British Art after Brexit
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PROVOCATION BY

British Art Studies Editorial Group

Provocation

What does it mean to correlate art and art history with "nation"? At the time of publication, the full impact and effects of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union are just beginning to manifest. In this feature, we are interested in the art-historical, historiographic, curatorial, political, legal, creative, and other aspects of how Brexit impacts on art making and the study of art history in relation to Britain. In light of Brexit and its attendant nationalist politics, we also envisage this Conversation Piece to be part of an ongoing dialogue about what it means to conceptualise a national art history, which in Britain's case encompasses its pre-colonial and colonial pasts and neoliberal global presents.

The idea of "British art" has always been problematic. This has been highlighted in particular by art and architectural historians who work with material created before the concepts of "Britain" and "British" existed as commonly used signifiers of national identity, or implied meanings not carried by those terms today. Within art history, and the humanities more broadly, the rationale

for using "nation" as an organisational category has long been scrutinised and discussed.[1] In 1994, in *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, Kobena Mercer asked "Why the need for nation?", underlining the critical energy that such questions brought to the activities of Black British artists and their ability to undermine racist and fascist constructions of nationhood.[2] In curatorial practice, the category of the nation appears to have been re-energised as a place of geopolitical critique, emerging more as a testing ground for questioning than as a descriptive, legal, or bureaucratic term.[3] These efforts issue a challenge to redefine the relationship of art and its histories to nationhood from both within and beyond Britain. As Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price wrote in their "Decolonizing Art History" feature for *Art History* (2020),

> *the backdrop of Brexit cannot be ignored, along with the impact of austerity and precarity in the university and museum sectors, and the rise of nationalism and xenophobia in response to both economic and political migration. There is a sense of instability in the political landscape, and conversations are often harder to hear than accusations, condemnation or dismissal.*[4]

We are "in" rather than "after" Brexit. Behind the theatre of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, many important mechanisms of collaboration in the arts have been, or are in the process of being, dismantled. Although much remains uncertain, immediate realities include the loss of around £40 million of EU arts funding per year, the UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus scheme, and more complicated restrictions on moving, working, buying, and selling, between the UK and EU member states.[5] If the UK becomes an expensive and prohibitive place to study, if access to EU research funding is not replaced, and if cultural institutions begin to see cross-Channel collaboration as a risk not worth taking, will these logistical borders be replicated in the future of how we understand art in Britain?

Figure 1

Cornelia Parker, *A Side of England*, 1999, chalk retrieved from a cliff fall at Beachy Head, South Coast, England, wire, and mesh. Digital image courtesy of Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images (all rights reserved).

Considering the wider cultural and political contexts of Brexit, we must also ask what it means to make, study, and curate "British" art in a neo-nationalist climate, particularly when the current UK Government exercises political control of the arts, intervening in decisions that curators and educators are trained to make.[6] In so doing, the history of Britain's resurgent and recurrent nationalisms simultaneously points to an orientation entwined, as Paul Gilroy has incisively shown over several decades, with the empire and its decline, racism, "postcolonial melancholia" and violence.[7] This begs the question of why the compulsion to study national schools endures. Brexit has amplified problems surrounding borders—physically and conceptually; within the UK and internationally—making Britain's status as an island more palpable. While the character of these tensions has shifted over time, both the first referendum to leave the EU, in 1975, and the most recent one, in 2016, have made the distinctions between England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland more apparent and uncomfortable.[8] We encouraged responses to this provocation that consider the impact of these reconfigurations on art making, the interpretation of historical and contemporary art, and the wider cultural field. How does Brexit change conceptualisations—past and present—of English, Northern Irish, Scottish, and Welsh art? How is the imagery and language of Brexit entering into the cultural imagination of Britain? How can art history account for the art and culture of the "borderlands"?[9] What images and ideas of "British art" are being produced from beyond its physical borders? What can the longer histories of the artistic relationships between Britain and Europe tell us about how geographical and conceptual borders have been crossed, negotiated, and bypassed by cultural forms? And what can we learn from how the movement of European art historians to Britain in the past has shaped the field of art history? Finally, looking at the present, has Brexit instigated artists, writers, curators,

and historians to imagine alternative forms of association and practice which reimagine or cast aside national frameworks?

RESPONSE BY
Jenny Gaschke
Curator of European art pre-1900
Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

British Art Remains European art

"Si dans le contexte du Brexit, cette saison britannique trouve un écho particulier, elle n'en réaffirme pas moins avec force les liens indéfectibles tissés à travers l'histoire entre l'Angleterre et l'Aquitaine, restée toujours très anglophile".[10]

With these words, the Mayor of Bordeaux, Pierre Hurmic, introduces the sumptuous exhibition catalogue *Absolutely Bizarre! Les drôles d'histoires de l'Ecole de Bristol (1800–1840)*. The exhibition, which opened on 10 June 2021 and showcases eighty works by nineteenth-century artists including Francis Danby, Edward Bird, and Rolinda Sharples, has taken nearly five years to prepare (fig. 2). It is a collaboration between the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, the Louvre, Paris, and Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, with additional loans from the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath and Tate. Work on this international project started just a few months after the Brexit referendum and successfully bridged the transition period and the final departure of the UK from the EU.

Figure 2

Francis Danby, *Sunset at Sea After a Storm*, 1824, oil on canvas, 89.6 × 142.9 cm. Collection of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (K5008). Digital image courtesy of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (all rights reserved).

As a German curator of British and European art who works in the UK, Brexit has had more than a professional or academic impact on me. Even just focusing on the collections of British art in the UK and the ongoing work required to research, de-colonise, and interpret them—and make them accessible to all—it seems obvious to me that such essential curatorial tasks cannot be done outside a European context even after Brexit.

To me, maintaining this "European context" relates first to the continental European study and reception of British art, through projects such as Bordeaux's exhibition: we need the external, yet informed and congenial perspective that side-steps British preconceptions of what British art is. Bristol and Bordeaux have been trading for centuries and have been twinned as cities for over

seventy years—to our colleagues at the Musée des Beaux-Arts and their audiences, the Bristol School is not a minor regional phenomenon: it is simply British art history.

My hope is that the dedication required to stage such a major project, or even just the possibility for European researchers and curators to come to the UK and vice versa to discuss British art together, will continue despite new restrictions to travel and immigration. But I worry that a lack of foreign language confidence on the part of British art curators and museum professionals might make this work more difficult and could broaden the gap to Europe—what is the situation at British art history departments?

Secondly, it must be remembered that British art has never existed in isolation. Francis Danby, Irish-born, spent years working in Switzerland and France and brought continental thinking back with him when he returned to live in England—how about showing him alongside French artists? And for hundreds of years European artists (as well as art historians and curators) have come to Britain, co-exhibited, coexisted, co-shaped its art—even if this annoyed Britons as far back as William Hogarth. These contributors should not be written out of British art history.

There is no British art exceptionalism and there is no point in focusing solely on the local—a suggestion which some in the museum world might pander to in order to heal the Brexit divide. What is the local anyway? Over three million Europeans are still living in the UK and they too are our audiences, as are those who have come to the UK from around the globe. For the successful decolonisation of British art history which we owe our diverse audiences, we also need the comparison with other European art histories undergoing the same process.

RESPONSE BY
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Disorganization / Organization

As someone living in France, I first experienced Brexit through the delivery of a book on Thomas Gainsborough. I was surprised when the postman told me I owed an extra twenty-eight euros. It was a charge resulting from the new customs rules, he said. Meanwhile, I had noticed that British magazines took longer to arrive—when they arrived at all. These moments of friction may be anecdotal, but they have introduced a new form of temporality to cultural production and its accessibility, impacting bookshops, libraries, universities, and museums downstream. What does Brexit do to the study, the teaching of British art? In her important book *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (2014), Jennifer Roberts proposed an alternative reading of artistic creation that looked at how the numerous physical displacements and removals to which a work of art may be subjected informs its very production. In this context, some exhibitions will no longer travel to Europe, and perhaps will never be organised in the first place. If we think about books or artworks as objects not only for themselves but also for their relations to the world, we have to reflect upon the pockets of meaning prompted by their circulation and, in the present Brexit-inspired case study, the time lag in the cross-cultural encounters they generate.

This is not just art theory. These new forms of temporal lag affect real people. Among the most noted consequences of Brexit is its interference with student exchange programmes. In the Turing scheme, which replaces the Erasmus programme in the UK, the emphasis is placed on *going* abroad. Very little is said, however, about incoming students, who, for now, will most likely have to pay exorbitant international fees. Anna Rossi is an artist who, as a student at the

Beaux-Arts de Paris, was able to do her Erasmus exchange at the Slade, University College London (fig. 3). People tend to forget that fine arts students also benefit from the program, as these exchanges are often made invisible by conventions on artist CVs.

Figure 3

Anna Rossi, *Espace Vert (Green Spaces)*, one of 52 panels (installation view), 2021, acrylic on wood panels, on rails, 12.5 × 23.5 in panels. Digital image courtesy of Anna Rossi (all rights reserved).

Equally, the consequences of Brexit have become almost inextricably tangled with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, doubly tying up and suspending vital flows of cultural exchange. It is almost impossible to predict what restrictions will remain in place after the health crisis has passed. The pandemic-related restrictions are thus superimposed on the consequences of Brexit, forming a calcified and contradictory conjuncture: on the one hand, the hardening of nationalist ideology; on the other, a virus which knows no frontiers.

Thinking about who has access to British art shifts how we understand the academic field, the canon, and related teaching curricula. If we think about *organ*-isation and its corollary *dis-organ*-isation as a metaphor, perhaps we then should think about British art in terms of *organ*-isms. Could we consider things from the point of view of ecosystems, the molecular angle in which frontiers are not as rigid? Critical fields and artists that look to phenomena such as viruses or bacteria can prompt us to rethink the relationships between culture and the environments and territories in which we live. From this perspective, the study of Britain and British art can be less narrow and more rhizomic. The crises we are now living through require of us an expanded definition of national art, and of how we understand the term *nation* itself, drawing on different fields to construct non-hierarchical ontologies that question existing hegemonies in the present.

RESPONSE BY
Gill Perry
Open University

Struggling with Plurals and "Island Artists"

As art institutions struggle with the harsh economic implications of Brexit, cultural debates have blossomed around controversial ideas of our "island nation". The recent Brexit-related collusion of geography, history, and politics to reclaim an identity steeped in self-determination and "separateness" has enhanced the relevance of the island theme. Problems of definition notwithstanding, islands can be seen to have immutable borders (the sea) and uncontested geographies. Yet the idea of the island has been read as both open and closed, and, as such, they offer rich material for writers and artists. Recent debates have harnessed these imaginative

possibilities in contradictory ways. The writer Madeleine Bunting has argued that being part of an island has been a central part of English nationalism. She points out that generations of children learned their history from H.E. Marshall's *Our Island Story* (1905), despite the fact that the title is based on some obvious mistakes: "England shares an island with other nations, and the UK is actually an archipelago of about 6,300 islands. English nationalism struggles with plurals".[11]

This historic inability to see Britain—and England—as part of a connected archipelago has informed the work of several contemporary British artists who have reimagined ideas of both nationhood and "islandness".[12] Several years before the 2016 referendum, the British artist Alex Hartley conceived of a multi-national island-state in his floating installation *Nowhereisland*, which was partly made up of rocks taken from a land mass that appeared in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard. Towed down the south-west coast of England during the 2012 Olympics, *Nowhereisland* boasted a portable embassy and invited all people to claim citizenship.[13] According to Hartley, during its development "we always talked about the idea of an island as a node of connectivity rather than a place alone and separated".[14] This connectivity is also central to the work of the British artist Tania Kovats. Her *All the Islands of All the Seas* (2016) consists of thirty-six works, each containing up to ten different layered drawings of landmasses. Traced from atlases onto translucent paper, Kovats's islands float across each other, giving up their geographic, cartographic, and cultural certainty—a system of plurals (fig. 4).

Figure 4

Tania Kovats, *All the Islands of All the Seas*, 2016, ink on layered matte acetate, 196 drawings, 32 parts, framed, 42 × 30 cm. Pippy Houldsworth Gallery. Digital image courtesy of Tania Kovats / Pippy Houldsworth Gallery (all rights reserved).

The label "island writers" is often used to identify a body of postcolonial writing from former British colonies in Caribbean, Indian, and Pacific archipelagos. These writers (including the St Lucian poet Derek Walcott) "have rendered island spaces as vital and dynamic loci of cultural and material exchange".[15] As a series of small nations connected by the sea, they have profited from fluid, transcultural, diasporic, and regional alliances. Martiniquan writer Edouard Glissant has described the "openness" embodied by these islands: "the dialectic between inside and outside is reflected in the relationship between land and sea".[16] For Kovats, Hartley and other

contemporary British artists (including, for example, Simon Faithful and Tacita Dean), the sea is vital to the spatial scale of island imagination, enabling my parallel designation of "island artists". In their work, the sea can act as a metaphor of connectivity within and beyond archipelagos. It can defy colonial and pro-Brexit narratives of separate island status and affirm the important role of art in the United Kingdom's "struggle with plurals".

RESPONSE BY

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British Art, Brexit, and the Black Mediterranean

In 2018, faced with the prospect of his own suicide driven by financial struggles, Roberto Pirrone instead shot another man, Idy Diene, a Senegalese vendor in Florence. Later, the white man told the police that he could not think straight when he had envisioned murder as an alternative to taking his own life. Pirrone's brutal logic cost him a thirty-year imprisonment (also taking him out of financial misery), while it cost Diene his life, "devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago".[17] When the Italian police ruled out racism as the motive behind the killing, the Senegalese community in the city started to gather on the scene to demonstrate their anger. Some rubbish bins were kicked, a couple of flowerpots were broken. Commenting on the effects of the demo, the mayor defined the Senegalese protest as vandalism, thus shifting the national discussion away from racism and blaming the victims.

Diene was one of the many migrant workers and refugees who arrived in Europe via what Ida Danewid and others have termed the Black Mediterranean, not so much a geographical space as a historical condition of diaspora, shaped by the impact of centuries of French, Italian, and British colonial rule.[18] One year after Diene's assassination, Phoebe Boswell, the Bridget Riley Fellow at the British School at Rome (BSR), exhibited a multimedia installation titled *Wake Work*, which included a four-panel group portrait drawn from press images of the Senegalese community members who protested in Florence, and three smashed flowerpots (fig. 5).[19]

> *I took these pots from the fountain in the institution's courtyard, without permission, signalling directly to the institution, a provocation that prompted an internal discussion about what the BSR represents, how it functions, what it upholds, its inertia, and ultimately, how to decolonise the academy.*[20]

Figure 5

Phoebe Boswell, *Installation: Wake Work I: Chinyere, You Are Loved (Rest in Power, Emmanuel Chidi Namdi) (left)*, *In Solidarity and Remembrance (centre)*, *Sing, Beloveds. Scream. Be Loud. Remember, We Were Never Meant to Survive (Rest in Power, Idy Diene) (right), June Mostra exhibition, British School at Rome, 15–22 June 2019, 2019, graphite and chalk pencil on black paper, mounted on wood (left), broken flowerpots taken from the fountain of the British School at Rome (centre)*, graphite and white chalk on black paper, mounted on wood (right), variable. Digital image courtesy of Phoebe Boswell (all rights reserved).

As an act of both remembrance and re-enactment, the broken flowerpots remove the institutional gaze away from the discourse of race and re-centre it on the complex connections between history and property: the property of the municipal flowerpots damaged by the protesters; the colonial legacies of the British Schools across the Mediterranean; and the devaluation of Idy Diene's life subjected to "racial calculus". Britain's impending exit from the European Union in 2019 should be taken as a context to think about Boswell's work, but also as the text on which she intervenes to redact and annotate the role of British art institutions.[21] While her initial project aimed to involve migrants and refugees in Rome marked by the experience of the Black Mediterranean, she quickly started to interrogate the relationship between the whiteness of the institution and Black optics—the structural limits which come to define the work of a Black artist only in relation to Blackness as spectacle. Interestingly, *Wake Work* is now part of Italian art history as well, having been taken on board by Black Italian artists and academics to mobilise the transnational coalitions of solidarity and resilience through which the installation has acquired even deeper meanings.[22]

The institutional and political entanglements activated by the work demand that we use history to bridge the geographical distance between Dover and Lampedusa. Brexit does not originate anything new for British art and its institutions that does not already belong to the history of natural extraction and the calculus of life that have defined modernity in the advent of racial capitalism. And while I think about *Wake Work* and the lives that it commemorates and celebrates, I am reminded of the important difference in English between roots and routes: What transnational coalitions do we allow ourselves to form under the rubric of British art? Whose routes do we want British art to preserve and remember? Can we start to think, as Phoebe

Boswell does, of artistic coalitions that engage with histories beyond the history of the nation? British art in the times of Brexit does not need to be defined by nationalism; it can be defined, instead, by the active resistance to that logic.

RESPONSE BY
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Brexit, Whiteness, and *The Arbor* (2010)

If the nation is a fiction made real by psychic investments in images of its cohesion, then Brexit exposes what people who have been subjected to Britain's imperial forays into the continents designated "dark" have known all along: the image of England coheres around whiteness. Clio Barnard's film *The Arbor* (2010) evokes some of the conditions that gave rise to the racism expressed and fueled by Brexit (fig. 6). Funded by Artangel, which supports artwork that defies the boundaries of genre, *The Arbor* tells the story of Andrea Dunbar, a young white woman who lived, wrote, and died—prematurely, at the age of 29—on the Buttershaw estate, the notorious housing project in Bradford. Encouraged by a teacher, Dunbar garnered recognition for her skills as a playwright, as she represented the despair of England's post-industrial wasteland with insightful accuracy. Building on Dunbar's plays, Barnard's film attests to the compounded destruction brought about not by foreigners but by a culture of neglect justified by the neoliberal premise that people and places can be abandoned in the name of capitalist prosperity.

Figure 6

Clio Barnard, *The Arbor*, 2010, film still. Digital image courtesy of Clio Barnard / Artangel (all rights reserved).

The Arbor is a documentary, but it is also an artwork that blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy. It includes footage from an earlier documentary about Dunbar, presents interviews with people in her life, and restages scenes from her plays. The scenes that most stand out are those in which actors lip-sync the testimonies of Dunbar's children. The slight, Godard-like disconnect between the recordings and the images of the actors on screen creates an uncanny effect that destabilizes the voice as a sign of origin. Laura Mulvey describes these scenes as "bodily palimpsest[s]".[23] The testimony of Lorraine, Dunbar's half-Pakistani daughter, is the

damaged heart of *The Arbor*. Engulfed by anger and alcoholism, Dunbar neglected all three of her children, but Lorraine was subjected to her mother's racist assaults, which inscribed her further within an orbit of misery. The portrayal of Lorraine narrating her life begs for a psychoanalytic reading: it reveals the violent words children inherit from their parents and the scars that repeat family narratives with cruel exactitude. Psychoanalysis is also pertinent to the slippage between the voice and the mouth of the actor, Manjinder Virk. Along with Lorraine's ability to, as Mulvey puts it, "articulate and analyze the most difficult aspects her life", this slippage opens possibilities for change.[24] Reflecting on her family's refusal to recognize her as Pakistani, Lorraine declares: "You don't have to be English to be part of a family".

The Arbor suggests that the exclusions Lorraine was subjected to within her own her family can be traced to her mother's fraught place in the racist world of the Buttershaw estate. Barnard recreates a scene from Dunbar's play, also called *The Arbor* (1980), in which "the girl" fends off the sexist and racist taunts of young white men who call her a "Dirty Slut" and a "Paki Lover". Dunbar and Barnard want viewers to see these men articulating the belief that they have a proprietary claim on the girl's life, body, and love. This belief is made possible by a definition of the white female body as a site for reproducing the fictions of racial stability and the delusions of white superiority. The penultimate scene of *The Arbor* is footage of Dunbar with Lorraine as a one-year-old infant traveling to London. As she bundles her daughter up, navigates getting her pushchair on to the train, and then wipes the steam from the window so they can look out of it together, viewers see Andrea's maternal care hinged to her movement into an independent future. The scene is, as Mulvey writes, "unbearably poignant in light of both their future lives".[25]

Watching the conclusion to *The Arbor*, I thought of Brexit, but also Sigmund Freud. Narrowly escaping Nazi persecution, the British newspapers described Freud as a "poor refugee" when he arrived in London in 1938. Aided by Princess Marie Bonaparte and Ernest Jones, Freud's exceptional status saved him. And yet, reading about what Peter Gay describes as the "outpouring of kindness and sympathy" Freud received from "total strangers", one cannot help but think of an England that Brexit has boarded up and blocked from view.[26] Freud brought with him the concept of the unconscious, as well as ideas and practices for rewriting its collective manifestations through nationalist aggressions. Elizabeth Danto shows that Red Vienna's experiment in democratic socialism impacted Freud's thinking, and in 1918 he gave a speech at the Fifth International Congress in Budapest in which he declared that psychoanalysis should be available to the poor. After this declaration, many of its practitioners across Europe thought of psychoanalysis as a social "right".[27] Free psychoanalytic clinics became part of a socialist vision in which healthcare, education, and art were not tools of exclusion but collectively available arenas for cultivating health. What if Dunbar and her daughter had been traveling in the England that welcomed Freud, and in turn, what if Freud had been able to realize the "right to psychoanalysis" on a national scale? Brexit mocks these questions, but *The Arbor* provokes us to ask them.

RESPONSE BY
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Reframing AIDS, Reframing COVID-19

While the architects of Brexit could never have foreseen the calamity of COVID-19, the withdrawal from the European Union will forever be entangled with the pandemic in public

memory. Grappling with these inseparable developments, many art historians have recently felt a stronger responsibility to decolonise the discipline, confront whiteness, and undo the tenacity of the nation state as an epistemological framework. Yet, these important intellectual projects, as the editors of *British Art Studies* have noted, are not new. In our scramble to contend with the interrelated biomedical, economic, and racial crises of today, it behooves us to reconsider a visionary archive of queer Black art, activism, and criticism.

One cultural work that remains chillingly relevant is Pratibha Parmar's video *Reframing AIDS* (1987) (fig. 7). At the height of Thatcherism, Parmar—a lesbian feminist Kenyan-born British of Indian descent—insisted that HIV/AIDS was structured by questions of race, gender, immigration, and representation. Analysing the disease, the torrential backlash against queers and people of color, and the emerging infrastructures of care and activism, *Reframing AIDS* stitched together an array of community and cultural workers across London.

Figure 7

Reframing AIDS, 1987, video still. Digital image
courtesy of Pratibha Parmar.

Besides giving voice to women, Black people, individuals living with HIV, and artists—that is, those the mainstream media rarely gave the opportunity to speak for themselves—the video carved out a deeper context for understanding the virus as it operated on local, national, and global scales. The feminist activists Susan Ardill and Sue O'Sullivan discuss how the new national safe-sex campaigns completely missed the mark by neglecting women; the Labour politician Ken Livingstone criticised the climate of fear propagated by the government; and HIV-positive gay nurse George Cant shares his mixed experiences of support and discrimination in the NHS.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic fed into and intensified anti-Black racism, immigration control, and the lingering effects of colonialism. Parmar's film illustrates this through interviews: the art historian and activist Simon Watney cites the fact that the UK and sixteen other countries restricted HIV-positive people from entering, and instituted mandatory testing for high-risk groups; the activist Dorian Jabri points out the rampant Africanization of AIDS in the media, a phenomenon on which the filmmaker Stuart Marshall and the critic Kobena Mercer also elaborate on. In dialogue with Grace Bailey, Mercer draws attention to the problematic cultural associations between the spread of germs and the intermixing of ethnic groups, especially Africans in Europe.

To reframe the AIDS crisis and support their vulnerable communities, as Parmar's video posited and put into practice, cultural agents needed to transform the terms of representation—works of art, video, photography, and criticism were fundamental to AIDS activism. Parmar's interviews with Sunil Gupta and Isaac Julien, whose respective photo series *Exiles* (1986) and video *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* (1987) were also featured, likewise reflect this conviction.

Because national imaginaries dangerously shape viral anxieties, the global perspectives of this brilliant cohort of Black and queer AIDS cultural activists can still offer guidance in the age of Brexit and COVID-19. Particularly as the virus comes under control in the Global North while continuing to wreak havoc on the Global South, we need to devise intersectional activist, scholarly, and creative projects that scrutinise the pandemic through the lens of decolonisation.

RESPONSE BY
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Fragmented Kingdom: Community Endeavors Reflect an Unstable Nation

In May 2021, the Turner Prize announced a list of nominees composed entirely of collectives. According to the jury's chair, it "captures and reflects the mood of the moment in contemporary British art".[28] The curated list comes in the long aftermath of Brexit and follows two years of disrupted awards. In 2020, the ceremony was cancelled, granting ten artists a £10,000 bursary. In 2019, the four nominees split the £40,000 award, reacting to a "political crisis in Britain" by declaring themselves a collective and issuing a joint statement, "in the name of commonality, multiplicity and solidarity".[29]

This year's nominees includes Array, a group that responds to issues disproportionately affecting Northern Ireland including the decriminalisation of abortion and discrimination against queer communities, through performances, protests, exhibitions, and events (fig. 8); Black Obsidian Sound System, a Queer, Trans, and Intersex Black and People of Colour collective championing sound-system culture across the African diaspora through club nights, art installations, technical workshops, and creative commissions; Cooking Sections, a London-based duo examining the ecological and geopolitical damages of food's mass-production through installation, performance, and video; Gentle/Radical, Cardiff-based artists, community workers, performers, faith practitioners, and writers adopting art as a tool for social change; and Project Art Works, a Hastings-based collective of neuro-diverse artists exploring art with and by neuro-minorities through exhibitions, events, films, and digital platforms.[30]

Figure 8

Members of the Turner-shortlisted Array Collective at an event on International Women's Day, 2019. Digital image courtesy of Alessia Cargnelli (all rights reserved).

While distinct in remit, each collective is localised—produced by specific groups determined by a shared sense of location, dislocation, or identity. They serve particular constituencies while also —in moments of visibility such as the Turner Prize—spotlighting under-recognised topics or challenging discrimination or marginalisation. Each group innovates distinct modes of public engagement, providing advisory or technical services beyond the auspices of participatory art. Discourse and activism are embedded within greater schemes of work, schemes that reach for financing beyond art's public funding bodies ailing under Conservative austerity.

While these praxes may be reflective of a distinctive present, they resemble the integrated practices of the British film workshop movement during the 1960s, later constituted by the "Workshop Declaration" of 1982.[31] Bringing funding, recognition, and audiences to artist and filmmaking collectives, the Workshop Declaration, according to Claire M. Holdsworth, "sowed seeds that pluralised filmmaking in Britain, enabling a generation of innovative alternative filmmakers to make and show work, and convey perspectives not yet seen or heard, to ever wider publics".[32] As well as producing films (of various formats, often broadcast by Channel 4), workshops were required to consider distribution, education, and community access to equipment. Workshops were also committed to racial diversity and local issues—a codified fusion of provision and representation disrupting an otherwise predominantly white, middle-class, metropolitan political and media stronghold. Workshops included the Newcastle-based working-class collective Amber Films; the Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa, both of which explored Black British identity and culture through film, video, and installation; Retake, Britain's first all-Asian film and video collective; and the Derry Film and Video Workshop, a women-led company with a focus on women's experiences in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The Workshop Declaration's financial infrastructure was the result of complex negotiations with a previous Labour government, but came into effect as Britain toiled under Thatcher's slogan, "There Is No Alternative". Temporarily it appeared to provide just that—real funding for creativity, solidarity, and production.[33] It supported artists working locally and reparatively, as the state proceeded to govern heavily in the interests of the few. We're back here now, but while

the Turner Prize nominees seem to return to similar focal points and group organising methods, rewards seem tokenistic by comparison to these earlier ventures. No real alternative, no real economy—not yet.

RESPONSE BY
Edwin Coomasaru
Contributing Editor
British Art Studies

Brexit's Supernatural Borderlands

In 2017, the Northern Irish artist Rita Duffy collaborated with Catholic and Protestant women living on either side of the Irish border to create *Soften the Border*, an installation that straddled the geopolitical line running through Belcoo–Blacklion Bridge between County Fermanagh in the United Kingdom and County Cavan in Ireland (fig. 9). A series of knitted orbs, votive dolls, and disembodied cats' heads were exhibited over the River Belcoo. Duffy worked with cross-community groups set up with European Union peace funding after 1998; the artwork is a testament to the links and bonds between border peoples that do not map neatly on to national boundaries.

Figure 9

Rita Duffy, *Soften the Border*, 2017, installation on Blacklion-Belcoo bridge, dimensions variable. Digital image courtesy of Rita Duffy (all rights reserved).

Colonised by the Normans (and later the English) from 1169, Ireland was incorporated into a joint kingdom with Britain between 1801 and 1921, when it was partitioned by Westminster. A thirty-year civil war (1968–1998) between loyalists, republicans, and the British state was fought over whether Northern Ireland should remain in the UK or join the Republic of Ireland. During the conflict the border was often a site of violence, and in the 1970s the British Army secretly staged black magic rituals near the border as a form of psychological warfare.[34] The geopolitical boundary line winds through 310 miles of countryside, occasionally splitting farms and even houses.

Ireland and the UK joined the European Economic Community on the same day in 1973, and the creation of an EU single market in 1993 helped ease some of the border's economic friction. The majority of voters in Northern Ireland voted to remain in the 2016 EU referendum. The 1998

peace agreement—the Good Friday Agreement—had granted those born in Northern Ireland access to both British and Irish citizenship, a conception of state-sanctioned identity that profoundly jarred the demands of Brexiteers that the UK "take back control" of its borders. The legacy of the conflict and the fragile peace process presented deep problems for those living in Ireland and Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland's power-sharing government collapsed in the three years following the referendum. The Irish border also presented serious problems for British politicians pursuing a hard Brexit after 2016. Between 2016 and 2020, journalists and MPs proposed variously that the UK annex Ireland or "starve" the country (which had experienced the Great Famine in 1845–1852).[35]

Before he became prime minister, Boris Johnson underplayed the border issue, criticizing the government for letting it dictate EU exit negotiations, or "allowing the tail to wag the dog".[36] After election to the UK Government's highest office in 2019, Johnson conceded to the EU's original proposals for an economic border in the Irish Sea between Britain and Northern Ireland. The latter remains in the EU's regulatory orbit, giving the former the option to diverge, which has angered some unionists and loyalists. Duffy's installation on the Belcoo–Blacklion Bridge helped raise the profile of the Irish border during withdrawal negotiations, and reflected on how border peoples have been both profoundly impacted by and also long worked against national boundaries as they shift over time.

The UK's borders, like Britain itself, are neither natural nor atemporal: they are unstable expressions and structures of power, contested and challenged throughout history. The EU referendum and withdrawal negotiations both articulated and exacerbated a profound crisis of British identity, especially in England. Researching art in relation to Britishness means coming into contact or conflict with the power struggles and myths that shape the country's violent histories.

Artists and art historians making work in relation to Britain have long been complicit with or critical of imperial propaganda. In an attempt to try and justify centuries of oppression and theft, proponents of the British Empire claimed it represented order, progress, civilisation, rationality and modernity. In 1895, the colonial secretary insisted that "the British race is the greatest of governing races the world has ever seen … shown by the success which we have had in administrating vast dominions".[37] These rhetoric strategies sought to rebrand the mass murder and material wealth British society was built on as benevolent custodianship.[38] History as an intellectual discipline in Britain has also long been organised by narratives of linear progress indelibly shaped by empire.[39]

While imperialism remains pervasive throughout the UK, it seems possible that the political crises after 2016 caused more people in England to question widely naturalized narratives about Britain's past and supposed superiority. In this context, Duffy's votive dolls and occult symbols on the Belcoo–Blacklion Bridge draw on longer histories of supernaturalism across the British Isles to unravel rhetoric of rationality versus irrationality that shaped British imperialism.[40] But even as Brexit supporters likened the UK leaving the EU to Ireland's violent struggle for independence, the Irish border troubled the image held among British politicians and the press about the nation as a neatly bounded entity.[41]

One Irish journalist observed that "the 'peripheral peoples' of the Irish borderlands have been the ghosts at the Brexit feast and their insistence on being heard has radically changed the tenor of English politics".[42] Artworks such as *Soften the Border* tap into and trace deeper social shifts, revealing the ways in which artists and activists resist the conceptual narratives that have long underpinned normative ideas of Britishness. Any British art history must pay attention to such

contestations, to think critically and self-reflexively about the ways in which the discipline is both complicit in or challenges structures of violence and oppression that underpin the UK's past and present.

RESPONSE BY
James Alexander Cameron

Between British and English: Racial Shibboleths in Medieval Architecture

"British art" has been an awkward term for scholars of medieval architecture long before Brexit due to the Kingdom of England's cultural separation from Scotland since the end of the thirteenth century.[43] Even when acknowledging the occupation of Wales as a principality and Ireland as a lordship, "English art" also has unfortunate structural problems in its methods and nomenclature.[44] Formative post-war studies that lay the groundwork, such as the *Oxford History of English Art*, edited by T. S. R. Boase, Alec Clifton-Taylor's *The Pattern of English Building* (1962), and, of course, Nikolaus Pevsner's *The Buildings of England* series (first published in 1951) could be accused of naively promoting a sense of a prelapsarian vernacular English building, untainted by British imperialism.[45] Consequently, the field of medieval architectural history today—overwhelmingly white and Oxbridge-educated—is complacent about the use of racial terminology, which is arguably more malignant than puerile nationalistic Union-Jack waving.

Early medieval literary studies has long been embroiled in a controversy over the terminology "Anglo-Saxon", and its use by white supremacists to emphasise Germanic ancestry.[46] Terms that historians often take for granted, such as the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle", are most often recently invented labels, and ones that should be open to revision and change.[47] Yet, change in architectural history is unforthcoming. "Anglo-Saxon" is used in the most recent editions of *Pevsner Architectural Guides* to refer to anything Romanesque that has a pre-Norman style of construction, grouping the mid-eleventh-century tower of Earl's Barton in Northamptonshire (fig. 10) in with monuments as diverse in chronology as the Carolingian-period Brixworth church in what would then have been the Kingdom of Mercia (c.800) and sites as early as the seventh century.[48]

Figure 10

*Parish church of All Saints, Earl's Barton,
Northamptonshire*. The originally free-standing tower
was probably constructed in the 1050s, possibly as
burhgeat: a tower required for the promotion of a ceorl
to a thegn in pre-Conquest English law. The lord of
Earl's Barton in 1066 was royal thegn Bondi the
Staller, whose name suggests he had Danish
parentage, 2018, photograph. Digital image courtesy
of James Cameron (all rights reserved).

There is another persistent complacency in English medieval architecture studies: a reluctancy to seriously reassess the work of John Hooper Harvey, who was perhaps third only in stature to Pevsner and Clifton-Taylor during the post-war years. This is despite the fact that it has been public knowledge for over a decade now that he was a member of the Imperial Fascist League—the most extreme British fascist party with strong links to Nazi Germany—and the author of vehemently anti-Semitic tracts.[49] Immediately after the Second World War, Harvey spent extended spells in Spain, admiring of its "intense conservatism [and] all-pervading feeling of nationality" under Franco.[50] In the late 1970s, he maintained that the Crown court was correct in its 1255 judgement to execute nineteen Jews of Lincoln under accusation of the ritual murder of a young boy, who would be venerated as Little St Hugh under royal approval.[51]

It is not just a case of "separating the art from the artist" with Harvey. Beyond the barely disguised ethno-nationalism and authoritarianism of his survey *Gothic England* (1947), because of his overbearing belief in the creative genius of individual "great men" (most often called John, as it happens),[52] his apparently forensic approach to dating buildings through documentary analysis is frequently deeply flawed. Chasing a name, Harvey's scholarship misled Pevsner (and thus generations of readers of the Wiltshire *Buildings of England*) that Salisbury Cathedral's iconic spire was built a generation later than it actually was.[53] Despite his manifest shortcomings as a historian and a person, I still frequently come across his critical judgements held in the highest regard by contemporary writers.[54]

Terminologies in medieval architectural history, like public statues, should not be immune from disputation and, if necessary, retirement. I would argue that, rather than marking a turning point, Brexit represents only a continuing reluctance for self-reflection on issues of national identity, not just in the culturally conservative political and punditry establishment, but also in supposedly liberal UK academia. As familiar as the term "Anglo-Saxon" has become when referring to pleasingly ancient structures like the Earl's Barton tower, correlation of architecture styles with racial bloodlines is irresponsible.

RESPONSE BY
Imogen Hart
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University of California, Berkeley

British Craft Before the European Union

In September 2017, David Peters Corbett and I asked: "What is the role of art history in the Brexit era?"[55] A year after the Brexit referendum, it seemed essential to explore how art history could "shed light on the history of Britain's interaction with other countries and cultures".[56] Since then, as the editors note in their provocation, the UK government has attempted to set limits on the role of art historians. In 2021, our question takes on a new, more sinister meaning: how is art history being circumscribed in the Brexit era? One way to resist current efforts to depoliticize art history is to expose the ways in which objects have been mobilized to support the agendas of the state.

In 1942, the British Council sent an *Exhibition of Modern British Crafts* to tour North America (fig. 11).[57] Planned before the United States' entry into the Second World War, this exhibition was part of a program of cultural diplomacy that sought to win American sympathy for the Allies' cause.[58] The exhibition attempted to reinforce Britain's "special relationship" with the United States by presenting British craft as a symbol of Western democracy.[59] Framed by a narrative of Britain as the last European country to hold out against the onslaught of fascism, the objects on display were invested with principles of freedom and individuality.[60]
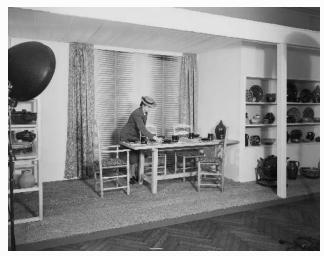
Figure 11

Muriel Rose Adjusts the Country Dining Room Installation at the exhibition *Modern British Crafts*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 21 May–19 July 1942, June 1945, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Art Resource, New York (all rights reserved).

As much as *Modern British Crafts* seemed to affirm the stability of national culture—displaying "jugs in traditional English shapes" and asserting that British crafts had not "greatly changed in character and quality" since opus anglicanum—it also demonstrated how dependent that culture was on international relationships.[61] Far from strengthening the supposedly unchanging national craft tradition, isolation left British craft struggling to survive. All but a handful of the exhibits had been produced before the war. Craftspeople were redeployed to war work; materials were impossible to obtain because they were being used to make weapons or they could no longer be imported; craft galleries were forced to close; and, even for those few who could continue to practice, the market for their work had shrunk.[62] British craft needed peace to thrive and it needed international consumers to make it sustainable.

Modern British Crafts was organized by the British Council rather than the Ministry of Information because it was not ostensibly political.[63] But numerous supporters on both sides of the Atlantic observed its political value, one claiming that it was "*much more valuable than any more direct form of propaganda*".[64] Let this be a warning to us. A history of British art that does not constantly critique the concept of Britishness and analyze art's role in constructing national identity will be "much more valuable" to the state than "any more direct form of propaganda".

RESPONSE BY
Corinne Fowler
Professor of Postcolonial Literature, University of Leicester and Director of Colonial Countryside: National Trust Houses Reinterpreted
National Trust

A Young Coachman. British (English) School: Interpreting Country House Paintings in a Neo-Nationalist Era

In 1840, a portrait was painted of a black coachboy, one of two black servants who served at Erddig Hall in North Wales (fig. 12). The young man is dressed in a red and blue livery. His eyes

meet the viewer of his portrait. The National Trust Collections website describes the portrait as British, but this should not detract from the global contexts in which such paintings were produced.[65] William Wilberforce is mentioned in the writing at top right of the painting, which recounts the coachboy's misfortunes. The painting shows the cultural impact of black and white abolitionists' campaigns during this period. It reflects a series of national and international conversations about slave-trading, slavery and the apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship was really slavery by another name: the 1833 Emancipation Act initially obliged enslaved people to work, unwaged, for an additional eight years. The issue of apprenticeship was resolved just two years before the painting's completion.

Figure 12

British (English) School, *John Meller's Black Coachboy*, 1770–1799, oil on canvas, 114.3 × 91.4 cm. Collection of Erddig, Wrexham (NT 1151289). Digital image courtesy of National Trust Images (all rights reserved).

The prominence of Emancipation debates during this period provides a useful context for understanding the painting's resonance at the time. The painting is actually based on a much earlier portrait of a black servant, dated 1770, when slave-trading was at its peak. Although Britain was then mired in the slave-trade, many Britons nonetheless deplored the slavery business, including William Wordsworth, who was born in that same year. Also in 1770, Captain Cook dropped anchor in modern-day Sydney, renaming it Botany Bay and claiming "New South Wales" for Britain. On board his ship was Joseph Banks who had, in Tahiti, spotted the breadfruit. He saw the potential of this as cheap food for enslaved people in the Caribbean. Banks was an advocate of slavery because of its contribution to the British economy. Bank's attempts at transplanting breadfruit to feed the enslaved in the Caribbean was initially unsuccessful, but other attempts did meet with success. Banks went on to become the unofficial director of Kew Gardens, which became an influential international knowledge and seed-exchange, at the heart of colonial botany. A network of plant hunters sprang up to serve wealthy

patrons and gardeners' nurseries sold expensive "exotic" plants for healthy profits. These sorts of colonial activities had a real bearing on country house estates and portraits of this nature. Paintings depicting black servants, often children, hang in country houses throughout Britain. The 1840 Erdigg portrait is unusual. It depicts the servant as a subject in his own right. More often, African and Indian servants were painted gazing up adoringly at their employers. As Paterson Joseph points out—and David Dabydeen before him—for decades art historians have overlooked the stories of black sitters, which remain largely unresearched and untold.[66]

It is a challenge to research and tell these stories in the midst of a "culture war". This war was declared by a group of fifty-nine MPs and seven Peers, called the Common Sense Group, inspired by the European Research Group, which was influential on Brexit policy.[67] Brexit taught these politicians that nationalism wins votes. The Common Sense Group declared a "culture war" in the summer of 2020. Its leader, Sir John Hayes, repeatedly condemned the National Trust report on its properties' links to colonialism. He also said that an English Heritage report on the slavery connections of the built heritage "should be shredded".[68] His words typify the group's openly confrontational tone.

The relationship between government and curators has lately come under strain. Curators should —in principle at least—be protected from political interference by the customary government "arm's-length" principle. Regardless of the current political mood, there remains a body of country house paintings and a wealth of untold stories. It is our duty to tell them, whatever the pressures might be to keep them from view.

RESPONSE BY
Alexander Massouras

The Present Order

In the twentieth century artists have clustered with remarkable geographic specificity: St Ives, Norwich, or London have all offered much more meaningful delineations than Britain or England. Even London resists usefulness as a defining territory, easily fragmenting into smaller constituencies: Hampstead in the 1930s was home to what Herbert Read called the "nest of gentle artists".[69] The circle could be smaller still, confined to Parkhill Road, where residents for a brief period included John Cecil Stephenson, John Skeaping, and Piet Mondrian, who lived next door to Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth. Or there is Dalston in the 1980s–1990s, a hub for the Black Audio Film Collective, whose founders, including John Akomfrah and Lina Gopaul, had originally met in Portsmouth.

And if such specific groupings are shifting and unstable, what chance is there that something as baggy as nationhood could carry useful definitional meaning? Ian Hamilton Finlay's Little Sparta offers an array of works pertinent to these questions of geographic distinction, their potency heightened by the vicissitudes of recent politics. In the Pentland Hills outside Edinburgh (which may or may not be British in the future), Little Sparta documents a kind of retreat and insularism, which is offset by the ambition of its imagination and its reach through time. Hamilton Finlay had the advantage that his battle was, at least nominally, with relatively contained entities: Strathclyde local authority and the Scottish Arts Council. But his laconic, occasionally satirical responses fight a long and more universal fight.

Among Little Sparta's works is *The Present Order*, conceived in 1983 (fig. 13). It is a carving of a quotation by the French revolutionary Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just, realised in five iterations during the 1980s, in Dutch, English, French, German, and Italian. Each word of the quotation, "The present order is the disorder of the future" (as it is in English), is carved on a

separate stone fragment. If it was not for their weight, their spacing would invite reordering, like magnetic poetry on a fridge door. The work's historical connotations and many languages connect it to Europe, but each version also belongs to its landscape, its mud and grass. Likewise, the paradox of *The Present Order*'s own relationship to order. Despite window-dressing suggestive of disorder and variability—the edges of each slab, for instance, would not lock together—the text nevertheless appears in order and fixed in stone. Like much sculpture, it is editioned, following an internal order and the order and conventions of the market. Like many editions, the work is and is not plural, existing as a population of similar but unique objects. Looking at *The Present Order* from what feels like the disorder of the future, the ambiguities of Hamilton Finlay's work allow it to be either a consolation or a bittersweet manifesto. It behaves like a ruin battered by time, but all except thirty years of that age is an illusion, a fiction like nationhood itself, and like the future Saint-Just imagined.

Figure 13

Ian Hamilton Finlay, *The Present Order is the Disorder of the Future Saint-just*, 1983, carving. Little Sparta, Dunsyre, Scotland. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay: Photo: Victoria Miro Gallery (all rights reserved).

Sparta was a city state, which (to participate in Hamilton Finlay's time-travel) might be a description applied by future historians to London. We might wonder what were Sparta's own Hampsteads and Daltons and what qualities distinguished them to attract artists? Were those qualities Spartan, Peloponnesian, or more broadly dispersed, making the artists feel connected to the world beyond Sparta?

About the author

Footnotes

1. Mark Cheetham, *Artwriting, Nation, and Cosmopolitanism* (London: Routledge, 2016); Antoinette Burton, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and Through Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and William Vaughan, "The Englishness of British Art", *Oxford Art Journal* 13, no. 2 (1990): 11–23. The journal also addressed this subject in its inaugural issue: Richard Johns, "There's No Such Thing as British Art", *British Art Studies*, no. 1 (2015), DOI:10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-01/conversation.

2. Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 5.

3. Most recently, the British Art Network's Black British Art Research Group organised a workshop titled "Curating Nation", inviting artists, curators, and scholars to focus on expanded and more diverse narratives of British art that push the parameters of the nation. The event was led by Alice Correia, Elizabeth Robles, and Marlene Smith, in conversation with Hammad Nasar, curator of *British Art Show 9* (which will travel between Wolverhampton, Aberdeen, Plymouth, and Manchester in 2021–2022), see Cat Cooper, "Curating Nation: Call for Contributions", 22 January 2021, https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/press-office/stories/curating-nation-call-for-contributions. For *British Art Show 9*, 13 May–14 September 2022, see https://homemcr.org/exhibition/british-art-show-9/.

4. Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price, "Decolonizing Art History", *Art History* 43, no. 1 (January 2020): 8–66, DOI:10.1111/1467-8365.12490.

5. Euclid, "Assessing the European Union's Contribution to the Arts, Museums & Creative Industries in England 2007–2016" (London: Arts Council England, 2018), https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/assessing-eu's-contribution-arts-museums-creative-industries.

6. In September 2020, the Department for Education prohibited teachers in England from using material created by organisations "that take extreme political stances on matters" such as "a publicly stated desire to abolish or overthrow … capitalism", notably keeping materials from antiracist groups, such as Black Lives Matter, and environmentalist groups, out of classrooms. See Mattha Busby, "Schools in England Told Not to Use Material from Anti-Capitalist Groups", *The Guardian*, 27 September 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/sep/27/uk-schools-told-not-to-use-anti-capitalist-material-in-teaching. Again, in September 2020, the government also instructed arms-length bodies such as museums and galleries to follow its position on contested heritage, which "does not support the removal of statues or other similar objects". See letter from Oliver Dowden to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, "HM Government Position on Contested Heritage", File INT2020/19838/DC, 22 September 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/922293/22-09-20_Letter_to_DCMS_ALBs.docx. Most recently, the report from the government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities calls for "all children to reclaim their British heritage" against "negative calls for 'decolonising' the curriculum". See Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, "Independent Report: Foreword, Introduction, and Full Recommendations", 28 April 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/foreword-introduction-and-full-recommendations. For further examples, see Peter Walker, "Government To Appoint 'Free-Speech Champion' For English Universities", *The Guardian*, 14 February 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/14/government-to-appoint-free-speech-champion-for-universities-heritage-history-cancel-culture; and Alex Barker, Nic Fildes, and George Parker, "Charles Dunstone Quit Museum Post over Government 'Culture War'", *Financial Times*, 1 May 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/25642d90-d79c-416f-9ebe-30895790bfa9.

7. Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

8. Robert Saunders, *Yes to Europe! The 1975 Referendum and Seventies Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), see especially "Introduction: A Fanfare for Europe'", 1–

26, DOI:10.1017/9781108340915.

9. Ysanne Holt, "On Watery Borders, Borderlands, and Tania Kovats' *Head to Mouth*", *Arts* 8, no. 3 (2019): 104–114, DOI:10.3390/arts8030104.

10. "If, in the context of Brexit, this British season finds a particular echo, it nonetheless strongly reaffirms the unwavering links woven through history between England and Aquitaine, which has always remained very anglophile".

11. Madeleine Bunting, "Books About Our Island Mentality", *The Guardian Review*, 23 March 2019, no. 62, 38.

12. "Islandness" is a concept broadly used (and debated) in contemporary Island Studies to denote a sense of a separate or contained culture and identity. I explore this term in my forthcoming book: *Islands in Contemporary Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2022).

13. Gill Perry, "Landscaping Islands: Alex Hartley's 'Nowhereisland' and Floating Histories in Contemporary British Art", *British Art Studies* 10 (November 2018), DOI:10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-10/gperry.

14. Email interview with the artist, 7 June 2021.

15. Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Island Writing, Creole Cultures", in *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*1, ed. Ato Quayson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 802–803.

16. Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1989), 139.

17. Saidiya Hartman, *Lose your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 6.

18. Ida Danewid, "White Innocence in the Black Mediterranean: Hospitality and the Erasure of History", *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 7 (2017), 1674–89; and The Black Mediterranean Collective, eds., *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

19. Each flowerpot commemorates three recent victims of racism in Italy: Emmanuel Chidi Namdi, Pateh Sabally, and Idy Diene. Their portraits were also included in the show.

20. Phoebe Boswell, "Letter to Frank Bowling". Talk, Tate Britain, London, 26 June 2019.

21. Here I am paraphrasing from Christina Sharpe's discussion of "Black annotation" and "Black redaction" as new modes of writing that counter the detached optics and brutal architectures of state power over Black life;, see Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 113–30.

22. Some elements of the installation *Wake Work* were exhibited in Florence in 2019 as part of *The Recovery Plan*, curated by Justin Randolph Thompson. In October 2019, Boswell returned to the BSR for a talk with the Italian scholar Angelica Pesarini (New York University), see 'Conversation with Phoebe Boswell and Angelica Pesarini', The BSR Podcast, 30 July 2020, https://www.bsr.ac.uk/news/events-podcasts.

23. Laura Mulvey, "Clio Barnard, *The Arbor*", in *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women, and Changing Times* (London: Reaktion, 2019), 160.

24. Mulvey, "Clio Barnard, 'The Arbor'", 162.

25. Mulvey, "Clio Barnard, 'The Arbor'", 161.

26. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 631.

27. Elizabeth Ann Danto, *Freud's Free Clinics: Psychoanalysis and Social Justice, 1918–1938* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

28. Alex Farquharson, Director of Tate Britain and Chair of the Turner Prize, "Turner Prize Shortlist Announced", Tate, Press Release, 7 May 2021, https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/turner-prize-shortlist-announced-0.

29. Mark Brown, "Turner Prize Awarded Four Ways After Artists' Plea to Judges", *The Guardian*, 3 December 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/dec/03/turner-prize-2019-lawrence-abu-hamdan-helen-cammock-oscar-murillo-and-tai-shani-shared.

30. In describing their commitments to and solidarity with "the queer communities", Array consistently adopt the lower-case, whereas B.O.S.S apply upper-case consistently with other identifiers. I maintain both cases within this sentence to reflect this diversity of approaches.

31. The Workshop Declaration was an agreement made in 1982 between Channel 4 (C4) and the trade union, Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) in consultation with the Independent Film-Makers' Association (IFA), the British Film Institute (BFI), and regional arts associations. See Claire M. Holdsworth, "The Workshop Declaration: Independent and Organised Labour", in *Other Cinemas, Politics Culture and Experimental Film in the 1970s*, ed. Sue Clayton and Laura Mulvey (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 307–12.

32. Holdsworth, "The Workshop Declaration", 311.

33. Peter Thomas, "The British Workshop Movement and Amber Film", *Studies in European Cinema* 8, no. 3 (2011), 195–209.

34. When the ritual remains were found by the public, they sparked a panic in the Northern Irish press, see Richard Jenkins, *Black Magic and Bogeymen: Fear, Rumour and Popular Belief in Northern Ireland 1972–74* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2014).

35. Lisa O'Carroll, "Ireland Dismisses Suggestion It Should Quit EU and join UK", *The Guardian*, 26 January 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jan/26/john-humphrys-suggests-ireland-could-quit-eu-and-join-uk; Niamh Lyons, "Brexiteer Blasted Over Threat to Starve Ireland", *The Times*, 8 December 2018, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/brexiteer-blasted-over-threat-to-starve-ireland-tjp7k76mq.

36. "Boris Johnson Calls for More 'Guts' in Brexit Talks", *BBC News*, 8 June 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-44407771.

37. Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 186.

38. Kehinde Andrews, *The New Age of Empire: How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World* (London: Allen Lane, 2021), 1–24 and 55–102.

39. Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: History, Conscience and Britain's Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2020).

40. Edwin Coomasaru, "Brexit and the Occult: Gendered Ghosts of Empire in Project O's 'Saved' and Rita Duffy's 'Soften the Border'", *Third Text* 35 no. 4 (July 2021), DOI:10.1080/09528822.2021.1936929.

41. Fintan O'Toole, *Three Years in Hell: The Brexit Chronicles* (London: Head of Zeus, 2020), 400.

42. O'Toole, *Three Years in Hell*, 393.

43. Richard Fawcett, *The Architecture of the Scottish Medieval Church, 1100–1560* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

44. Roger Stalley, ed., *Irish Gothic Architecture: Construction, Decay and Reinvention* (Dublin: Wordwell, 2012). For Wales, see Eric Fernie, *Romanesque Architecture: The First Style of the European Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 157.

45. *The Oxford History of English Art* began with a heavy focus on the medieval period. The first instalment was the highly influential Joan Evans, *English Art: 1307–1461* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949); followed by David Talbot Rice, *English Art: 871–1100* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); Thomas Sherrer Ross Boase, *English Art: 1100–1216* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); and Peter Brieger, *English Art: 1216–1307* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957). The series concluded with Dennis Farr, *English Art 1870–1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). The projected volumes *Up to 871* and *1461–1553* were never produced. See also Alec Clifton-Taylor, *The Pattern of English Building* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1962).

46. Michael Wood, "As a Racism Row Rumbles on, is it Time to Retire the Term 'Anglo-Saxon'?" *BBC History Magazine*, December 2019, https://www.historyextra.com/period/anglo-saxon/professor-michael-wood-anglo-saxon-name-debate-is-term-racist/.

47. Nicholas Brooks, "'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle(s)' or 'Old English Royal Annals'?" in *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford*, eds. Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds, and Susan M. Johns (London: University of London Press, 2012), 35–48.

48. Bruce Bailey, Nikolaus Pevsner, and Bridget Cherry, *Northamptonshire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 14–17.

49. Graham Macklin, "The Two Lives of John Hooper Harvey", *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 2 (2008), 167–90.

50. John Harvey, *The Cathedrals of Spain* (London: Batsford, 1957), 8. Later in the introduction, it reveals he had "several extended visits between 1948–1956", 10.

51. Macklin, "The Two Lives of John Hooper Harvey", 187–188.

52. John Hooper Harvey, *Gothic England: A Survey of National Culture, 1300–1550* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1947). An index by given name showing the overwhelming popularity of John as a forename in the late Middle Ages can be seen in John Harvey, *English Medieval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary Down to 1550*, 2nd edn (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984), 370.

53. Tim Tatton-Brown, "Building the Tower and Spire at Salisbury Cathedral", in *The Engineering of Medieval Cathedrals,* ed. Lynn T. Courtenay (London: Routledge, 1997), 347.

54. A welcome exception regarding his Spanish work is Tom Nickson, "Gothic Architecture in Spain: Invention and Imitation", in *Gothic Architecture in Spain: Invention and Imitation*, ed. Tom Nickson and Nicola Jennings (London: Courtauld Books Online, 2020), 29. https://courtauld.ac.uk/research/research-resources/publications/courtauld-books-online/gothic-architecture-in-spain-invention-and-imitation/1-gothic-architecture-in-spain-invention-and-imitation-tom-nickson/.

55. I would like to thank David Peters Corbett and Catherine Roach. The quoted text is from a call for papers for the conference "British Art and the Global", co-organized with David Peters Corbett, History of Art Department, Berkeley, 17–19 September 2018, https://arthistory.berkeley.edu/events/british-art-and-the-global/.

56. "British Art and the Global" conference.

57. On the exhibition, see Imogen Hart, "Craft, War, and Cultural Diplomacy: 'Modern British Crafts' in the United States, 1942–1945", *Winterthur Portfolio* 53, nos. 2–3 (Summer/Autumn 2019), 153–85.

58. On cultural propaganda, see Nicholas J. Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign against American Neutrality in World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

59. On the special relationship, see Cull, *Selling War*, 7; and Susan A. Brewer, *To Win the Peace: British Propaganda in the United States during World War II* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 2, 9, and 235.

60. See Hart, "Craft, War, and Cultural Diplomacy", 159, 170, and 175.

61. Charles Marriott, Preface to *Exhibition of Modern British Crafts* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art for the British Council, London, 1942), exhibition catalogue, 11, and ill. 10. The digitized catalogue is available at https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15324coll10/id/167041.

62. See Eric MacLagan, "Introductory Note", and G.R. Hughes, "The Silversmith", *Exhibition of Modern British Crafts*, 9 and 27; James Noel White, "The Unexpected Phoenix I: The Sutherland Teaset", *Craft History* 1 (1988), 49–72, especially 51; and the typed manuscript, "Inquiry into the Present State of the Country in Regard to ART IN INDUSTRY", 1941, "British Library of Information, New York: Fine Arts 1941–46", BW 63/24, The National Archives, London.

63. On the Ministry of Information exhibitions, see Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939–1945* (New Haven, CT: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2007), especially 161–62. On the British Council, see Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years* (London: Cape, 1984).

64. Typed extract, letter to British Council from Boyd Tollinton, British Consulate-General, Boston, 10 September 1942, MRA/1433, "British Council Exhibition USA. Extracts from Letters and Reports", Muriel Rose Archive, Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham. Emphasis in original.

65. See 'A Young Coachman', National Trust, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1151289.

66. Paterson Joseph, "The Outrageous Neglect of African Figures in Art History", *Art UK*, 31 October 2019, https://artuk.org/discover/stories/the-outrageous-neglect-of-african-figures-in-art-history; and David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Image of Black People in Eighteenth-Century English Art* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985).

67. Archie Bland and Jessica Elgot, "Dissatisfied Tory MPs flock to ERG-Inspired Pressure Groups", *The Guardian*, 11 November 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/nov/11/dissatisfied-tory-mps-flock-to-erg-inspired-pressure-groups.

68. "MP Calls for Lincolnshire Slavery Report to be 'Shredded'", BBC News, 18 March 2021.

69. Herbert Read, "A Nest of Gentle Artists", *Apollo*, September 1962, 536–40.

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