

# BSA Study Group Annual Report

Study Group Name: Sociology of Arts

## 1. Membership overview

The number of subscribers to our mailing list was 207 (subscriptions to mailing list), among which 27 are BSA members.

## 2. Account balance

As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, the account balance for the Sociology of the Arts study group was **£165.20**.

## 3. Convenor details

Dr Harris is an Anniversary Fellow at the University of Southampton. Her research Laura looks at the overlap of visual sociology and creative art practices, specifically artists moving image, and she has collaborated with several galleries. She is book reviews editor at Cultural Sociology and also works as an arts writer.

Dr Linzhi Zhang is an affiliated lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge. Her research adopts a cultural approach to labour studies with a focus on creativity and work in contemporary China. Her forthcoming book *Making Contemporary Art: Creations and Careers through Exhibitions* addresses the institutional conditions of art production in China.

Jiayi Tian is a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh. His interests cover the identities and careers of outsider and self-taught artists, globalised art production, the moral discourse of artists in modern China, and contemporary Chinese art. His PhD project focuses on the commercial painters' exploration of an artist self in post-socialist China.

## 4. Aims of the study group

- 1) To provide a space in which academics with a specific interest in the arts can come together and share ideas, thoughts, and arguments.
- 2) To offer the opportunity for critical development and exploration of theory and practice relating to the arts.
- 3) To create opportunities for collaboration and professional networking for those working, and interested, in the sociology of the arts, both within the context of sociology and across other disciplines.

- 4) To foster inter- and trans-disciplinary thinking and research in the sociology of the arts, and to develop new ideas about art which are of international significance.
- 5) To link in productive ways with study groups within the BSA dealing with related areas.
- 6) To work with BSA conference organisers in arranging themed streams at the BSA conference.
- 7) To organise seminars and other events for BSA members interested in the arts.
- 8) To engage with the BSA journal *Cultural Sociology*, and to propose special sections and editions of the journal which come out of the study group's activities.
- 9) To forge links with practitioners in the arts and cultural industries.
- 10) To promote the BSA and sociology within major higher education institutions where the arts are taught.

## 5. Past and Future Activities

In 2024, the study group hosted six events, both online and in person, maintaining strong momentum and active member engagement. These events addressed cutting-edge issues in the field and amplified new scholarly voices. Our online sessions consistently attracted an average of around 30 attendees, while the highlight of the year was our in-person symposium, which revisited the work of a much-neglected female sociologist. We are pleased to report that the symposium has successfully developed into a special issue proposal, now accepted and scheduled for publication in *Cultural Sociology* in 2027.

With fresh perspectives and renewed energy, we have expanded our event portfolio to align with our updated aims and objectives, particularly aims 1, 2, 4, and 7.

- **January 2024** – In collaboration with the European Sociological Association's Sociology of Art Research Network, we hosted an online panel on *Artificial Intelligence in the Art World*. An international panel explored how AI is currently disrupting artistic practice and institutions, and what might be envisioned for the future of AI and art.
- **February 2024** – Our PGR representative, Jiayi Tian, hosted an online dialogue with American sociologist Larissa Buchholz on her new book *The Global Rules of Art*. The event attracted audiences from across and beyond the UK, sparking discussion on artistic production and valuation in a global context.
- **May 2024** – Supported by £1,000 from the BSA Postgraduate Forum Regional Event Funding and an additional £500 from the University of Edinburgh's PGR Student Initiative Fund, Jiayi Tian organised an event providing PhD students with

a platform to engage in dialogue with junior and senior academics. The event explored how different art genres influence research practices and outcomes.

- **June 2024** – In partnership with *Cultural Sociology* and the Bauman Institute, we hosted our first in-person symposium at the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds: *The Social Production of Art Today: Revisiting Janet Wolff*. The symposium consolidated the study group's renewed energy and networks. Janet Wolff delivered the keynote, and contributions came from PhD students through to mid-career and established scholars, including David Inglis, Lisa McCormick, Austin Harrington, and Nick Crossley.
  - **Funding:** *Cultural Sociology* and the Bauman Institute (£1,820 + £500 for ECR travel)
  - **Special Issue:** Accepted by *Cultural Sociology*, scheduled for publication in 2027.
- **November 2024** – Together with the School of Social & Political Science, University of Edinburgh, we co-hosted a hybrid book launch for *The Sound of Difference* by Dr Kristina Kolbe. The event critically examined diversity initiatives within classical music, in dialogue with other sociologists.
- **December 2024** – We welcomed the eminent French sociologist Nathalie Heinich for an online lecture reflecting on her intellectual journey. Heinich traced her progression from the sociology of art to her pioneering work in the sociology of evaluation, opening up new understandings of how values, artists, and artistic works are perceived and contested.

**Future activities:** In 2025, we will continue to build on this momentum. Planned events include our recurring PGR event in May, a series of book talks in September, another online interdisciplinary dialogue later in the year, and the launch of our special issue call for papers. We also aim to establish a biennial rhythm of in-person symposia to strengthen our networks and visibility.