

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Barbican Centre Board	13 July 2016
Subject: Visual Arts Board Report 2016	Public
Report of: Director of Arts Report Author: Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts	For Information
Summary	
<p>This report provides an overview of the Visual Art department's strategy and planning, in the context of the Barbican's vision and mission and Strategic Business Plans. It examines models for success going forward.</p> <p>It is divided into the following sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview: what we do 2. Wider context 3. Progress since last report – <i>Eames, Strange and Familiar</i> and <i>Imran Qureshi</i> 4. Exhibitions -- models of success 5. Future programme: 16-17 and beyond 6. Conclusion <p>Recommendation Members are asked to note the report.</p>	

Main Report

1. Overview : what we do

Barbican Visual Arts presents world class modern and contemporary exhibitions in the Art Gallery and commissions a diverse range of contemporary artists to creatively respond to our Curve space, a distinctive programme of commissioned work that has been running since 2006. We are now planning the installation of our 26th commission.

- a. Our exhibitions continue to focus on twentieth and twenty-first century art, architecture and design, photography and cross-disciplinary practice of all kinds. As I have reported previously, we view this diversity as strength, especially in an age when plurality, cross-fertilisation and collaboration are increasingly relevant for artists.
- b. We see it as a distinctive aspect of our work to collaborate with architects and designers so as to offer them an important platform to profile their work and to make the very best use of our dynamic architectural spaces.
- c. Our aim is to always realise exhibitions that are thoughtful, timely and compelling. We seek to present exhibitions that would not be seen elsewhere in London or indeed Britain and which are developed with the intention of reaching a broad audience whilst, crucially, still being art historically rigorous and visually and spatially compelling. My sense is that people are increasingly appreciating what it is that makes our programme unique, as evidenced by this comment from Marina Vaizey about *Strange and Familiar*.

- d. “*The Barbican has built a steady reputation for almost unclassifiable large-scale art exhibitions, particularly in architecture, design and photography: they have been underestimated pioneers, often working in areas themselves under-scrutinised. Thus they often manage to surprise, and so it is here.*”
Marina Vaizey, [The Arts Desk](#), 03.04.16
- e. The two Gallery exhibitions we have staged since my last Board Report, *The World of Charles and Ray Eames* and now *Strange and Familiar: Britain as Revealed by International Photographers* are both excellent examples of how we can realise compelling and timely exhibitions. Imran Qureshi’s installation in the Curve has garnered widespread acclaim for its poignant treatment of difficult subject matter and the exquisite installation.
- f. As previously reported, a development since I took up the post of Head of Visual Arts, is that we now seek where possible to work in partnership with national and international museums and art galleries to share costs and increase and widen audiences. These international partnerships ensure that we are able to maintain the standard of the programme and they can also bring in additional funds to support the Centre’s wider objectives. I lead on this initiative, with the support of the Exhibition Manager, and all curators are empowered to develop and seek partners for our programme. The continuing benefit of partnerships is well illustrated on the ‘Barbican Earned Income v Subsidy’ graph (Appendix 2) and given further attention in Section 4.
- g. On a smaller scale, the visual arts team contributes to the Strategic Plan Foyer project, by curating the space adjacent to the Barbican Kitchen – currently given over to a series of exhibitions about the Barbican. This endeavour supports the Cultural Hub strategic objective through animating the foyer and building a sense of destination, while underscoring our landmark architecture credentials. Additionally, we now commission artists to make work for the Lightwell over the bridge, the first being an uplifting textile commission by the Brazilian artist, Maria Nepomuceno. It is less well known that we are currently working with Searcy’s to ensure that the art in *Osteria* is of an appropriate quality and by emergent younger artists. The first of these is a young London artist: Cornelia Baltes represented by an emergent Dalston gallery, Limoncello. Over the last year I have also personally supported the Strategic Plan by advising on design and architecture projects and commissions throughout the Centre including Level 4 and the Foyers, to ensure a consistent, high quality of design, thus maintaining our reputation in this area.
- h. Finally, we publish books for all our exhibition projects and the Curve commissions, ensuring that the exhibitions we present (that can be the result of 2-3 years work) and the research undertaken has a legacy beyond the relatively short life of the exhibition. These world class publications greatly widen the reach of our projects, being distributed internationally. Recent titles have also brought in significant income. Currently 28% of Barbican retail income is derived from our catalogue. We have sold over 3,000 copies of *Strange and Familiar*, with a further 3,000-5,000 being distributed internationally. Net profit to the Centre for the *Strange and Familiar* publication is £38,000.
- i. In line with the strategic aim of ‘connecting arts and learning’ we have a keen responsibility to both artists and audiences – and endeavour to meet that responsibility through a varied and balanced programme that puts emphasis on living artists, research and the presentation of inspirational exhibitions, as well as providing a free offer and accessible interpretation.

- j. The adult public event programme (talks, seminars and exhibition tours) are developed and realised by the Art Gallery Curatorial team. This year we have also forged partnership relationships with the Architecture Foundation and Magnum Photography to host monthly talks and events on Level 4. These important partnerships help build our architecture and photography credentials and contacts respectively, whilst also reaching new audiences. The Architecture Foundation partnership comprises a monthly talk and 2-3 major events. For example, we just hosted a day celebrating and giving critical thought to the refugee crisis and the importance of art and architecture. Over 600 tickets were sold and we had over 50 participants, including thinkers, architects and refugees themselves. The Magnum talks partnership will be complemented by a display of 50 Magnum photographs throughout Level 4, which will be on loan to us for an extended period. The images will reflect 'Magnum Now' and their topicality and quality is intended to greatly enhance these spaces and hopefully our ability to sell them, while also providing visual stimulus in the Auditorium Foyers.
- k. None of this would be possible without a highly dedicated and high achieving Visual Arts team (31 permanent members of staff). As leader of the team, I seek to engender a culture of positivity, empowerment and support while setting ambitious targets and expectations. All staff work collaboratively with colleagues across the Centre.
- l. It is crucially important that everyone in the Visual Arts team understands what success looks like in a London and International visual arts context and a Barbican context. I think this is key to our demonstrable progress and success (as detailed in the following section) over the last year. In the last year, we have a new team of Curators – Alona Pardo, Eleanor Nairne and Florence Ostende, who (along with the Associate Curator and Assistant Curator) support me in shaping the programme and ensuring that our projects are exemplary and distinctive.

2. Wider Context

- a. Attendance at nationally funded museums and galleries for 2015-16 was 47,621,523, a reduction on both 14/15 and 13/14 - 7.8% lower than in 2015.
- b. The Tate is hoping for increased attendances with the opening of Herzog De Meuron's extension on 16 June and with 'big-hitter' exhibitions planned for 2017 and 2018: i.e. Giacometti and Hockney. Their planned exhibitions are noticeably addressing socially relevant questions: *The Black Debate* (2017) and *Queer Art* (2018). The new Design Museum opens in Kensington in 2017. The National Portrait Gallery under new direction from Nicholas Cullinan is seeking to re-fresh and expand its remit. The Hayward remains out of action until September 2017 and it may be that we are benefitting from this for the moment. Into the future, the Smithsonian has dropped plans to create an outpost in the Olympic Park and will instead work more closely with the V&A on exhibitions there. In conclusion, while there is respite in some areas, the competition across London for audiences, artists and exhibitions remains fierce.
- c. Whereas public art galleries are finding the economic climate more difficult than recent years, the contemporary art market is seemingly awash with money and on the back of that many new smaller galleries have sprung up in the east end of London. The annual Frieze Art Fair attracts similar daily attendance as Tate Modern. Mid-career and leading artists therefore have plenty of opportunity to exhibit and sell, while it is less easy for emergent artists to obtain non-commercial, publicly funded exhibiting opportunities. To 'make it' as a visual artist continues to be extremely difficult and competitive, with many art student graduates struggling to find work or

continue to make art. The cost of property and studio space in London exacerbates this problem. In order to support the visual arts ecology it therefore remains crucial to find ways to support and present the work of living artists.

3. Progress since last report – Eames, Strange and Familiar and Imran Qureshi

- a. Given the widely acclaimed nature of what we do, we hope that our offer exemplifies 'World Class Arts and Learning.' As exhibition makers the curatorial team create exhibitions that are essentially and intrinsically informative and, hopefully, inspirational. Both *Charles and Ray Eames* and *Strange and Familiar* were initiated by us, involved considerable new research, both have had associated learning and publications and both are travelling to extend their reach.

This is just a smattering of press accolades for these two exhibitions:

Charles and Ray Eames

Ellis Woodman called it a "*captivating exhibition*" in his 5* review, and a "*Blissfull marriage of art and science*"

"a comprehensive retrospective with a gorgeous range of objects and ephemera"

Stephen Bailey

"Eames fans visiting the exhibition will enjoy discovering new aspects of the duo's multidisciplinary output and absorbing its wealth of previously unseen material, while newcomers to their work will be impressed by its ambition and continuing relevance."

Alyn Griffiths,
30.10.15 CNN News

Strange & Familiar

"This beautiful show perfectly captures the changing and diverse nature of Britain as well as the evolution of photography"

Ben Luke, 5* review, 15.03.16

Mark Hudson's 4* review appears again in The Sunday Telegraph (21.03.16) and is named '*Exhibition of the Week*'.

The exhibition is named show of the week and receives a 5-star review from Martin Coomer :
"ace photographer Martin Parr has put together one of the most involving and moving exhibitions of the year. It's chock full of photography legends."

The exhibition is also included on Time Out's Things to Do list:

"brilliant new exhibition." (22.03.16)

- b. In terms of the Barbican's key objectives, our Curve programme has to be seen as the pillar of our commitment to invest in the artists of today and tomorrow. This is what emergent London artist, Eddie Peake, has said of his commission here in 2015:

"My Curve commission, 'The Forever Loop,' was the biggest show I've worked on in the ten years that I've been exhibiting, and by a significant margin. In order to make it the best show it could possibly be, the Barbican team encouraged, supported and enabled me to really spread my wings in terms of the actual content of the show, and that was echoed by the broad and diverse, as well as numerous, audience it reached. It was an honour and a privilege to be invited to make a show in a space of such idiosyncratic shape and size, and which required me to extend myself creatively in order to meet its physical, as well as cultural, magnitude."

- c. Equally, our commitment to working with architects and designers, as aforementioned, is an important and distinctive aspect of our curatorial approach. The design of the Gallery's exhibitions also offers architectural practices a unique opportunity in line with the Centre's objectives.

The architectural design for *Eames* was by '6A.' This is what Tom Emerson, one of their Director's said:

Every architect wants to work in greatest utopian project ever built in the UK. Within the brutalist ensemble, the Barbican Art Centre continues to present a radical and exciting programme of exhibitions. The galleries are foundational to London's cultural landscape and so challenging spatially that they have created a parallel tradition of architectural interventions to match each exhibition... It's a great privilege to make a small contribution to that tradition and to have a 'Barbican' in our portfolio.

Equally, *Strange and Familiar* was designed by Witherford, Watson Mann (WWM). Stephen Witherford said this of the collaboration:

*After 15 years of working on projects that respond to and re-imagine Britain's shared public culture, this is the first time we have been invited to design an exhibition. Working closely with the full breadth of the Barbican gallery team on the design and making of the *Strange and Familiar* show has been hugely rewarding. ...We feel extremely proud to have contributed to the extraordinary programme of Barbican gallery exhibitions.'*

- d. The City's 'Four R's': Relevant; Responsible; Reliable and Radical are widely evidenced in *Charles and Ray Eames* and *Strange and Familiar*, as are the Barbican's own five strategic goals. In terms of relevance, or timeliness; the *Eames* exhibition foregrounded a multi-talented cross-disciplinary practice that sought ethical and creative solutions for the modern age. As a distinctly modern partnership Charles and Ray Eames created work that was important for education, global co-operation and celebrated diversity. The exhibition also sought the most wide-ranging and thoughtful reassessment of Ray's contribution to the partnership. *Strange and Familiar* is especially relevant in the way it foregrounds British identity at a time when it is being questioned. It is responsible in the way we have included little known photographers alongside legends.
- e. Our exhibitions are reliable in that with each one we strive to achieve the highest quality of presentation, never compromising by simply hiring in shows that have not been moulded and modified for our space, audience and context. They are always accompanied by thoughtful and accessible interpretation. The Curve programme is ideally positioned to be responsive to the radical or cutting edge –as can be seen in Qureshi's show which subtly refers to universal conflict; or Eddie Peake's exhibition which sought to in some way encapsulate urban living and was intentionally provocative in its questioning of sexual identity. Our responsibility to artists and audiences is evident in all the work that we do and is illustrated by the relationships we build with artists and the care we put into presenting their work and building audiences for it.
- f. Barbican's visual arts attendance is looking healthy with a broadly upward trajectory. *Eames* achieved 157% of target (85,735 through the door, 69,096 paying), and *Strange and Familiar* achieved 144% of target (75,800 through the door, 61,460 paying). *Charles and Ray Eames* is the second most well attended exhibition in the last ten years, and *Strange and Familiar* the fourth. The Curve attendance is also on

an upward trajectory, indicating a greater awareness and successful programming decisions.

- g. In 2016 we are undertaking the first phase of a refurbishment of the Curve, (by architects Witherford Watson Mann); the second part will be in 2018. This is much needed work to maintain the required conditions.

4. **Exhibitions – models of success**

- a. When audience and income are considered together *The World of Charles and Ray Eames* has undoubtedly been the most successful exhibition we have ever staged. See Appendix 2 that compares the financials as they relate to *Charles and Ray Eames, Strange and Familiar* and by way of comparison an earlier photography show, *Everything was Moving* from 12/13. There is a marked difference in the level of subsidy or income in the case of each of these projects. In the case of *Eames* and *Strange and Familiar* these are two models of success that reflect the general upward trend in the subsidy v income graph (Appendix 1).
- b. The extraordinary success of *Eames* (contracted to earn us £316,000 even after all salary and marketing costs are taken into account) is a result of the following factors:
- A very clear proposition in marketing terms
 - High level of mainstream awareness and interest
 - Perfectly suited to our space
 - 100% commitment and co-operation from the Eames Estate.
 - Willingness from the Estate to participate in an extended tour to six other venues
 - Secured largest ever grant from the Terra Foundation in recognition of new research
- c. *Strange and Familiar* has also been incredibly successful (earning £12,000 after staff and marketing taken into account). It is the highest attended photography exhibition (75,800 total) we have ever staged – topping Eve Arnold, David Bailey, Bill Brandt and Cecil Beaton. Martin Parr's own exhibition back in 2002 only achieved 32,839, showing the progress that has been made in terms of the Gallery's reputation since that time. Manchester City Art Gallery's showing in the autumn should attract a further sizeable audience and is part of a new drive to find national partners where appropriate. This excellent Box Office, far in excess of target (which in itself was set ambitiously), plus a healthy contribution from Manchester to take the show, and relatively low cost to stage in the first place, means that this exhibition has been incredibly helpful in the overall economy of the Barbican. I believe that its success is testament to:
- A greater awareness of our programme
 - The quality of our exhibitions and confidence in the offer
 - Mainstream awareness of Martin Parr
 - Appetite for photographic exhibitions and especially human subject matter
 - Excellent Press delivered by a highly experienced team
 - A standout marketing campaign
- d. The comparison with *Everything Was Moving* from 2012/13 is instructive in that it illustrates greater confidence in our offer and the benefit of partnership work. *Everything was Moving* was also a thematic photography show with great human content and so it is a fair comparator.

- e. Since the launch of the web site improvement project, a Google Analytics study has shown a clear increase in Gallery on-line booking. During the 2 month period 1 November and 30 December 2015 Google Analytics has shown that Eames was responsible for the highest level of event transactions on the web site – 5.11% compared with 2.64% for the LSO. Again, during 1 March to 30 April 2016, we were responsible for 7.19% on-line transactions, as against 4.17% for the LSO. These statistics underscore the importance of the Gallery’s business and especially in respect to daytime attendance. This upward trend of on-line transactions is also crucially important in attracting business across the entire Centre’s offer.
- f. A degree of caution is necessary however, in that it is not always possible to bring all of the desirable factors that underpin the success of *Charles and Ray Eames* and *Strange and Familiar* together. The availability of loans is the principal factor in determining whether it is possible for costs to be shared with a partnering co-producer or for a project to tour. Equally, variety and timeliness is essential in the programme. However, we can build on these successes (just as we built on the success of *Constructing Worlds* in 2014-15 – our previous photography exhibition) and learn from the strategies we employ.
- g. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten, that successes of this kind crucially allow us to develop the programme in challenging ways, support contemporary artists and broaden access more generally. This much needed income also helps support free activity and new initiatives essential to the Centre meeting its Strategic Objectives.
- h. The extensive tour of *Charles and Ray Eames*, as stated above, has only been possible due to the co-operation of the Eames Estate and the other principal lender, Vitra. Capitalising on the situation means that many more people will benefit from our research and the substantial human resource investment in making this project. In travelling the exhibition, we also forge highly valuable partnerships with prestigious venues internationally, making it easier to repeat in the future. The growth and success of partnerships more generally brings incredible profile benefits for the Barbican brand, encourages and supports individual, grant and corporate fundraising, and is testament to our growing international reputation for producing projects of quality and relevance.
- i. Imran Qureshi (born Pakistan, resident Lahore) in *The Curve* is set to exceed 45,000 visitors, as against a target of 36,000. This is encouraging for an exhibition that is quiet and thought provoking – doing significantly better than a comparable installation by Geoffrey Farmer in 2013, which achieved 35,000.

5. **Programme to Autumn ‘17**

Through the mix of programming in the main Gallery and the Curve, our future programme is designed to meet the following Strategic Objectives:

- We present an ambitious, international programme that crosses art forms, with outstanding artists and performers.
- We invest in the artists of today and tomorrow
- Through our activities we hope to inspire more people to discover and love the arts.
- Mixed income generation

The broad outline and rationale for each of these exhibitions is as follows:

a. **SUMMER 2016**

Ragnar Kjartansson

This is the first major exhibition of Kjartansson's (Icelandic) work in the UK, even though he is well known in the art world. His work, which covers performance, film, painting, drawing and sculpture is critically acclaimed but also very accessible. I'm hoping that there will be enough 'magic' in this exhibition to capture the imagination of a broad audience, as well as satisfying an art historical interest in presenting a body of his work together for the first time. The cross-disciplinary nature of the work fits the Barbican's wider agenda and it is a great follow up to *Station to Station*. Kjartansson is also a musician and has his own record label. We are therefore staging one night in the concert hall with Kjartansson and collaborators, Bryce Dessner (The National) and Kjartan Svensson (ex-Sigur Ros).

This will be the first time we have staged a solo living artist in the Art Gallery since Christian Marclay in 2005. As much contemporary art can be seen in London for free, this is a more challenging proposition than recent shows. However, I believe it is important that we find ways to work with contemporary artists in the main space. The summer slot is a good time to give it a try for a relatively short run.

Initiated and produced by Barbican, the exhibition is travelling to the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, a very prestigious partnership that is bringing in a sizeable cost-sharing benefit.

We are producing and co-publishing a book to accompany the exhibition.

b. **AUTUMN 2017**

The Vulgar: Fashion Redefined

This is a follow-up to *Viktor & Rolf, Future Beauty* and *Jean-Paul Gaultier*. It is curated by Britain's leading costume curator, Judith Clark, and her partner, psychoanalyst, Adam Phillips. It will offer a surprising, provocative, visually sumptuous, star-studded array of fashion that charts the shifting notion of taste. This is a fashion show which is intelligent but also visually very appealing.

Initiated and produced by Barbican, the exhibition is travelling to The Belvedere, Vienna's baroque Winter Palace. As such there will also be a sizeable cost sharing benefit.

We are producing and co-publishing a book to accompany the exhibition.

The Curve: Bedwyr Williams

This will be the first major London show for up-and-coming Welsh artist, Bedwyr Williams. This is a classic Curve commission designed to give a relatively young artist the opportunity to work on a larger scale and increase their profile. I expect it will be popular – look out for the singing goat and the talking shoe!

We are producing a Curve book to accompany the exhibition.

c. **SPRING 2017**

The Japanese House: Architecture and Life after 1945

This is a follow up to *Le Corbusier, Bauhaus* and *Eames*. There has never been a major UK exhibition looking at Japanese domestic architecture in the post-War

period and there is a real appetite for seeing this work now. This is a co-operation, cost sharing project between London, Tokyo (the Japan Foundation) and Rome (the MAXXI).

We are producing and co-publishing a book to accompany the exhibition.

The Curve: Richard Mosse

A major contribution to our focus on film, this is a very exciting, moving and timely film commission from a relatively young artist who has been making a new work on the refugee crisis – filming migrants and military interventions in the Mediterranean and at border crossings and camps. This work is unusual in that he has made it with a highly advanced military heat seeking surveillance camera. This will be his first sizeable project in London.

The work is co-commissioned with the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. We are producing a Curve book to accompany the exhibition and will seek touring venues for the work so that it can be more widely seen

d. AUTUMN 2017

The Curve: John Akomfrah

This is another major film commission from a leading East London based, Ghanaian born, UK film-maker of international standing. Akomfrah will make a new 8 screen work that takes account of global climate change. It will be a follow up to his much celebrated three-screen film, *Vertigo Sea*, shown at Venice Biennale in 2015. This will be the first time Akomfrah has made a site specific work. It will also be the perfect complement to Jean-Michel Basquiat in the Curve.

We are seeking co-commissioning partners for this work, necessary to achieve the total £350,000 production budget. We are producing a Curve book to accompany the exhibition.

For reasons of commercial sensitivity, the following sections in this report are continued in the non-public section.

Non-Public Appendices:

- **Programme from Summer '17**
- **Autumn 2017**
- **Conclusion**
- **Appendix 1: Art Gallery Financial Summary**
- **Appendix 2: Barbican Earned Income v Subsidy**
- **Appendix 3: Comparison Financials: C&R E, S&F and EWM**
- **Appendix 4: Main Gallery last ten years attendance**
- **Appendix 5: Curve Gallery last ten years attendance**