

The Leicester Graduate Network

# Museum Studies *connect*



Image: Digital Specialism Workshop, School of Museum Studies: credit Robin Clarke

## Open and Diversity Scholarships for September 2017

Following the success of last year's scheme, we are offering a range of Scholarships again for 2017. Scholarships are open to applicants for either Postgraduate Diploma or Masters programmes commencing their studies in Autumn 2017. Two scholarships of £3,000 are available to all applicants, a further four Scholarships, each of £3,000 are open to UK applicants from backgrounds that are underrepresented in the UK museum sector.

The diversity scholarships are for underrepresented groups including people

from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled applicants, care leavers, carers, and people from lower income households.

The initiative forms part of our long standing commitment to support the diversification of the UK's museum workforce. The scholarships schemes are part of a suite of linked initiatives focused on different aspects of diversity and equality.

In 2016 we were selected to lead on the University of Leicester's participation in a

nationwide project designed to enhance student diversity and led by the Equality Challenge Unit. In addition, 2016 saw the launch of Socially Engaged Practice in Museums and Galleries – a brand new flexible learning programme that looks closely at equality and diversity themes and draws on the School's world leading research and practice in this area.

The deadline for all applications is 30th June 2017.



# Prejudice and Pride

The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) are collaborating with the National Trust on a major research project to enrich and inform the Trust's Prejudice and Pride programme. During 2017, a series of events and celebrations will tell the stories of the men and women who challenged conventional notions of gender and sexuality and who shaped the properties in which they lived. This forms part of the nation's commemoration to mark 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality.


Working closely with a cohort of properties and key staff, the project team – Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd, Sarah Plumb and artist, Matt Smith will be exploring the following research questions:

- How can we offer diverse audiences (new and existing) authentic, engaging and meaningful experiences and purposefully engage the public in debates surrounding LGBTQ history, culture and equality by researching, acknowledging and presenting the LGBTQ histories and associations in the places, stories and collections of the National Trust?
- How can we contribute to new thinking and practice related to the presentation of LGBTQ histories within the international heritage and museum field?
- How can the Trust develop and sustain its capacity to engage audiences around challenging histories?

The 17th century barn theatre at Smallhythe Place, Kent. Credit National Trust Images, James Dobson.







A recreation of a formal garden at Ham House, Surrey, from a design of 1671, comprising box-hedged compartments filled with santolina and lavender. Formal gardens such as these were designed to be seen from above, and were often viewed from galleries.  
© National Trust Images/John Hammond

# Cultivating the Art Gallery in the Early Modern Garden

## A new research project funded by the Leverhulme Trust

I completed my PhD in Museum Studies at Leicester in 2015, and in 2016 was awarded a three-year Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, which began last September. It's fantastic (and slightly surreal) to have become a member of staff in the place where I was a student for so long!

My research project investigates the spatial, conceptual and experiential relationships between gardens and picture galleries in England from 1500 to 1750. In particular, it examines how and to what extent the cultural practices of the garden influenced those of the gallery, and helped shape its development.

I first became interested in gardens while studying for my doctorate, which examined the visual representation of the world in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cabinets of curiosity – privately-owned collections of extraordinary objects – and their reinterpretation by contemporary artists. Early modern people tended to view their gardens as an integral part of their cabinets, using them to display works of art such as sculptures, antiquities and even paintings. At times, gardens were so full of art that

the seventeenth-century diarist John Evelyn complained that 'Our cockney gardens [...] smell more of paynt th[a]n of flowers' (Temple 1908: 175).

While a considerable body of scholarship exists on the history of gardens and of galleries, the relationship between gardens and galleries has rarely been subjected to a deep cultural analysis. I began to wonder whether instead of simply occurring to people to display works of art in their gardens as they had in galleries, there had been a more complex relationship between these two cultural forms.

Garden history is a new subject for me, so much of the last seven months has been spent understanding how these spaces were designed, conceived and experienced across the centuries. I have begun to visit potential case study sites, as well as museums and archives, and have come across some intriguing material – embroidered seventeenth-century caskets which open up to reveal miniature gardens, and evidence of mural paintings which extended gardens beyond their physical limits. Incredibly, some garden plantings do survive from as early

as the 1690s, but gardens themselves are a unique and challenging form of evidence to work with. It is very easy to be seduced by a beautifully-restored garden, which despite its fine attention to detail is always only a contemporary interpretation of a single moment in the site's history.

In May I will travel to Florence to visit the Boboli Gardens, first laid out in the sixteenth century, and if possible, travel further afield to the 'Garden of Monsters' at Bomarzo, an enigmatic sixteenth-century sculpture garden populated by mythical creatures. Later this year I plan to visit the French château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, to help me understand the relationships between garden design in England and abroad.

Ultimately, I aim to propose a new way of understanding the development of the modern art galleries we know today; one which takes into account their considerable debt to the manner in which people understood and experienced the garden in the early modern era.

**Stephanie Bowry**



# School Welcomes The Jodi Awards 2017

The School of Museum Studies is proud to be supporting this year's 'Jodi Awards', taking place at Attenborough Arts, Leicester, on Thursday 29 June.

For over ten years the Jodis have been celebrating excellence in accessible digital design. Managed by the Jodi Mattes Trust, these biennial awards recognise outstanding practice in the ways digital technology has been used to increase participation for disabled people within museums, libraries, archives and the heritage sites.

Given in memory of Jodi Mattes, a tireless campaigner for the cultural equality of disabled people within the cultural heritage sector, the awards look

to highlight organisational commitment to universal design principles, as well as to inspirational approaches to inclusive and participatory design.

With our own Dr Ross Parry one of its founding Trustees, the Trust has a long-established relationship with the School of Museum Studies. 'The Jodi Awards, and the extraordinary practice they discover and share', Ross explains, 'continue to be not only a provocation and stimulus to our research, but are a wonderful catalogue of exemplar

to share with our students in our teaching'.

The 2017 Jodis at Attenborough Arts, follow previous winners' events at the British Museum, V&A, Museum of Liverpool and, last year, at the British Library – where the awards were presented by disability activist and cross-bencher peer, Baroness Campbell.

The evening event will be preceded by an afternoon workshop on accessible design led by Ross Parry and equalities and access manager at The National Trust, Heather Smith.



# Reconnect 2017

Thursday 29 June

We are inviting you to 'Reconnect' with the School of Museum Studies this summer on Thursday 29th June from 3.00 - 8.00pm. This year's event will take place here at the School, and at the Attenborough Arts Centre, giving you the opportunity to take part in a workshop and catch up with members of staff and fellow graduates.

The event will kick off at the School with a Workshop on Accessible Digital Design led by Ross Parry and Equalities and Access Manager at The National Trust, Heather Smith. Following this we will head over to Attenborough Arts Centre for the Jodi Awards ceremony, drinks and refreshments and a chance to explore the galleries.

As before, free overnight accommodation will be available at John Foster Hall for ten Connect members.

More detailed information will be made available on our website in due course.



## Critical Practice

### Artists, Museums, Ethics

Janet Marstine, Academic Director of the School, has published a new book as part of the Routledge 'Museum Meanings' series. The monograph explores how artists' interventions in museums contribute to a developing discourse of museum ethics and create conditions for organizational change towards public agency and shared authority. Borrowing from literature on reconciliation theory as a human rights strategy, the book establishes that artists' interventions play a unique role in recognizing the cultural rights of individuals through initiatives that generate effective social participation.

The book discusses these interventions as a symbolic gesture performed to make amends and to repair rifts within the larger framework of peace and reconciliation studies. These gestures of reconciliation convey 'institutional desire,' defined by curator Dieter Roelstraete as an ethical caring for museums and galleries that not only expects these organisations to become more equitable but also helps to advance this cause.

The book is available to purchase from Routledge.

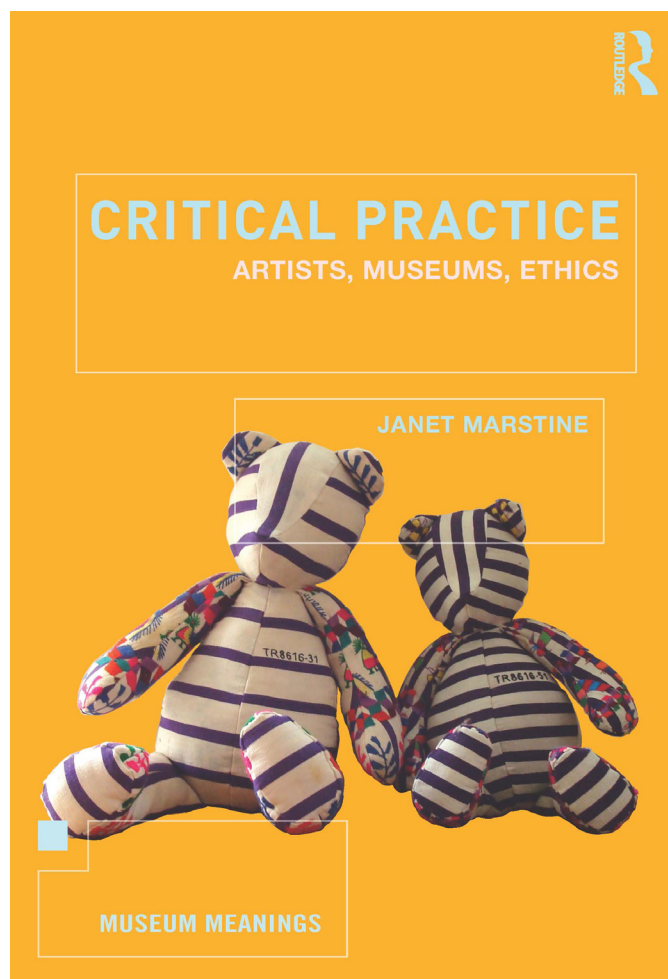


Image: Book Cover, Critical Practice: Credit Routledge



# Graduate Profiles

## Learning in Living Knowledge

### Alex Whitfield – MA, PhD Museum Studies

While my love of museums started from a young age (I was slightly obsessed with the netsukes at the V&A as a child) my career didn't begin until after I completed my MA in Museum Studies at Leicester. Before then, while teaching in China, my sole museum experience was editing the labels for a new museum opening in Changzhou, then called the China Dinosaur Museum – a subject I knew very little about. After 3 years in Asia I returned specifically to do the MA, which I loved, and, as part of that undertook a placement within the Learning Team at Tate Britain. I was fortunate enough to have a wonderful line manager and when some temporary work became available a few weeks after my placement ended, she offered me the job. It was a piece of work co-ordinating three BP Saturday events for the under 5s (Tiny Tate), families (Dotty Tate, Sparky Tate) and young people (Loud Tate),

which I continued to work on for 5 years, moving from co-ordinating to programming the events, the latter in the partnership with Tate Forum – now Tate Collectives.

It was at this time that I also started my PhD, under Ross Parry's brilliant tutorship. I remained in London, working on the PhD part-time, and taking on a variety of temporary, freelance projects, primarily at Tate. This included working with the Adult Programmes team on their monthly Late at Tate programme and working with Tate National on their International Programme – which included working on a small exhibition in Oman and two projects that brought groups of young curators from across the UK and the Middle East to the Sharjah Biennial and the Alexandria Biennale.

During this time I also started working part-time at the British Library as their

Learning Programmes Manager, my first permanent job. It was a tiny but extraordinary team, some of whom I still work with and who remain, 10 years later, incredibly passionate about their work. I ran the schools programme for several years, before managing the website (digital was the subject of my PhD), and then moving on to managing the team once I had finished my PhD in 2011, 3 days before the birth of my son (always loved a deadline!). Last year I became Head of Learning Programmes, and have been busy writing a new strategy for the whole of the British Library who have recently, and publicly stated their commitment to Learning in Living Knowledge. I never thought I would work anywhere for 10 years – but it's my 11 year anniversary in April – and there is no sign of me leaving yet!

Image: Alex Whitfield, PhD Graduation





Image: Verity Smith with Aardman Productions Founder, Peter Lord and Morph

# Project Management at the National Media Museum

## Verity Smith – MA Museum Studies

In September 2012, I completed the campus based MA in Museum Studies, having undertaken my placement at the National Railway Museum in York. This involved working on the redevelopment of the Station Hall gallery with the Exhibitions team, and community outreach work with former railway workers.

Initially, I took up a post at the University of Leeds working as an administrator for the Clinical Research Network. Whilst most of my working week was a world away from museums and heritage, my role was very enjoyable and rewarding. It equipped me with relevant experience, transferable skills that I have since been able to apply to working in museums. I am enormously grateful for the opportunities it opened up and the perspective it provided on my career.

Concurrently to this role, I was then able to take on part time paid work for Leeds Museums and Galleries as the Youth Group Coordinator (for volunteers aged 13-24) based at Leeds City Museum. I was responsible for coordinating the first major First World War commemoration project by the museum service in 2013. This was

a digital media project using Facebook's timeline function to document effects of war on the Home Front in Leeds, the content for which was entirely developed by the young volunteers. This provided a great opportunity for partnership working with academics at the University of Leeds, community engagement with a range of volunteer groups across the city, and cultural exchange with international twinning partners.

I was thrilled to be invited back to Leicester by Dr Sheila Watson in 2014 to deliver a seminar on the WW1 Leeds project to students undertaking the Museums and Histories module. It was a great pleasure to teach such an enthusiastic group of students!

In April 2016, I was delighted to be offered the role of Project Management Assistant in the Exhibitions department at the National Media Museum in Bradford. Primarily, my role supports the development and delivery of major and diverse temporary exhibitions which draw on the museum's fantastic collection of film, photography and television. Our major exhibition for summer 2016, In Your Face, was an interactive

investigation of the most photographed, examined, and expressive part of the human body. As part of October half term week, we worked with Aardman Animations to celebrate their 40th anniversary and reveal how some of their best loved animated creations such as Wallace and Gromit communicate through facial expression. Meeting some of the talented model makers, storyboard artists, and the founder of Aardman himself, Peter Lord, has definitely been a highlight of the job so far!

I have been a Trustee for the Social History Curators Group since 2014, a role which I consider to be hugely important in supporting museum professionals in their interaction with and care of social history collections. Since June 2016 I have taken on the role of Secretary, and I am also co-editing the SHCG Journal, a peer-reviewed publication, for 2017. SHCG is very keen to diversify and increase its membership, and is looking to better engage, work with and support Museum Studies departments and their students. More information is available on the SHCG website:

<http://www.shcg.org.uk/home>



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All information in this document was correct at the time of going to print. However, changes and developments are part of the life of the University, and alterations may occur to the programmes and services described in this newsletter.