

**ARE YOU / DO YOU KNOW AN ENGAGING MUSEUM CURATOR
IN THE SOUTH WEST?
WHAT MAKES AN ENGAGING CURATOR?
TAKE PART. HAVE YOUR SAY.**

‘ENGAGING CURATORS’ is a museum engagement PhD research project by Jillian Sutherland, in association with Bath Spa University

Project question: How does curatorship and audience engagement come together in the small museum?

Project aims: Drawing from the perspectives of both non-curatorial and curatorial museum staff, the ‘Engaging Curators’ research project aims to investigate how museum curatorship is responding to audience engagement and the expectations and pressures that accompany the concept.

It seeks to explore how the relationship between curatorship and audiences factors in the planning of in-house displays, exhibition programming and other areas of curatorial work, taking the historical and contemporary significance of the role of the museum curator into account.

Context: In the modern museum, the curator’s traditional role is changing dramatically from its traditional roots of carer, keeper and researcher of collections to something far more dynamic that encompasses many additional tasks such as managerial responsibilities, exhibition design, providing educational resources, or training other team-members.

With public engagement now a hotter topic than ever, a nationwide call-to-arms is in effect for social, educational and cultural institutions to include and appeal to as many different types of people as possible. Consequently, museums are coming under pressure from prescriptive policies designed to guide what engagement should look like and measure how well engagement has been achieved.

Scope: I hope this research will highlight valuable sector developments in the South West of England; a region densely populated with a variety of diverse small and independent museums, and an area that is under-represented in wider museum studies.

Opportunities: If you choose to participate, your contributions will enrich research for your sector in the South West, and lend insights into broader questions of museum culture and curatorial practice.

Participants are invited to take part during the following research stages:

Stage 1 - Anonymous survey for non-curatorial museum staff (*Feb 2019*)

Stage 2 - Focus group 1 with curatorial staff for survey response and discussion of audience engagement in relation to museum curatorship (*2019, date TBC*)

Stage 3 - Interview and case study with up to 3 museums to present examples of curatorial intervention and visitor response, including observation and evaluation of a selected current exhibition to be conducted by researcher (*2019, date TBC*)

Stage 4 - Focus group 2 a follow-up with curatorial staff for reflective responses to case studies (*date TBC*)

**For further information please contact Jillian Sutherland, PhD Researcher,
Bath Spa University: jillian.sutherland17@bathspa.ac.uk**

About the researcher

Jillian has volunteered and worked in art galleries and museums throughout the South West region over the past decade, including collaborating on independent art projects. Jillian completed her Masters in History of Art in 2012. Inspired through both her previous research in contemporary curating and by her experiences interacting with visitors in art and museum settings, Jillian's research interests are now concerned with curatorial practice, museum traditions and reception, and the entrenched social behaviours and indicators associated with visiting museums. 'Engaging Curators' forms the basis of her current PhD project at Bath Spa University.