

Institution: Middlesex University London		
Unit of Assessment: 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Curating Leon Golub: Extending Global Understanding of Golub's Art, Benefitting the Museum and Gallery Sector, Arts Audiences and the Commercial Art World		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Jon Bird	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Art and Critical Theory (Prof. Emeritus since 30/09/2017)	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 01/09/1981 – 30/09/2017
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2018		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Recognised as the leading authority on the art of Leon Golub (1922-2004) [5.10], Bird's research has resulted in impacts in the following areas: (1) Extending awareness and appreciation of Golub's painting to a global audience through contributing to Golub retrospectives at London's Serpentine Gallery; The Met Breuer, New York; and Fondazione Prada, Milan; (2) Enhancing understanding of Golub's significance as a history painter addressing issues of power, identity and the body relevant to the present, through curating exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery; and Hauser & Wirth, London; (3) Impact on the commercial art world, through providing written evidence and expert testimonial relating to Golub's work in an American civil art fraud case, after undertaking forensic assessment of works of art.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Bird's engagement with the art of Leon Golub represents a sustained research project, initiated in the 1980s and continuing to the present day. Its origins lie in Golub's response to an article that Bird published in the journal <i>Block</i> (Middlesex University, 1979-89), and the theoretical and methodological approach to visual culture pioneered by the journal. Bird's research examines Golub's 'critical realism,' his complex relation with Modernism, his approach to the politics of pictorial representation, and his explorations of the male body as signifier of masculinity, subject to the operations of state power and violence. These issues were initially explored in the critical monograph <i>Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real</i> (Reaktion Books, 2000) [3.1]; and in a <i>Retrospective</i> exhibition that Bird curated for the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (July-October 2000), which toured to the South London Art Gallery (November-December 2000), the Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York (January-April 2001) and the Brooklyn Museum, New York (May-August 2001).</p> <p>Subsequently, Bird curated a major Golub retrospective for the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte, Reina Sofia, Madrid (May-September 2011), the first time this artist's work had been exhibited in Spain [3.2]. Including many works not previously exhibited, Bird's curatorial discourse analysed the major themes of Golub's work – sexuality, masculinity, mythology, hybridity and mortality – and the stylistic transformations of his practice: from early classically influenced works, through the Vietnam paintings, the works of the 1980s, the introduction of dogs, lions and text in the 1990s, and the small paintings and drawings of the early 2000s, Golub's 'late style.' The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue edited by Bird, which included his and others critical essays on the artist [3.2]. In addition, Bird revised and added two new chapters to <i>Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real</i> (Reaktion Books, 2011) [3.1], which focused on the artist's use of photographic imagery as source material for his paintings and Golub's 'late style,' and the significance of drawing to his practice. In the exhibition and publications, Bird presents Golub as a contemporary history painter whose large-scale depictions of war, torture and the impact of oppressive political and military regimes upon individual and social bodies continues to resonate in the present.</p> <p>An ongoing aspect of Bird's research has been to situate Golub in the narratives of post-War American art as a painter of scenes of social relevance and historical witness, which express something quintessential about American power and masculinity in the twentieth century. Bird had a long-term working relationship with Golub, which he drew on for his contribution to the exhibition <i>Leon Golub: Bite Your Tongue</i> at London's Serpentine Gallery (2015). For this Bird loaned works</p>		

from his own collection, acted as a consultant, and wrote an essay for the catalogue, 'A New York Story,' which traced the background to Bird's relationship with the artist, and describes the artist's studio working environment, his close relationship to his wife, the artist Nancy Spero, and the beginnings of Bird's involvement in her art. Background research for the essay came from personal diaries and the ongoing recorded interviews Bird conducted with Golub over a twenty year period [3.3]. As key artists in the formation of the post-War Chicago 'Monster Roster' group, Golub and Spero were two of the fourteen artists included in the award-winning exhibition *Monster Roster: Existentialist Art in Postwar Chicago* at the Smart Museum (2016), the first exhibition in America to explore the artists in this important group, and their place in the history of postwar American Art. Bird contributed an essay to the catalogue, 'Myth and Transformation in the Art of Leon Golub' [3.4], examining Golub's influence on the 'Monster Roster' artists through his figuring of the 'tragic hero' and explorations of mythic archetypes. Identifying early formal and technical processes underlying an 'expressionist figuration,' Bird argues that the artist's early compositions of the 1950s-1960s partly derived from his interest in archaic mythology and direct experience of the classical world which, along with his art historical knowledge, were directed towards 'the imaging of a postwar, American subject.'

In 2016, Bird curated the exhibition *Leon Golub Powerplay: The Political Portraits* [3.5], at London's National Portrait Gallery (NPG). Facial expression became increasingly important for Golub's form of expressive realism, first explored by Bird in the chapter 'Portraits of Power' in his book *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*; and in 2011 in a room devoted to these portraits in the Reina Sofia retrospective. For the NPG display, Bird curated a selection of portraits to demonstrate Golub's attention to the mediated 'look of power,' a key element in the artist's pictorial language. The political portraits represent the artist's sustained period of exploration of the media's presentation of powerful leaders and came at a time when the Nixon administration introduced the televisual image of 'presidency.' This thematic focus also allowed Golub to challenge the traditional conventions of portraiture, and to work in series – the visualisation of power and its effects upon visage over time. The exhibition was accompanied by a book, *Leon Golub Powerplay: The Political Portraits* [3.6], which is the most complete visual compilation of the series to date. In parallel, he was also invited to select works for an exhibition at Golub's London Gallery, Hauser & Wirth (19 March – 3 April 2016), which provided context for an enhanced understanding of the portraits exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery.

3. References to the research

- 3.1** Bird, J. (2000). [Authored book]. *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*. 1st ed. London: Reaktion Books; and Bird, J. (2011). [Authored book]. *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*. 2nd ed. (extended). London: Reaktion Books. Available Middlesex on request.
- 3.2** Bird, J. (2011). [Exhibition]. *Leon Golub Retrospective*. Curated by Jon Bird at the Centro Nacional Reina Sofia Museum, Palacio de Velázquez, Parque del Retiro, Madrid; and Bird, J. (ed.) (2011). [Exhibition Catalogue]. *Leon Golub*. Madrid: Turner/Museo Reina Sofia. ISBN 978-84-7506-975-3. Available Middlesex on request.
- 3.3** Bird, J. (2015). [Chapter in book]. 'A New York story'. In: Enderby E., Blanchflower, M. and Larner M. (eds.), *Leon Golub: Bite Your Tongue*. [Exhibition Catalogue]. London: Serpentine Galleries | Koenig Books, pp. 96-104. ISBN 978-1-908617-26-2; ISBN 978-3-86335-718-4. Available Middlesex on request.
- 3.4** Bird, J. (2016). [Chapter in book]. 'Myth and Transformation in the Art of Leon Golub.' In: Corbett, J., Dempsey, J., Moss J., and Born, R. A. (eds.), *Monster Roster; Existentialist Art in Postwar Chicago*. [Exhibition Catalogue]. Univ. of Chicago Press, pp. 58-69. ISBN 978-0-935573-48-0. Available Middlesex on request. The publication was awarded the Association of Art Museum Curators 'Award for Excellence' in 2017.
- 3.5** Bird, J. (2016). [Exhibition] *Leon Golub Powerplay: The Political Portraits*, curated by Jon Bird. National Portrait Gallery, London. 18 March – 25 September 2016. Listed in REF2: *Leon Golub Powerplay: The Political Portraits*, practice as research output.
- 3.6** Bird, J. (2016). [Edited book]. *Leon Golub Powerplay: The Political Portraits*, London: Reaktion Books. ISBN 978-1-78023-582-0. Listed in REF2: *Leon Golub Powerplay: The Political Portraits*, practice as research output.

4. Details of the impact

Through collaboration with the museum and gallery sector, Bird's research has extended awareness and appreciation of Leon Golub's work to a global audience, and enhanced understanding of Golub as an artist whose politically charged artistic discourse continues to be relevant. Indicators of reach and significance are given by the high profile of the museums and galleries Bird has worked with, audience figures, and critical reception and media coverage. In addition, Bird's expertise developed via his overall body of research were utilised to provide evidence and expert testimonial in an American civil art fraud case, related to paintings from Andrew Hall's private collection, one of the largest private holdings of modern and contemporary art. First suspected to be of doubtful provenance by Bird upon seeing images of works to be included in a proposed exhibition, the Hall Foundation asked Bird to make a detailed examination of the paintings. He concluded the works were 'not by the hand of the artist,' resulting in the jury finding in favour of Hall.

(1) Extending awareness and appreciation of Golub's work to a global audience, through contribution to high profile 'retrospective' exhibitions. In recognition of his role as the leading scholar on Golub, Bird was invited as a consultant for the exhibition *Leon Golub: Bite Your Tongue*, curated by Emma Enderby at the Serpentine Gallery, London (March – May 2015). The exhibition aimed to 'highlight key aspects of [Golub's] career by bringing selected themes into focus through chronological groupings of works' [5.1a]. In the 'Introduction' to the exhibition catalogue, the Serpentine's Co-Directors of Exhibitions and Programmes, Julia Peyton-Jones and Hans Ulrich Obrist, recognised Bird's 'expert research and advice' in the preparation of the exhibition [5.1b], for which Bird also lent two drawings from his personal collection, 'Mr Amok' and 'Proud.' These illustrate Golub's 'late style,' which Bird discussed in *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real* [3.1] and represented in the Reina Sofia exhibition [3.2]. The exhibition was met with an 'overwhelming response from the public', with over 1,100 visitors daily and 76,726 visitors in total [5.1a], and extremely positive reviews in the press [5.2]. Adrian Searle noted in *The Guardian*: 'This is a terrific exhibition. The paintings roar off the walls' [5.2]. A further indicator of the significance of Bird's contribution is given by his organisation and chairing of a one-day symposium on Golub at the Royal College of Art to coincide with the exhibition. Speakers included Adam Curtis, Avery Gordon, Oscar Murillo, John Roberts and Martha Rosler [5.1c]. The exhibition also travelled to Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (September 2015 – February 2016).

In 2016, Bird entered into discussion with The Metropolitan Museum, New York (The Met), about gifting works from his Golub collection and an exhibition of such works, supplemented by loans from other public and private collections. The result was the exhibition *Leon Golub: Raw Nerve*, staged in the galleries of The Met's temporary space, The Met Breuer (February – May 2018). As consultant curator, Bird worked closely with The Met's Chief Curator, Kelly Baum, and her curatorial team, advising on the location and selection of works. *Raw Nerve* was constructed around works from Bird's personal collection [5.3a] and the gifting of a major painting, 'Gigantomachy II' (1966) from the Spero/Golub Foundation, to The Met's collection of contemporary art. The work demonstrates Golub's transition from his 'classicism' of the 1950s and early 1960s to his 'Vietnam' period, aspects of Golub's practice which Bird discussed in both *Echoes of the Real* [3.1] and 'Myth and Transformation in the art of Leon Golub' [3.4]. As one of the six Trustees of the Foundation, Bird was instrumental in the gifting of this wall-sized painting, which was the first work to confront, and often stun, visitors [5.3a]. Many of the paintings, drawings and prints in the exhibition had never before been publicly displayed, and the inclusion of the lesser-known drawings and prints offered an understanding of the range and diversity of Golub's practice. *Raw Nerve* was very popular among visitors and one of The Met's 'highlights in fiscal year 2018' among the fifty-seven exhibitions it mounted [5.3b]. It received extensive, positive critical reviews, including *The Brooklyn Rail*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Review of Books* [5.4]. Karen Wilkin described *Raw Nerve* for *The Wall Street Journal* as 'unforgettable and difficult to come to terms with' [5.4]. Bird's *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real* was available in the bookshop and Clayton Press observed for the *Forbes*: 'Bird's book (...) is particularly notable since its cover has a partial reproduction of Golub's breathtaking painting, "All Bets Are Off" (1995). This work, in combination with "Bite Your Tongue" (2001), close the exhibition. Both paintings address "apocalyptic dystopia: the end of civilization as we know it" [5.4].

For the *Leon Golub Retrospective* at the Fondazione Prada, Milan curated by Germano Celant (October 2017 – January 2018) – the first large-scale survey in Italy of the artist's work - Bird loaned a work from his collection, 'Napalm Shield 1' (1970); and contributed an essay for the publication, which provided the context for an element that diverged from previous Golub exhibitions. One large gallery was given to a display of the artist's 'Installations' that he produced in the 1990s: images printed upon individual Duraclear transparent filmic plastic sheets, suspended throughout the space, allowing viewers to wander amongst them and encounter changing juxtapositions and connections. These works were the subject of Bird's essay 'Between the Window and the Screen: Leon Golub's Transparencies,' published in the exhibition's catalogue (pp. 41-48) [5.5]. The essay built upon research that Bird published in the second edition of *Echoes of the Real* [3.1], which examined Golub's use of photographic imagery and his photo archive. It traced the evolution of Golub's combination of images taken from his paintings and archive of photographic references, screen-printed onto Duraclear transparent filmic sheets of plastic, which were displayed in the 1990s in eight museum locations in America and Europe.

(2) Enhancing knowledge of Golub's significance as a history painter addressing issues of power, identity and the body relevant to the present. In 2013, Bird entered into discussions with London's National Portrait Gallery (NPG) about a display of Golub's 'political portraits' – over one-hundred portraits of political, military, corporate and religious leaders, which the artist produced between 1976-1979. This was the first time these works were seen in the UK, a small selection being displayed in one of the public spaces of the Gallery, where they could be viewed in relation to the permanent collection and receive the maximum footfall, which was estimated to be in excess of one million visitors over the duration of the exhibition [5.6a]. *Leon Golub Powerplay: The Political Portraits* [3.5] was spread across the regular non-ticketed location of the *Intervention* series, a main wall of Level 2. Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the NPG, praised the exhibition as 'an important addition to the gallery's *Intervention* series focusing on themes of representation in twentieth century portraiture' [5.6b]. As curator, Bird selected eighteen portraits of thirteen 'men of power,' which were arranged in a salon hang around the focal point of Golub's single image of a religious leader, 'Pope Paul IV.' At Bird's suggestion, the framing wall was repainted in Golub's familiar red oxide, the ground for his 1980s depictions of 'Mercenaries' and 'Interrogations', the colour also used previously for the portrait room in the Reina Sofia retrospective [3.2]. Of the eighteen portraits on view, 'Franco', 'Castro' and 'Kissinger' were examples from extended series of those individuals. Local interest was represented in the portrait of 'Michael Foot' (1976), which, like others, had never been previously exhibited. Bird wrote the introductory wall texts and an accompanying leaflet, which provided contextual information on the subject of each portrait; he also gave a number of talks on the work in the gallery to general and invited audiences. The exhibition opened in March 2016 for a six-month period and received positive press coverage [5.7]. Oliver Basciano's 'Anatomy of an artwork: Francisco Franco portrait,' published in *The Guardian*, reached 166,039 readers [5.7]; it analysed the portrait, identifying Franco's cruelty and machismo in the face of an old man approaching death. These traces of power in facial gestures were examined in the exhibition's accompanying book, *Leon Golub Powerplay: The Political Portraits* [3.6] (available in the NPG bookshop for the duration), which also served as a catalogue for the display, as it included visual documentation of the entire portrait series. The portraits were critically examined and contextualised in two essays (Bird and Perry). Bird also selected sixteen paintings and eight drawings from Hauser & Wirth's extensive holdings of the artist's work, which were exhibited in a 'salon' hang in the Saville Row gallery. This display provided viewers with a range of the artist's subjects and themes, further contextualising the focused display at the NPG. From the intimacy of his late drawings (2000-2004), to the history paintings of the 1970s-1990s, the exhibition presented Golub's depictions of the male body as both instigator and victim of violence, from the Classical period to the present day.

(3) Impact on the commercial art world via the provision of evidence and expert testimonial in a civil art fraud case in America. In early 2015, the Golub/Spero Foundation – of which Bird is one of the six Trustees – was approached by the Hall Art Foundation regarding their intention to mount an exhibition of Golub's paintings from the private collection of Andrew Hall. Founded in 2007, the Hall Foundation has galleries and exhibition spaces in Vermont, runs the Schloss Derneburg Museum, Hanover, Germany, and is in partnership with the Massachusetts Museum

of Contemporary Art. With one of the largest private holdings of modern and contemporary art, Andrew Hall has a large collection of Golub works, many of which have been loaned to exhibitions of the artist including the Reina Sofia retrospective and the NPG. When the Hall Foundation provided images of all the paintings in their proposed exhibition, Bird realised that a significant number were of doubtful provenance. This began an investigative process which culminated in a court case over the suspect works at the United States District Court, Concord, New Hampshire (2018). The case became a significant example of contemporary art forgery and received extensive coverage in the American press and international art journals including the New York Times [5.9], which details Bird's contribution to proceedings. At the outset, Bird was identified by the Hall Foundation as 'the world authority on the art of Leon Golub' [5.10] and was contracted to examine the suspect paintings. Key to the proceedings was Bird's deep knowledge - developed via his overall body of research - of Golub's 'signature style': the artist's technique in applying acrylic paints and lacquer; understanding of human anatomy in representing bodies under duress; and attention to clothing, weaponry and gesture. Over a two-day period in September 2017, Bird made a detailed study of eighteen paintings (held in a secure art warehouse in New Jersey), which included the removal of frames, photographic documentation of the painted and reverse surfaces, and constant reference to the authorised Golub archive. Bird was required to produce a Report describing the process of close analysis and the reasons for his conclusions – that all the works were not 'by the hand of the artist' [5.8]. This Report was submitted to the lawyers for both the Prosecution and the Defence and was the subject of a Deposition and the primary document tabled during the actual court proceeding. A selection of the suspect works was displayed in court and over two days of explanation and cross-examination, Bird testified to the reasons for his judgement of the works as forgeries. As a result, the jury found in favour of Hall. The Director of the Hall Art Foundation commented: 'The role that Professor Bird played in this case was invaluable and most certainly contributed to its positive outcome. The result was of course very desirable for the Hall Collection, but more importantly, to upholding the legacy and integrity of Leon Golub and his work' [5.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Serpentine Gallery: (a) Letter to Jon Bird, 1 July 2015 (b) Obrist, H. U. and Peyton-Jones, J. (2015). 'Introduction.' In: Enderby E., Blanchflower, M. and Lerner M. (eds.), *Leon Golub: Bite Your Tongue*. [Exhibition Catalogue]. London: Serpentine Galleries|Koenig Books (c) Webpage, includes video recordings of the symposium, 'A symposium on Leon Golub:'

<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/symposium-leon-golub/>

5.2. Collated press coverage for *Leon Golub: Bite Your Tongue* at the Serpentine Gallery.

5.3 The Metropolitan Museum: (a) Baum, K. and Fenstermaker, W. (2018). 'Critiques of Power and Toxic Masculinity – Kelly Baum on *Leon Golub: Raw Nerve*.' In: *Curator Conversations/Now at The Met* (10 April 2018): <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2018/kelly-baum-on-leon-golub-interview> (b) *Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990* (2017-2018), pp. 76 – 77: <https://www.metmuseum.org/-/media/files/about-the-met/990-forms/2017-irs-form-990-for-fy2018.pdf>

5.4 Collated press coverage for *Leon Golub: Raw Nerve* at The Met Breuer, New York.

5.5 Bird, J. (2017). [Book chapter]. 'Between the Window and the Screen: Leon Golub's Transparencies.' In: G. Celant (ed.), *Leon Golub*. [Exhibition Catalogue]. Milan: Fondazione Prada, pp. 41-48.

5.6 National Portrait Gallery: (a) *DCMS-Sponsored Museums and Galleries Visits*. Rows 368-381 include visitor numbers at NPG between March-September 2016:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/museums-and-galleries-monthly-visits#history> (b) NPG's News Release, 14 March 2016.

5.7 Collated press coverage of *Leon Golub: Powerplay* at the National Portrait Gallery.

5.8 Bird, J. (2018). [Research report for external body]. *Examination of Paintings in the Hall Collection*. Report submitted in the Hall vs Gascard court case, United States District Court, Concord, New Hampshire: <http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/nhpr/files/201804/46-7.pdf>

5.9 Collated press coverage of the Hall vs. Gascard art fraud case.

5.10 Statement from the Director of the Hall Art Foundation.