attend our shows, we play a significant role in promoting the Centre, the City and its values, while

crucially attracting a sizeable day-time audience, thereby supporting a vibrant atmosphere and supporting income generation from the shop and catering operations at the Barbican.

Our strategic focus in the visual arts team, in terms of Barbican change objectives, is to: narrow the gender gap and increase the presence of BAME and LGBTQI+ artists in our exhibition programming, to better reflect the communities that we serve; continue to foreground the interplay between a broad range of artistic practices; and to form partnerships with international institutions for income diversification, audience development and profile raising. The overall objective is to do all this without compromising the quality and ambition of our programme, which is a key contributor to the Barbican's mission to 'invest in the artists of today and tomorrow'. We aim to deliver ground-breaking curatorship resulting in an inspiring, timely and thoughtful visual arts offer that is consistently acclaimed and increasingly well attended by all sectors of society. Our ability to work with living artists as well as staging historical reassessments is crucial to our success.

It remains crucial to recruit wisely when curatorial vacancies arise, and retain high achieving staff for as long as possible. We are proud to have set up a traineeship with Iniva (Institute of International Visual Artists), now in its third year, to increase curatorial diversity.

In the 2018-19, financial year we presented a Main Gallery programme that was closely aligned to the Season's theme of Art and Change, and which was extremely ambitious and exceptionally well received. The photography exhibition *Another Kind of Life* was enjoyed by public and critics alike. Its timeliness, together with expert staging, led to a total audience figure in excess of the target. *Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing*, staged alongside an exhibition of the mid-career artist Vanessa Winship, was the first show to look at Lange's work in Britain. This exhibition hit its high target despite it being a sweltering summer during which the World Cup took place. While *Modern Couples* did not achieve the most ambitious target to date, it nonetheless achieved 92% of that target and garnered significant critical and popular acclaim. This was the largest and most complex loan show we have ever attempted, and we are pleased to say it has taken a spot in the top ten most popular exhibitions staged since the Art Gallery opened, with a total audience of 70,939.

Exhibition	Daily Attendance				Total paid attendance		Total attendance including comps & Private View
	Target		Actual		Target	Actual	
	Paid	Inc members/comps	Paid	Inc members/comps			
Another Kind of Life: photography on the margins	480	624	475	620	42,720	42,306	55,136
Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing / Vanessa Winship	535	696	514	657	39,055	37,549	47,982
Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde	540	696	494	652	57,780	52,948	69,877

Free access to the Art Gallery for Centre Members continues to be a driver for that stream of income generation. We saw considerable membership take-up during Dorothea Lange and Modern Couples in particular, with both exhibitions drawing 15 per cent of attendees from this group. Young and student visitor numbers remain consistently high – for Another Kind of Life they made up 24 per cent of attendees. More specifically, Young Barbican membership attendance increases have been seen post-Basquiat, reflected in the following figures:

- Basquiat: 6%
- Another Kind of Life: 8.69%
- Modern Couples: 9.31%

The forward programme is designed to continue the mix of shows that we are increasingly well known for; a mix of disciplines, telling new and compelling stories and working alongside emergent and leading architects and designers to stage them. Our aim is to attract loyal and new audiences, and to further consolidate our reputation in a fiercely competitive arena.

As the financial climate becomes tougher it is imperative that we put even greater energy and resources into our partnership programme, which has been running since 2014, as this programme has delivered considerable levels of income generation over the last five years. With more investment we have the potential to grow and consolidate our partnership network and to deliver increased levels of funding on a consistent basis in the future.

Progress on Strategic Change Objectives

2. Gender balance in 2018-2019 financial year and into the future

The gender balance in art history and in gallery representation generally is skewed in favour of the male artist. It is therefore beholden on us to take active steps to rectify the injustice of women artists being marginalised and under-represented. (“Invest in

the artists of today and tomorrow”; Objective B: Understand and Diversify ourselves and our audiences, to serve and reflect the capital).

In the financial year 2018-19 we staged four exhibitions in the Art Gallery (ticketed) and three commissions in the Curve. Out of the four main gallery shows, two (**Dorothea Lange** and **Vanessa Winship**; 22/06/18 - 02/09/18) were solo photographic exhibitions of the work of women artists, while ***Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde*** (10/10/18 - 27/01/19) was 50 per cent female. ***Modern Couples*** presented an entirely new counter argument about the hitherto under-acknowledged impact of relationships in modern art and provided a platform for many previously overlooked female artists, challenging the idea of a singular line of solitary, predominantly male geniuses. **The Curve commission** programme gives artists an opportunity to create new work and provides a platform for those who have yet to have a major solo exhibition in the UK. As a free space, it is accessible to all visitors to the Barbican. Since the beginning of 2018 we have showcased four female artists here: **Yto Barrada**, **Ann van den Broek** (choreographer), **Francis Upritchard** and **Daria Martin**.

At the time of writing, we have just opened the first **Lee Krasner** retrospective to be held in the UK since 1965. For years Krasner was largely overshadowed by her husband, the legendary artist Jackson Pollock. The majority of works in the exhibition have never been shown in the UK before, allowing many visitors the opportunity to experience Krasner’s work for the first time. In the autumn we open ***Into the Night: Cabarets and Clubs in Modern Art***, which highlights female artists as iconic performers, including Loie Fuller, Josephine Baker and Dada puppeteer Emmy Hennings. Too often these artists have been remembered primarily as muses or pin-ups, rather than modern artists in their own right whose performance art transgressed boundaries between high and popular culture.

Our future programme continues to address the balance of male/female representation, which is best tested in the visual arts across a three-year cycle of activity.

3. Diversity in the 2018-19 exhibition programme

In a globalised world, with the impact of colonialism being comprehensively interrogated, and white-western dominance critiqued, we need to ensure that our programme is rigorously international and relevant to, and reflective of, diverse audiences. Additionally, there has been a rise in identity politics and a radical focus on gender fluidity and empowerment and a new wave of feminism. Many of our recent exhibitions in Barbican Art Gallery have sought to address these issues

Another Kind of Life: photography on the margins (AKOL), our first exhibition of 2018, was an attempt to show how photographers have sought to highlight and empower people on the margins of society. It included a diverse range of international artists, embedded or deeply engaged in alternative, marginalised communities such as sex workers on the Mexican border, cross-dressers in rural

America, circus performers of short stature, and disadvantaged young people to name but a few. Charting a sixty-year arc from the late 1950s to now, AKOL effectively mapped the ongoing battle for gay rights and women's liberation and was an argument for inclusivity and tolerance, while highlighting inequality and injustice.

Of the 40 couples featured in ***Modern Couples***, a significant number (around one third) were homosexual, bisexual, lesbian or polyamorous. The exhibition sought to show that modern artists in the avant-garde period were at the forefront of changing societal norms and gaining new rights to live in a non-conformist way. The exhibition made same-sex female relationships, frequently overlooked in the history of modernism in the 20th century, a particular focus.

UK-Ghanian Dalston-based film-maker/artist John Akomfrah's ***Purple*** – a Curve commission about climate change – was staged at Barbican from October 2017 to 7 January 2018, and then toured to TBA21 in Vienna, Austria, Bildmuseet in Umeå, Sweden, and Museu Colecao Berrado in Lisbon, Portugal. It was seen by 108,971 people at these first three venues, and has now opened at both the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, USA, and Moscow's Garage Museum of Contemporary Art.

Our Jean-Michel Basquiat exhibition, ***Boom for Real***, much acclaimed while at the Barbican from 21 September 2017 to 28 January 2018, then went to our partner venue the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, Germany. It closed on 27 May 2018 after a 13 week run, it was seen by 112,408 people.

Future projects will continue to speak to diverse communities. Our autumn show this year, ***Into the Night: Cabarets and Clubs in Modern Art***, presents a global perspective. Of the 128 artists represented in this exhibition, 56 are people of colour, and will be featured in individual sections for the Harlem Renaissance, Mexico, Nigeria and Tehran.

4. Multi-disciplinarity in the 2018-19 programme

A particular feature of the Visual Arts programme is its focus on performance and a wider multi-disciplinarity, embracing as it does architecture, design and photography alongside painting, drawing and sculpture. Such an approach reflects modern and contemporary art practice and allows us to tell new stories, build audiences and support the Barbican's brand and its cross-arts programme.

Of the 80-plus artists represented in ***Modern Couples***, a significant number were designers, performers and architects. Additionally included were writers, poets and thinkers such as Virginia Woolf and Federico Garcia Lorca.

Our partnership with the Architecture Foundation (AF) continues to be a sound success. Together with the AF, we present ***Architecture on Stage***, a programme of talks and discussions held in four venues (Frobisher Auditorium 1, Milton Court, the Theatre and the Concert Hall). In 2018-19, 23 talks and events were attended by around 9,000 paying visitors. The partnership is cost-neutral and serves to underscore our architectural credentials.

The Gallery frequently collaborates with the other Barbican art form departments – for example during the **Daria Martin** commission the Cinema team programmed an evening with Daria Martin during which some of her previous films were screened, and during **Another Kind of Life** we collaborated with the Music team to deliver ‘Dust Bowl Ballads’ in the Gallery. Every Barbican exhibition is accompanied by a series of public programme events – often programmed in collaboration with the Creative Learning department - bringing in a wide variety of artistic practitioners to engage with the public. In the future programme, the Cinema team will be programming a film season on nightclubs to complement **Into the Night**, an exhibition which, in addition to being strongly international, will have a carefully curated sound installation of music and spoken word to complement the paintings, drawings, sculpture and interior recreations of cabarets and clubs. Evening events will include performance.

5. Workforce of the future: diversification initiatives

The Visual Arts team works closely with Creative Learning to support a broad programme of engagement opportunities for young people, artists, art workers and community groups (Objective E – Pioneer Learning and Engagement in the Arts). These include the young curators and artists who are part of the Young Visual Arts group, and who have the opportunity to visit Gallery exhibitions and to engage with our curatorial team. In 2018 there were fourteen members of the Young Visual Arts group, some of whom were part of the cohort of young people who were paid to deliver gallery talks. In 2018 ten young people were trained and supported to deliver these talks, and six tours were delivered.

In 2018 we also successfully hosted our second annual **Curatorial Traineeship** in collaboration with Iniva, as part of our Equality & Inclusion Strategy. The traineeship has been developed to increase diversity in curating in our own institutions and in the wider visual arts sector, and the first trainee has subsequently gone on to secure a curatorial post in a prestigious regional arts venue. Our most recent Trainee, Priya Jay, has written of the experience:

‘Before I applied for the Curatorial Traineeship position, I was unsure whether a career in curating would be possible. Like many aspiring young curators, I had partial and sporadic experience but the next step seemed out of reach. This Traineeship offered concerted time, space and mentorship to help crystallise my thoughts, understand my interests, develop my skills and, in turn, feel confident about future possibilities.

I worked closely with lead curators for two new artist commissions for The Curve - *Francis Upritchard: Wetwang Slack* and *Daria Martin: Tonight the World*. Learning through practice built my confidence in ways that a Masters degree could not have done. I was given ownership of a range of

tasks, and took on responsibilities such as giving tours, writing wall texts and copyediting the exhibition catalogue. I was also able to apply and develop my research skills through my work on two forthcoming Main Gallery exhibitions *Into the Night* and *Masculinities*. Throughout the Traineeship, I participated in meetings with architects, designers, photographers, technicians and also an Arts Programming meeting with the Artistic Director, which has strengthened my understanding of the role of public art galleries. I sought opportunities to expand my understanding wherever possible, and was given support as needed. One day a week at Iniva, and the one month secondment at Arts Council Collection gave me a crucial insight into the operations of two other organisations. The combined experience with these three institutions and the full-time salary made this Traineeship a real success'.

As a result of the Barbican initiating this Curatorial Traineeship, we were asked to participate in a national roundtable discussion on Workforce Diversity hosted by the Art Fund in September 2018. On 11 March 2019 the Barbican then hosted a Curatorial Open evening with Iniva to share insights in to the work of a curator and to broaden the conversation about routes into curatorial work. Over 120 participants attended and had the opportunity to meet with curators from Barbican, Create and Iniva, as well as watching a film interview with the previous Curatorial Trainee.

Our third Curatorial Trainee joined the team on June 20th.

Public and Critical Successes in the Past Year

6. Critical successes in past year

In a fiercely competitive market place for audience, artists, lenders, Development funding and partners, it is imperative that we build our reputation with standout exhibitions. As we are still working to build our reputation as a significant daytime destination, and do not have a collection we need to ensure our exhibitions are art historically significant but also reach a broad and growing audience. Whereas ten years ago our average daytime attendance was in the region of 350 visitors a day, now it is routinely above 550.

The Visual Arts programme receives extensive press coverage and has a high social media profile. The programme in 18/19 achieved considerable positive critical acclaim:

Main Gallery

Another Kind of Life: Photography on the Margins (28 February – 27 May 2018)

Time Out

“... one hell of a transformative experience.”

Chris Waywell, 28.02.18

[4* review, The Daily Telegraph](#)

“Much of the imagery on display is masterful and compelling. But it is the stories behind the pictures – the fascinating, often heartrending tales of human struggle, sacrifice and heroism – that prove to be transcendent and, at points, moving us to tears.”

Alastair Sooke, 27.02.18

[4* review, CULTURE Whisper](#)

“breath-taking...The labyrinthine structure of the space appears to mirror the chaotic pathways of the people at its heart. It's a subtle yet effective way of focusing our attention onto the serious nature of the subject at hand.”

Lucy Scovell, 28.02.18

[The Economist](#)

“Another Kind of Life” never tries to define what an “outsider” actually is – but that is why it succeeds ... Instead of arguing that everyone shares the same experiences, it revels in revealing the riotous and unwieldy chaos of human existence.

26.03.2018

Dorothea Lange: *Politics of Seeing* / Vanessa Winship (22 June – 2 September 2018)

[5* review, Evening Standard](#) (print)

Matthew Collings describes the exhibitions as “daring”.

“Tremendous impact at every step.”

Matthew Collings, 20.06.18

[Morning Star](#) (online + print)

“... a magnificent feast of images... outstanding features of the Barbican’s The Art of Change season.”

John Green, 27.06.18

[Apollo magazine](#)

“The Barbican’s photography double bill speaks powerfully to our times.”

Tim Smith-Laing, 21.07.18

[5* review, The Observer](#) (online and print)

Double-page review in The Observer. “Defiant, principled, tireless in her pursuit of the individual in every crowd, Lange is a heroine of the lens.”

Laura Cumming, 17.06.18

Modern Couples: *Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde* (10 October 2018 - 27 January 2019)

[4* review, The Guardian](#) (online)

“... fun and fascinating ...”

“It searches for new heroes and new narratives for the story of art in the 20th century, still so dominated by the figures of lone men. For that it should be applauded.”

Hettie Judah, 10.10.18

[4* review, Time Out](#) (online and print)

“You’ll go back for more.”

Katie McCabe 10.10.18

[The Sunday Times](#) (online and in print)

“By focusing on couples rather than individuals, Modern Couples, at the Barbican Art Gallery, has found a new way to arrange and understand modern art....genuinely revealing... an approach that proves transformative.”

“To organise all this must have been horrendously difficult. The curators deserve a medal for bravery as well as for effort.”

Waldemar Januszczak, 14.10.18

[4* review, Culture Whisper](#) (online)

“Timely, revelatory and supremely engaging.”

Lucy Scovell, 10.10.18

Members of the public:

“One of the best exhibitions I’ve ever been to in the Barbican Art Gallery.”

“I am so amazed, this is gorgeous. I have never been to Barbican before and I am amazed, I will try and come back on Sunday.”

“This is truly a beautiful exhibition, the way the works have been displayed exceed any other exhibitions we’ve seen in recent years.”

Lee Krasner: Living Colour (30 May – 1 September 2019)

[The Times](#) (online and print)

5* review – “swooningly good”

Nancy Durrant, 28.05.19

[Time Out](#) (online)

5* review - “This is Lee Krasner in full flight”

“This whole exhibition proves, beyond any doubt, ... Lee Krasner was one of the best.”

Eddy Frankel, 28.05.19

[The Guardian](#) (online and print in News section)

4* review – “Storms of colour from a wild destructive genius”, “Dynamic paintings that fizz and fascinate ... in this thrilling major retrospective.”

Adrian Searle, 29.05.19

[The Sunday Times](#) (online and print)

“a rousing and persuasive tribute ... beautifully judged presentation”

Waldemar Januszczak, 02.06.19

[Evening Standard](#) (online and print)

5* Review

“euphoric”

“... one of the great exhibition moments this year.”

The Curve

Yto Barrada: Agadir – 7 February – 20 May 2018

[London Evening Standard](#) (print and online)

5* review

“Yto Barrada ... is a force of life and her new show in the Barbican Gallery’s Curve space is a delight.”; “A magic realist visual/literary trip, the past bubbling up like dreams, and you’re struck by paradoxes and absurdities but then quickly forget them, gives way to art that’s impressive because of its fresh graphic simplicity.”

Matthew Collings

[Something Curated](#)

“Yto Barrada has transformed the space into a metaphorical fault-line, where distant rumbles of the Agadir earthquake can still be felt today.”

Niamh Leonard-Bedwell

[Apollo magazine](#)

“When examined by Barrada, the subtle relationships informed by the Agadir earthquake of 1960 transcend materials, decades, and countries: the thin, bendable wicker becomes solid in its shadows... another brutalist shape in the timeline of rebuilt Agadir, on the curved brutalist wall of the Barbican.”

Mary Pelletier

Ann Van den Broek – Loops of Behaviour 8 -17 June 2018

[FAD Magazine](#)

‘Top 7 Art Exhibitions to see in London this week’

“This raw and emotionally charged look at human behaviour is a dark and captivating performance. It pulls you in and I was gripped for the entire hour long performance.”

Tabish Khan, 10.6.18

Francis Upritchard: Wetwang Slack – 27 September 2018 – 6 January 2019

[Time Out](#) (online and print)

4* review: *“completely charming. Its clever, breathless enthusiasm and love of surreal aestheticism is totally infectious.”*

Eddy Frankel, 27.09.18

[Apollo](#) (online)

“‘Wetwang Slack’ feels like a joyful celebration of the comparatively non-hierarchical nature of craft, open to experts and have-a-go hobbyists alike.”

Isabella Smith, 08.10.18

[Evening Standard](#) (print)

4* Review

“Despite the difficulties the Curve can present for displays of small objects — its height, its length, its odd shape — Wetwang Slack is hugely enjoyable and beautifully paced.”

“both hilarious and touching.”

Ben Luke, 19.10.18

[City AM](#) (online and print)

“The Barbican’s 30th commission in its Curve Gallery, a space used to display site-specific installations, is a good ‘un.”

“Never taking itself too seriously – as an exhibition called Wetwang Slack probably shouldn’t – this is a great addendum to a visit to the Barbican.”

Steve Dinneen, 28.09.18

Daria Martin – Tonight the World 31 January – 7 April 2019

[Financial Times](#) (online and print)

“Daria Martin’s new installation achieves a remarkable feat – making someone else’s dreams gripping.”

Simon Ings, 05.02.19

[Evening Standard](#) (online and print)

“... the two films, in their own distinct ways, are compelling and moving.”

Ben Luke, 1.2.19

[Time Out](#) (online and in print)

4* Review

“American artist Daria Martin has achieved the impossible by making her grandmother’s reveries into interesting art.”

Eddy Frankel, 30.1.19

[Londonist](#)

“... innovative and surreal.”

Tabish Khan, 05.02.19

7. Conclusion

After the huge commercial and critical success of **Basquiat** in 2017, the Gallery team set higher and more stretching visitor targets for 2018/19. We also worked to grow and consolidate the partnership programme – during this period **Basquiat**, **John Akomfrah’s Purple** and **The World of Charles and Ray Eames** toured to six partner venues between them, and we delivered both **Another Kind of Life** and **Modern Couples** as collaborative partnerships. The Gallery team worked closely with the wider Barbican Centre to contribute to the Art of Change season and to achieve strategic change objectives including increasing the representation of women, BAME and LGBTQI+ artists in our exhibition, talks and events programmes. In line with our Equality & Inclusion strategy we also worked to develop the diversity of our staff team, continuing our collaboration with Iniva on our Curatorial Traineeship programme.

Appendices

- None

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