

Professor Andrew Dewdney
Tate Encounters: Black and Asian Identities, Britishness and Visual Culture
End of year report for 2008

The project gave two presentations of emergent findings during the period of this report. The first to the Tate Diversity Group in February, the second to the DCMS in October. The approach has been participatory, embedded and engaged and this has led us to develop 'positions' supported by our experience in relationship to our aims and issues of common concern to the professional field. In this respect the project took a strongly critical position on various forms of ethnic monitoring within the sector and within research, arguing that the taxonomies are both intellectually flawed and strongly resisted by our student sample. We have further argued that the policy of targeting black and ethnic minorities as an educational means of inclusion in museums has no significant impact upon the programming and organisation of Tate Britain, nor upon its core audiences. On the positive side the work with the student co-researchers continues to show how identity plays a central role in constructing interpretative viewing strategies, especially in the notion of 'seeing on the move', which is related to transmigration.

The two year field work period of the project ends in April, with the end of contract for the three RAs. The fieldwork programme has yielded a large amount of data in the form of video interviews and footage, two intranet blogs/postings and 34 organisational interviews. In addition data has been gathered upon the reflexive methodologies of the research team, which are now being brought together for critical review on the intranet. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the project and the high stress upon reflexivity in the methodology, the project has developed a greater focus upon a critical 'internal' enquiry into the origins of the project itself and in relationship to its object(s) of study. This has been achieved by a structure of weekly team meetings, development workshops, internal papers and correspondence.. The project has been ambitious and noted as such by Tate and others, this has stretched resources at times to the limit no more so than now as preparations progress to model the research process as a form of research display at Tate Britain. This is a major undertaking which assigns one week in the Duveen Studio to each of the research strands and attempts to combine in an events programme, fieldwork material, research perspectives, critical responses from respective intellectual fields and a public audience. One of the aims of the programme will be to produce a new body of data which will be added to an online archive.

The visual ethnography of Sarah Thomas has now focused in depth on six student co-researchers and she is in the process of producing first 'films' with them for the forthcoming research Display. We have approximately 30 participants still active in the project, twelve of whom will present their findings during week three of the Research Display. The organisational study of Isabel Shaw is in a process of initial 'combing out' as we build a shared analytical framework. David Dibosa continues to work with the co-researchers on questions of visual culture in relation to the national collection. Morten Norbye Halvorsen and Andrew Dewdney undertook a digital encounter with a new group of 17 participants from LSBU. Victoria Walsh and Mike Phillips have continued to work together on the history and analysis of Diversity Cultural Policy. Since November 08 Andrew Dewdney has been leading the development of an interdisciplinary framework to bring the various strands of the research together.